
OUR REF: JB/3402

DESIGN, ACCESS, AND PLANNING STATEMENT

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A DORMER WINDOW
(WITH 3 PITCHED ROOF ELEMENTS)**

SHELLY, MEADOW LANE, CULVERSTONE

NOVEMBER 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1** This statement is prepared in support of an application for the addition of a dormer window to the rear roof slope of the dwelling. The applicant was keen to avoid a simple box dormer and as a result it was designed to have the appearance of 3 separate dormer elements. The proposal will extend a bedroom, a bathroom, and a shower room.



Photograph 1: Existing rear elevation

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1** The application site extending to 1132 sqm is located on the south east side of Meadow Lane, a short distance north of the junction with Whitepost Lane in the Culverstone Valley Area. As is common in this area, the site is steeply sloping, with a garage erected close to the road, and the dwelling further up the slope behind it. As with much of the Culverstone Valley Area, Meadow Lane is characterised by an eclectic mix of brick-built bungalows. Much of the Culverstone Valley Area has not been excluded from the Green Belt, despite its unusual evolution which has resulted in a density of dwellings that give the area a village character. This proposal site is located within the Green Belt.
- 2.2** To the south west of the curtilage of the dwelling is a track giving access to the land behind the dwelling. To the north east is another dwelling of similar character called Autumn Lodge. This dwelling is set a small distance further back than Shelly, so that the rear elevations are not quite aligned.
- 2.3** The rear garden is terraced, with an area of lawn higher than the patio at the rear of the dwelling. There are no long views available of the rear of the dwelling from outside the site, and only brief views of the side elevations when passing nearby.

- 2.4 The site lies within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area (Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment). This describes one of the key characteristics of the area as a haphazard mosaic of residential plots and small holdings set within the woodland. The LCA explains that the uncharacteristic and sporadic settlement of small plots within coppice woodland is a dominant element within the area, creating an incoherent landscape. The policy recommendations of the LCA include halting the erosion of the landscape character by resisting development of inappropriate design and materials; conserving the characteristic of narrow lanes; and softening new development using characteristic landscape elements.

3.0 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

- 3.1 Relevant planning history includes the following:

Application for renewal of planning permission GR/91/709W for erection of a detached bungalow with a detached garage at the rear and installation of a septic tank. Ref. No: 19960829 | Status: Application Permitted

Erection of a detached bungalow with a detached garage at the rear and installation of a septic tank. Ref. No: 19910709 | Status: Application Permitted

Erection of chalet for weekend and holiday use. Ref. No: 19890105 | Status: Application Refused

Erection of detached bungalow with detached garage. Ref. No: 19970795 | Status: Application Permitted

Erection of chalet for weekend and holiday use and installation of septic tank. Ref. No: 19890505 | Status: Application Permitted

- 3.2 It appears that the application dated 1997 was implemented. Of particular note, it is observed that the decision notice for the application 19970795 included a condition that removed Permitted Development Rights for extensions and outbuildings to the dwelling. The reasons given were *‘in order to comply with the Borough Council’s Policy for controlling residential development in the Green Belt generally and in the Culverstone Valley Area in particular’* and *‘In the interests of amenity and in order to comply with the Borough Council’s policy for the Culverstone Valley Area’*.

4.0 DESIGN AND PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 4.2 Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) reiterates this, whilst paragraph 12 of the Framework is clear that the development plan is the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3 Paragraph 38 of the Framework states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, as well as work with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. They should also seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.4 The adopted planning policy for Gravesham consists of the Core Strategy (2014) and the saved policies of the Gravesham Local Plan (1994). There is emerging policy in the ADMP. This has not yet completed its public consultation and is some way off formal adoption. It is therefore to be afforded limited weight.
- 4.5 As a result of the Inspectors report into the Examination of the Core Strategy (in 2014), policy C14 was deleted. This previously provided a special policy for the CVA and it was under this policy that the previous redevelopment proposals on this site had been permitted. At that time the Inspector recommended a review of the Green Belt boundary, but that has not been completed yet.

Green Belt

- 4.6 National policies for protecting the Green Belt are set out in Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). Paragraphs 147, 148 and 149 are key for the consideration of this application. In summary, Paragraph 147 describes that:

‘Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances’.

- 4.7 Paragraph 149 confirms that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. However, it then goes on to consider a list of exceptions. It is our view that the following exceptions is relevant to this case:

‘c) the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

- 4.8 The NPPF does not define ‘disproportionate’, and the Gravesham Borough Council development plan policies (which were drafted before the NPPF) cannot reliably be used to define the meaning of this term. Nevertheless, because there is no other guidance (there is not an up-to-date development plan), planning decisions by the council have regularly used Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (2014) (reproduced below) to define modest (and thereby appropriate) extensions in the Green Belt (and this is defined as an overall limit of one third of the floor area of

the original dwelling). The Council continue to apply this policy and it seems reasonable to assume that other criteria of the policy are also still relevant.

Policy C13

Extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Borough Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-

- (i) *The existing dwelling must be an “original dwelling” in permanent use as a dwelling.*
- (ii) *There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.*
- (iii) *Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen, which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.*
- (iv) *The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.*
- (v) *The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.*
- (vi) *The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.*
- (vii) *Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot*

4.9 Design will be considered in more detail in the next section. In Green Belt terms, however, the policy is satisfied. Additional floor area increase is very small indeed (8 sqm) and clearly well within the one third floorspace limit. In volume terms, the change is more notable (6 % increase), but still comfortably within the described appropriate change.

4.10 As with all dormer extensions, the change to the bulk and massing of the building occurs above ground level. In this case, the careful design of the dormer avoids excessive bulk which might be harmful to the appearance of the dwelling. The highest part of the dormer sits well below the ridge and tiles are still visible to the side and above the eaves. The appearance, massing, form and materials of the roof extension are appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting. The development is on the rear roof slope and would not be perceived in most views. The existing topography means that the dwelling sits low into the landscape.

4.11 **The proposal is considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt and in accordance with Policy C13 in the Local Plan First Review and Section 13 of the NPPF**

Character and appearance of the countryside

- 4.12** There is a difference between impacts on visual amenity, which are normally considered within the process of assessing landscape impact and the visual aspects of openness which are considered as part of a Green Belt Assessment. In the former, an assessment is made on the effects of development on the views available to people and their visual amenity and how this may affect character and scenic quality.
- 4.13** The proposed dormer is on the rear roof slope and will not be visible in views from public vantage point, other than brief glimpses of the side elevation.
- 4.14** The proposed extension will not be visually prominent in the local landscape. The area in which it is located arguably has a village character, with a wide range of sizes and designs of dwellings, all contained within a treed landscape. The proposed dormer extension will conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the locality. The development responds to the policy recommendations in Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area which includes resisting development of inappropriate design and material. These are considered in more detail in the following section.

Good design and neighbour amenity

- 4.15** While the proposal does add bulk to the dwelling at roof level, every effort has been made to ensure the dormer is well designed. The shape of the dormer roof, seeks to visually appear as if it were 3 separate dormers, each with its own roof. This responds to gable features on the front elevation above the windows and door.
- 4.16** The highest part of the dormer sits well below the ridge and there are roof tiles visible above the eaves and at the sides of the roof. The materials match the existing.
- 4.17** In terms of the amenities enjoyed by the neighbouring dwelling, any impact is minimised because the neighbouring dwelling is set behind the application dwelling by a short distance. As a result, it is inevitable that the area immediately to the rear of the neighbour's dwelling will not be overlooked. It is also relevant that the two windows closest to the neighbour house are bathroom windows and will be obscure glazed. While there might be some additional overlooking of the rear garden away from the house, this relationship is not unusual and would not be expected to amount to an impact that would result in a refusal of planning permission.
- 4.18** Section 12 of the NPPF relates to “achieving well-designed places” and sets out the Government’s requirements in relation to design issues. Paragraph 126 relates to good design and better places. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy requires new development to be “visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive”, to “conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment” and “integrate well with the surrounding local area”. Policy CS19 also seeks to ensure that new development safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties and land. The policy requirements are met through a careful design approach in this case.



Photograph 2: Front elevation

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1** It is the view of Graham Simpkin Planning that the proposed dormer window is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and will not have a detrimental impact on Green Belt openness. Furthermore, the proposed development does not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the countryside, is of suitable design and materials and does not have a detrimental impact on the amenities enjoyed by the occupants of the neighbouring dwelling. The Council is requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development.