



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20230702

Location: Meadow Cottage 46 Beechwood Drive Meopham Gravesend

Description: Raising and redesign of existing roof with gable walls front and rear, barn hip ends to the side and provision of two dormers to the front and rear elevation to provide two bed rooms and bathroom in roof.

Applicant: Mr Lee Cooper

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form
Site Location Plan
Existing Block Plan
Proposed Block Plan
Existing Plans
Proposed Plans
Email received on 16th August – Amended Materials

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
19910788	Erection of single storey side extension to form kitchen/diner; reconstructure of link between lobby and bedrooms; erection of detached double garage.	Permitted	28.01.1992
19860573	Retention of new roof	Permitted	26.09.1986
19830151	Stationing of weekend and holiday caravan	Permitted	25.04.1983
19560156	Erection of a chalet for weekend and holiday use	Permitted	12.09.1956

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS13 – Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C13 – Extensions to dwellings in the countryside
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020).
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006).
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Ward Councillors: No response received.

Meopham Parish Council: *'We raise no objection to the application, subject to compliance with local planning policy.'*

Neighbouring properties

A site notice was placed in the area on 20th July 2023.

5 surrounding properties were consulted, and no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Site Description

This application relates to a detached dwellinghouse named Meadow Cottage (Formerly Qui-Si-Sana), in the rural boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt and is in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area. Based on the site visit, it was evident that two bedrooms are available on the first floor, with limited head height and at least one bedroom is available on the ground floor.

It is noted that there is a chalet/caravan to the north of the dwellinghouse, which the applicant has described as in their ownership but which as they understand it does not form part of the residential curtilage. The most recent consent related to this chalet falls under ref 19830151.

Sample of photographs taken during a recent site visit:



Principle Issues

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt;
- Impact on openness and the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- Amenity of Future Occupiers
- Residential amenity;
- Highways.

Principle of Development in the Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (para. 137 of the NPPF 2021). Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. '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.

The relevant exceptions to this policy are as follows:

Paragraph 149(c) identifies 'the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building', as an exception to this policy. Paragraph 149(g) identifies another exception as;

'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the*

area of the local planning authority'

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014

Core Policy CS02 sets out where development should be distributed in the borough. Preference is given to those urbanised area as sustainable locations. Outside urbanised areas, those rural settlements which are inset from the Green Belt would also be considered acceptable in principle. This site is in a rural area, in the Greenbelt **NOT** forming part of settlement inset from the Greenbelt. In this context the policy states that developments; *'will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in this plan.'*

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994

Saved Policy C13 sets out the requirements for extensions to dwellings. Of particular consideration and to assist in assessing whether the addition would be disproportionate, this policy limits the increased floorspace to one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling. However, this policy does pre-date the NPPF, and greater weight should be given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 149 the NPPF 2021.

"Original dwelling" for the purpose of Saved Policy C13 means the building in permanent residential use at 1st July 1948.

Consent for alteration/extensions to the subject dwellinghouse were given in 1986 and 1992. By raising the ridge height, headroom would be created to allow increased useable floor space. The original floorspace, approximated by the details given in the application ref 19860573 was 47.63m². The existing floor space as approximated using the most recent application for alterations and extensions as approved has a floor space of 90.36m². The dwellinghouse has therefore already increased its floorspace by 89.7%. Further expansion of floorspace, unless sections of the building were removed, would not therefore comply with the one third limitation given the previous development of the dwellinghouse. However, Policy C13 does apply an exception to this policy, where the limit would be applied *'unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.'* It is noted that the alterations would increase the first floor space by 4m², a minor increase.

When viewed externally, the proposed ridge height would be evident. This is particularly the case where the new gable would be introduced to the front elevation. Given the existing expanse of the dwellinghouse, a new feature to the roof such as this could be a dominant and oppressive feature. However, the existing appearance of the dwellinghouse is one of a plain, underwhelming frontage. The addition of a small gable such as this adds visual interest to the property and formalises the principle elevation visually. However, there is potential that the increased ridge height could result in a top-heavy appearance and disbalance the dwellinghouse. It is evidenced in other properties in the area that where ridges have been raised, using hipped roofs to the ends reduces the visual bulk somewhat. Jerkinhead style roofs are also common and so it is felt that on balance the proposed alterations would be appropriate in this setting, given the design features, characteristic for the area and the minor scale increase.

The proposal as it stands would comply with paragraphs 149(c) and 149(g) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and Saved Policy C13 of Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994)

Impact on openness and the character and appearance of the surrounding area in the Green Belt

Paragraph 138 of the NPPF (2021) identifies the 5 purposes of the Green Belt as follows:

- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF (2021) identifies the essential characteristics of Green Belts as their 'openness' and 'permanence.'

Paragraph 148 of the NPP (2021) states that *'When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.'*

Assessing the impact on the openness of the Green Belt as an essential character of the Green Belt is vital. As paragraph 148 above states, substantial weight should be given to ANY harm to the Green Belt. This development has the potential to harm the openness and so it is necessary to assess that harm. In this instance it was assessed as harmful to the Openness of the Green Belt as laid out in the delegated report.

In the below appeal (Appendix A), the Inspector found that the development accorded with paragraph 149(c) of the NPPF (2021), and for that reason there was no requirement to assess the openness. They stated that: *'As I find the development is not inappropriate under paragraph 149(c) of the Framework, it is not necessary to consider the development under other sections of that paragraph'*

- APP/K2230/D/21/3282859 – Bucklebury, Pear Tree Lane, Shorne

In the case of this application, the scheme has been assessed as resulting in proportional additions, in compliance with paragraph 149(c). Therefore, in line with the appropriate assessment as the development accords with paragraph 14(c) of the Framework, further consideration of impact to openness is not required.

Landscape Character Area

Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of surrounding area. This application is located in a rural area within the protected Metropolitan Green Belt. Whilst there are some areas of built form, such as this existing dwellinghouse, the landscape of the area is overwhelmingly rural and open, without built form. The dwellinghouses which form part of this cluster, are largely single storey and have limited footprints. The majority of these dwellinghouses have been converted over time from holiday chalets to become permanent residences, hence their small scale, more appropriate for the rural countryside. This site in particular forms part of the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

The Landscape Character Assessment described the modern development of the area as follows:

'In the mid 20th Century the land to the north of Harvel was divided into a multitude of small plots that has resulted in sporadic and piecemeal development. These plots are enclosed by a variety of boundaries including fencing, hedgerows and other materials, or defined by clearings in the woodland to create a haphazard mosaic of small-scale housing plots within the woodland. The style of properties is varied in terms of size, scale and style. Many plots accommodate derelict caravans adjacent to small brick bungalows. Security gates and fencing are dominant throughout the area. Many properties appear to have small adjoining paddocks accommodating a small amount of livestock and associated equipment.'

It continues to say:

'The uncharacteristic and sporadic settlement of small plots within coppice woodland is a dominant element within the area creating an incoherent landscape. There are many visual detractors, including derelict buildings and caravans, overgrown gardens, poor fencing, disjointed fencing materials and fly tipping. The visual unity is significantly interrupted, although the wooded nature of the area conceals much of the visual clutter from wider views.'

Given the harm caused to the landscape character from the areas of small plots such as the one referred to in this application, the condition of the landscape area is considered moderate and requiring a Conserve and Create approach, as noted in the Landscape Character Appraisal; 'The strong landscape elements

within the Harvel Wooded Downs should be conserved, whilst design standards should be defined to halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development.' Of particular relevance, the Landscape Character Assessment provides the following guidance to 'halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development.':

- Conserve and maintain traditional and distinct buildings, materials and elements.
- Resist proposals that introduce inappropriate designs and materials.
- Improve and soften new development using characteristic landscape elements such as woodland blocks and hedgerows.
- Conserve enclosure of settlements within wooded areas.

In this instance, as has already been ascertained, the proposed development would result in a minor increase in built form to this plot. It is also noted that there are other dwellinghouses in the area with a second storey.

It is noted that following discussion with the planning agent, they have amended the proposed external materials from rendered walls, slate roof tiles to match existing and oak coloured upvc openings to match existing to timber oak colour weatherboarding to first floor, oak framed windows and concrete roof tiles as existing.

The roof design which includes hipped ends to reduce visual bulk, and the use of appropriate materials used reflective of the rural nature of the area would be acceptable in terms of impact on openness and the Landscape Character of the area.

The impact of this would be a negligible impact on these wooded settlements. Overall and on this basis, the proposal is compliant with the requirements of Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014, Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan 1994 and Section 13 of the NPPF 2021.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The NPPF (2021) states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users. The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land. The impact on neighbours will be assessed in the next section of the report.

The proposed additional space would provide a bathroom and landing. The internal space requirements would be met. The external space standards would continue to be compliant.

Neighbouring Amenity

As outlined above, it is important that any development safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties and land. Based on the nature, scale and design of the proposal and that the dwellinghouse is located a reasonable distance from neighbours, the raised ridge height would be unlikely to harm the residential amenity of nearby neighbours.

The proposal is therefore considered to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties in compliance with policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, subject to full assessment at application stage and submission

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed development complies with all relevant national and local planning policies. The recommendation is to approve.

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Lisa Williams	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	21 st August 2023	Dated:	24 th August 2023