



PLANNING STATEMENT

Project Number:

2024-1881

Project:

Land on the western side of Ridge Lane, Meopham

Proposal:

Conversion of existing building to two bed dwelling, use of outbuilding for ancillary storage, change of use of the land to residential, hard and soft landscaping to include access, and parking amenity area (Retrospective).

Date:

February 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of my clients' planning application. This is in relation to the conversion of existing building to two bed dwelling, use of outbuilding for ancillary storage, change of use of the land to residential, hard and soft landscaping to include access, and parking amenity area (Retrospective).
- 1.2 First this statement will set out the details of the site description to provide a context in which the proposal has been designed. Secondly, we review the sites planning history and set out the details of the proposal, subject of this application. Next, we provide a summary of the relevant national and local planning policies. Following this we set out a detailed assessment of the proposal and the relevant material considerations. Finally we provide a short conclusion.
- 1.3 In addition to this statement the following documents have been provided;
- Application forms
- Drawings
- Location and Block Plans – Drawing Ref 2024-1881v1-LocBlock
 - Existing Stable Floor Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref 2024-1881v1stable
 - Existing Outbuilding Floor Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref 2024-1881v1-ExistOutbuilding
 - Proposed Outbuilding Floor Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref 2024-1881v1PropOutbuilding
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations (Dwelling) – Drawing Ref 2024-1881v1-Dwelling

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The site is located on the western side of Ridge Lane and to the east of Culverston Green. The site comprises a former stable building, outbuilding and shed. A driveway is also positioned on the northern side of the plot, the site has also been landscaped. These works were carried out at the beginning of 2020. There are significant changes in topography within the site, such that the western part of the site is set much lower than the eastern. The image below shows the view of the site from within the street scene.



- 2.2 In terms of planning policy constraints, the site is located within the Green Belt although it is not designated for its landscape sensitivity. The site is located within Flood Zone 1.
- 2.3 In terms of neighbouring development, there are a number of other properties located along Ridge Lane. These are generally detached properties set within large plots.

3. **Planning History and Proposal**

Planning History

- 3.1 No planning history, although the proposal is retrospective and this application has been submitted following an investigation by the Enforcement Team.

Planning Proposal

- 3.2 Planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing building to two bed dwelling, use of outbuilding for ancillary storage, change of use of the land to residential, hard and soft landscaping to include access, and parking amenity area (Retrospective).
- The former stable would be converted to provide a two bedroom dwelling with a kitchen/diner, lounge and bathroom. The outbuilding would be used for storage associated with the residential use.
 - The stable building and outbuilding would not be enlarged as part of this proposal.
 - An area of grass would be provided as amenity space.
 - The image below illustrates the existing buildings on site.



4. **National Planning Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies which Local Plans need to accord with. Relevant paragraphs include;

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.2 Para 7 of the NPPF states that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.'
- 4.3 Para 8 states that 'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a. **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - b. **A social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c. **An environment objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

- 4.4 Para 11 of the NPPF states that 'plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

For decision-taking this means:

- c. Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.5 Para 131 relates to achieving good design and states that 'the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development acceptable to communities.'
- 4.6 Para 135 continues to state 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:



- a. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'

5. **Local Planning Policy Summary**

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy – 2014

5.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014 and sets out the Councils long term spatial vision for the Borough. The Core Strategy covers the period from April 2011 to March 2028.

- Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- Policy CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- Policy CS15 – Housing Density
- Policy CS16 – Affordable Housing
- Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

5.2 Policy CS01 relates to sustainable development and states that;

Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan for Gravesham will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in this Core Strategy. It will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic social and environmental conditions in the area.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies – 2014

5.3 The Local Plan was originally adopted in November 1994. In September 2007 a number of policies were saved through direction from the Secretary of State. In September 2014 the Council adopted their Core Strategy and as a result a number of saved policies were deleted. The remaining saved policy is relevant to this proposal are as follows;

- Policy P3 – Vehicle parking standards

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies

5.4 A second regulation 18 consultation was carried out between October and December 2020. No further consultations have been carried out since this time. It is understood that there have been delays to the progression of the Emerging Plan due to highways modelling. As a result, we consider that the policies contained within the emerging local plan hold very limited weight and have therefore not been referenced here. Planning Assessment

6. Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The site is located within the Green Belt and therefore consideration has been given to whether the proposal would be considered appropriate development in accordance with the NPPF. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that: *'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'* Paragraph 153 states that: *'When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'*
- 6.2 Exceptions to inappropriate development are set out in paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF and includes *'the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction'* and *'material changes in the use of land'*, providing that these developments would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. In this case, the proposal relates to the reuse of an existing building for use as a residential dwelling. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed use is not lawful through the passage of time, the building has been in place for over four years and as a structure is therefore lawful. This proposal seeks to change the use of the building to create a residential dwelling. No extensions are proposed to the building, such that the footprint and volume would remain the same. On this basis, we consider that the development would not have a greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.3 The proposal would also involve the change of use of the land to provide a residential curtilage to the new dwelling. As set out above, a change of use can be considered an exception to inappropriate development, provided that the development would not have a greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The land parcel is located adjacent to an existing residential curtilage which is enclosed due to the presence of a fenced boundary.

Visual Amenities

- 6.4 Core Strategy Policy 19 sets out a list of development and design principles that new proposals should take into account. In relation to visual amenities, this includes requiring new proposals to take account of *'the scale, height, building lines, layout, materials and other architectural features of adjoining buildings. Account will also be taken of the wider site context, including strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place.'*
- 6.5 The site itself is not located within a sensitive landscape, and whilst the site is located outside a settlement boundary it is positioned in close proximity to Culverstone Green and adjacent to other neighbouring properties. As set out in the site description, site levels change significantly across the site, such that from within the street scene there are limited views of the western part of the site. The proposal would involve the conversion of an existing stables which has been on site since the beginning of 2020 and is therefore immune from enforcement action. This proposal would not result in an extension to the existing stables, simply its conversion to a residential dwelling. The existing stables

Residential Amenities

- 6.5 Core Strategy Policy 19 sets out a list of development and design principles that new proposals should take into account. In relation to residential amenities this includes requiring the new development to *'safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties.'*
- 6.6 In terms of neighbouring residential amenities, the proposed buildings are sited to ensure that there would be no adverse impact upon the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light,

outlook or privacy. Furthermore, the proposal would include sufficient amenity space for the future occupiers.

Highways and Parking

- 6.7 The site has an access directly onto Ridge Lane which would not be altered as part of this proposal.

Ecology

- 6.8 As this proposal comprises retrospective development, there is no requirement to fulfil the 10% biodiversity net gain. Additional biodiversity enhancements can be introduced within the site such as log piles and bird boxes.

Trees

- 6.9 Whilst we acknowledge that the site is designated as 'priority habitat' as deciduous woodland, the trees within the site were removed at the beginning of 2020. No further trees are required to be removed.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Retrospective planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing building to two bed dwelling, use of outbuilding for ancillary storage, change of use of the land to residential, hard and soft landscaping to include access, and parking amenity area.
- The existing stables have been on site for over four years and therefore as structures they are immune from enforcement action. The proposal to convert the buildings to residential use would not result in a greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. As a result, we consider that the proposal would be acceptable in principle.
 - The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the character of the site or wider landscape.
 - The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon residential amenities in terms of loss of light, outlook or privacy.
- 7.2 The scheme accords with the NPPF (2024), and policies contained within the Core Strategy. We respectfully request that planning permission is granted.