

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20230250

Location: 42 Beechwood Drive Meopham Gravesend Kent

Description: Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a two storey side extension. Demolition of existing porch and erection of two storey front extension. Installation of new roof with dormers and rooflights to create a first floor with habitable rooms. Demolition of existing garage and erection of new double garage with re-siting of vehicular access.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs S Ball

Site Visit Date: Desktop Assessment/Photographs provided by applicant

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form

BA/23/109.01 – Existing Floor Plans and Elevations

BA/23/109.02 – Proposed Floor Plans

BA/23/109.03 – Proposed Elevations

BA/23/109.04 – Location Plan, Existing and Proposed Block Plans

BA/23/109.05 – Existing and Proposed Garage

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20010724	Erection of single storey side extension on southern elevation to form conservatory and erection of a front porch.	PER	26.03.2002
19910405	Erection of two no. single storey extensions on the north and south elevations to form enlarged bedroom, enlarged lounge, additional bedroom and utility room and erection of a front porch.	PER	06.09.1991

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 including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Ward Councillors: No comment received.

Meopham Parish Council: Meopham Parish Council objects to this planning application as if permitted the extension would be inappropriate development in and undermine the openness of the Green Belt.

KCC Public Rights of Way: Public Rights of Way NS295 lies to the east of the site. The route may be affected by the application, and I therefore enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network map showing the definitive line of this path for your information.

It is important to advise the applicants that a public right of way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed or the surface disturbed and there must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future. This includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases. Please note that no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority.

GBC Highways Officer:

The proposed garage although not conforming to the preferred size given in SPG4 is adequate for two cars, although the pedestrian door should open outwards. The proposed car parking meets with the current suggested parking provision.

With regards to the access, other than accommodating the new garage and its positioning I can see little benefit, unless the applicant is restricted from installing any boundary treatment, soft or hard landscaping over 1 metre in height within 2.4 metres of the carriageway which would protect sight lines. Whilst gates are disliked unless they are set back from the carriageway, so the road is not obstructed whilst they are opened or closed, I note this would replace an existing arrangement and the road would be lightly trafficked, given it is a cul-de-sac.

The applicant should provide two secure cycle parking spaces for the 2 extra bedrooms to comply with SPG4 and given the restricted size of the garage, they cannot be accommodated within the garage.

I have no objections, subject to the cycle parking being provided and the sight lines protected.'

Neighbouring properties

7 surrounding properties were consulted and a site notice displayed. 0 responses were received from members of the public and the overall consultation period expired on 21 April 2023

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This proposal would result in a number of changes to this residential plot which currently contains a detached bungalow and single bay garage. These would include:

- Demolition of the existing conservatory on the Southern elevation.
- Erection of a two-storey side extension on the Southern Elevation
- Demolition of existing Porch on the Eastern elevation.
- Erection of a two storey front extension to the Eastern Elevation
- Alterations to roof to create first floor.
- Addition of 2no. roof dormers to the rear roof slope (Western Elevation).
- Addition of 1no. roof dormer to the front roof slope (Eastern Elevation).
- Addition of 4no. roof lights in total to South, North and Western roof slopes.
- Demolition of existing single bay garage.
- Erection of two bay garage.
- Re-siting of existing access.

The proposed external materials would be: off-white pre-coloured render, slate grey roof tiles and black upvc framed openings to both the main dwellinghouse and the proposed garage. This is confirmed in both the application form and drawing no's; BA/23/109/03 and BA/23/109.05.

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 areas 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 extensions were given in 1991 and 2002. Based on the plans included in application ref 19910405, the original floorspace can be approximated at 50.8m². The current floorspace is 69.5m² and so the building has already increased by 18.7m², from its original built floorspace.

The following details the calculations for the increased floorspace:

Development Stage	Ground Floor	First Floor	Total
Original	50.8 m ²	N/A	50.8 m ²
Current	69.5 m ²	N/A	69.5 m ²
Proposed	100.2 m ²	85.1 m ²	185.3 m ²
			Total Increase: 134.5 m ² /(265%)

This would be 231% greater than the 1/3 increase prescribed by saved Policy CS13 and significantly above the allowance. The proposed development would result in significant increase to the scale of the dwellinghouse from its original conversion, in the Green Belt.

The proposed erection of a garage or another domestic outbuilding does not fall within any of the categories listed in paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021. However, it is acknowledged that there is case law (most notably Sevenoaks District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and Dawe 1997 and

most recently *Warwick DC v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities* 2022) which establishes that a domestic outbuilding may be regarded as an extension to a dwelling provided that it forms a 'normal domestic adjunct'. In considering whether a proposal is considered to be a normal domestic adjunct, consideration is given to location and use in relation to the main dwelling.

As the use of the building would be for parking alone, this use would be ancillary to the main dwelling and if as it does also have a relatively close physical relationship between the proposed garage and the main dwelling (which is likely given the layout and positioning of the dwellinghouse in the plot) the proposed building may be considered to be a normal domestic adjunct and as such, would constitute an extension to the dwelling at the application site. The floorspace of such a building would therefore be included within the one third floorspace increase limitation applied by Saved Policy C13 above.

It is also noted that the existing garage would be substantially larger than the existing. The existing garage has a floor space of 16.7m² and the proposed has a floor space 31.7m². The height would also increase from 2.8m to 5.2m. When considered cumulatively with the already extensive increase in built form proposed to the dwellinghouse, the garage would also create a substantial increase in built form to the site which would harm the openness of the Green Belt and further exceeding the increase allowed by Saved Policy C13.

It would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building which **WOULD CONTRAVENE** paragraph 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

There is no specific definition of "openness" in the NPPF, and the concept of what is considered as openness has only really emerged from case law. Effectively, 'openness' is epitomised by the absence of built development (i.e. land that is not built on) and it follows therefore that any new built development is likely to have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt, but whether that impact is greater or lesser on sites where there is already built development will be dependent on an assessment on a case by case basis. It is a different concept to "visual impact". Although openness may be considered in a visual sense, the visual impact of a development in the Green Belt may be harmful through the siting, design and materials used. The presence of landscaping or screening may serve to mitigate the visual impact of a development including built development but there might still be an impact on openness.

The development, by its nature, would involve a form of inappropriate development at the application site that would erode the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would result in building which is significantly larger and bulkier than the original dwelling, consolidating and extending the level of built development at the application site to an unacceptable level. The prominent position of the enlarged garage in particular would mean that the proposal would be visually intrusive from public vantage points (including a public Right of Way). As such, the proposed development would significantly and harmfully impact on the openness of the application site and the Green Belt within which it sits.

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 significant increase in built form to this plot. It is noted that there are other dwellinghouses in the area with a second storey. Of particularly note, is the adjoining neighbour 41 Beechwood Drive. However, the design of those elements is more simplified in appearance and cohesive with the rural area than the one proposed.

The issues with the design in this instance include (but are not limited to), the use of residential elements usually found in the urban area such as a number of dormers, the elongated and disbalanced layout of the front projection, the tall height of the eaves, where a chalet style appearance is expected, use of modern materials externally, and use of gates and fencing to the front where soft landscaping would be preferred. These details are uncharacteristic for the rural area and the landscape setting.

The proposed garage would also create substantial built form and bulk to the front of the boundary. It is noted again that there are similar circumstances in the wider vicinity. However, these instances show the harm caused by such high built form at the boundary and the oppressive scenario it creates along the road. Given that the intent is to conserve the landscape character area, allowing further harmful development would be in direct opposition of that intent.

The impact of this would be an intensification of the existing harm caused by these wooded settlements. Overall and on this basis, the proposal would **NOT** comply 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.

On the ground floor the following rooms do not meet the minimum standards applied by the Residential Layout Guidelines: Living Room, Ensuite and Shower Room.

However, it is noted that the kitchen/dining room is excessive in space and so could also be used for living space. There is also an appropriately sized bathroom on the first floor.

The remaining rooms meet the required minimum space standards, and the property would not have a significantly altered rear garden depth and area. On balance, the proposal would be acceptable under per SPG2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020.

Neighbouring Amenity

As outlined above, it is important that any development safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties and land. Following a period of consultation with neighbouring properties, no objection to the proposal was received.

41 Beechwood Drive

This neighbour is located to the north. It is set forward significantly from that of the location of the existing dwellinghouse and so the built form from the dwellinghouse has a limited impact on the amenity of this neighbour, in terms of the bulk, location, potential overlook and potential overshadow.

43 Beechwood Drive

This neighbour is located to the south and is set slightly further back and at an angle but there is a close relationship between the buildings. There is close boarded fencing between the buildings which reduces visibility between the buildings. This neighbour has a similar height to the subject dwellinghouse as it exists. The proposed development would result in two storey built form viewed against this neighbours dwellinghouse. However, there would be a 5.1 metres distance between the dwellinghouses and as the below 45 degree test shows, there would be no significant overshadowing of openings at such a distance.



There would also be no upper floor side openings other than those which are obliquely angled in the roof slope and so no issues arise with regard to potential direct overlook.

The proposal is therefore considered to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties in compliance with policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Highways

The GBC Highways officer has raised no objections to the scheme, as it would relocate an existing access subject to ensuring sight lines are protected and cycle provision is provided. If approved, adequate sight lines would be reserved by condition. It is evident based on the size of the property that there would be

adequate space for cycle provision if required. It is noted that these concerns could be overcome with detail provided in an alternative scheme, should an amended application be submitted in future.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal, by virtue of its proposed scale, massing and form, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling and harm the openness of the Green Belt. In the absence of any very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, the proposal would be contrary to Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review, Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

The proposed development by means of its significant increase in built form in the rural area, its design, layout, form location and appearance, would fail to conserve and would result in significant harm to the important features of the Landscape Character Area. It would therefore fail to comply 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.

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

Case Officer:	Ms Lisa Williams	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	4th May 2023	Dated:	05 May 2023