

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Conversion of Integral Garage to Sitting Room

Three Oaks, Harvel Road, Meopham, Gravesham, Kent

Prepared in support of a Householder Planning Application

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Householder Planning Application for the conversion of the existing integral garage at Three Oaks, Harvel Road into a sitting room.

The proposal comprises the conversion of existing internal floorspace within the dwelling together with the replacement of the existing garage door with a matching window and associated improvements to the front garden through additional soft landscaping.

The proposal does not involve any increase in the footprint, height, scale or massing of the dwelling and remains wholly within the existing building envelope.

The application has been prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and the statutory duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Particular regard has also been given to Planning Condition 10 attached to the original planning permission, which required the garage and parking spaces to be retained for vehicle parking.

2. Site Description

The application site comprises a detached single-family dwelling and includes an unused, integral single garage beneath the main roof together with an existing generous private driveway and hardstanding providing off-street parking.

The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape.

The surrounding area is characterised by detached dwellings set within landscaped plots with generous front gardens and private parking.

The proposal does not alter the established layout, the site's relationship with neighbouring properties or the existing highway access.

3. Description of the Proposal

Planning permission is sought for:

- conversion of the existing, unused, integral garage into a sitting room;
- replacement of the existing garage door with a window matching the existing dwelling;
- internal alterations associated with the conversion;
- additional soft landscaping to the front garden.

No extension is proposed.

The proposal does not involve:

- any increase in the footprint of the dwelling;
- changes to roof form;
- changes to ridge or eaves height;
- additional bedrooms;
- creation of an annexe or separate dwelling;
- alterations to the existing vehicular access.

The proposal therefore represents the efficient re-use of existing residential floorspace.

4. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, with particular regard to:

Section 14 – Achieving Well-designed Places

DP3 Paragraph 1. Seeks development proposals that respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings.

DP3 Paragraph 2 g. Seeks to create visually attractive, distinctive and characterful development to establish or maintain a strong sense of place and pride, including through the use of a coherent palette of materials, design features and planting.

The proposal responds positively to these objectives through high-quality external detailing and modest enhancements to the appearance of the property.

Section 19 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

N4 Paragraph 1. Seeks development proposals within Protected Landscapes such as the Kent Downs National Landscape to be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the Protected Landscape.

The proposal introduces no additional built development and remains entirely within the existing building envelope.

Consequently, there is no adverse impact upon the landscape character or scenic beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Gravesham Local Plan

The proposal accords with the objectives of the Gravesham Local Plan, including:

Policy CS11 – Transport

Adequate off-street parking is retained within the site and no adverse highway impacts arise.

Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

The proposal respects the character of the existing dwelling, which will be visually attractive through sympathetic design, matching materials and improvements to the landscaped frontage while safeguarding neighbouring residential amenity.

5. Design, Character and Appearance

The proposal has been carefully designed to preserve and improve the appearance of the existing dwelling.

The existing garage door will be replaced with a traditionally proportioned window that reflects the scale, detailing and materials of the existing house. Matching brickwork, lintels and window detailing will ensure that the alteration integrates seamlessly with the original architecture.

Importantly, the proposal also introduces additional soft landscaping to the front garden, as shown on the submitted drawings.

The proposed planting will reduce the visual dominance of hardstanding that was providing access into the garage, replacing it with soft landscaping to reinforce the established landscaped character of the site.

Accordingly, the proposal provides a modest enhancement to the appearance of the dwelling through improved architectural treatment of the front elevation and additional planting, contributing positively to the character of the street scene.

The proposal therefore accords with the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan.

6. Impact upon the Kent Downs National Landscape

The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires decision-makers to seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of designated landscapes.

The proposal has been specifically designed to ensure that no harm arises to the special qualities of the National Landscape.

The development remains entirely within the existing building envelope and therefore results in:

- no increase in footprint;
- no increase in building height or volume;
- no encroachment into undeveloped land;
- no loss of trees or established landscape features;
- no alteration to the settlement pattern.

In addition, the proposed soft landscaping provides a modest enhancement to the appearance of the site and reinforces the verdant character of the residential street scene.

Whilst modest in scale, these landscape improvements represent a positive visual contribution to the immediate setting of the dwelling.

The proposal therefore preserves the character and appearance of the Kent Downs National Landscape whilst delivering a modest enhancement to the appearance of the site.

7. Residential Amenity

The proposal gives rise to no adverse impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

No extensions are proposed and no additional overlooking, overshadowing or loss of daylight will occur.

The proposal simply changes the internal use of an existing part of the dwelling and therefore has no material effect upon neighbouring occupiers.

8. Highway Safety and Response to Planning Condition 10

Planning Condition 10 of the original planning permission requires the approved garage and parking spaces to remain available for the parking or garaging of motor vehicles.

The reason accompanying the condition states:

“That the development without provision for the parking or garaging of private motor cars is likely to lead to car parking inconvenient to other road users and detrimental to amenity.”

The reason for the condition is therefore clear. Its purpose is to ensure adequate off-street parking in the interests of highway safety and residential amenity.

The current proposal has been prepared having full regard to this objective.

Whilst the integral garage would be converted into a sitting room, the submitted site plan demonstrates that the property retains generous off-street parking within its curtilage through the existing driveway and hardstanding, sufficient for vehicle turning within the curtilage. Existing vehicular access arrangements remain unchanged.

It is also noteworthy to identify that the existing garage is not in use, and the proposed change will therefore have no impact on road users, highway safety or amenity.

Importantly, the proposal does not increase the parking demand associated with the dwelling. It does not increase the number of bedrooms, create a separate residential unit or intensify the use of the property in any way.

Accordingly, the planning purpose underlying Condition 10 continues to be fully achieved.

The proposal will not result in overspill parking onto the public highway and will not lead to parking inconvenience for other road users or harm to residential amenity.

Furthermore, the proposal delivers wider planning benefits through improved design quality and the introduction of additional soft landscaping to the frontage.

Taken as a whole, the proposal satisfies the purpose of Condition 10 whilst providing improved family accommodation and enhancing the appearance of the property.

9. Sustainability

The proposal represents sustainable development by making efficient use of existing residential floorspace without increasing the size of the dwelling.

By adapting existing accommodation rather than constructing an extension, the proposal minimises the consumption of new materials, avoids additional land take and makes effective use of the existing building fabric.

10. Planning Balance

The proposal when considered in the round, delivers improved family accommodation entirely within the existing building envelope and avoids the need for any extension or additional built development.

The proposal:

- preserves the scale and form of the dwelling;
- safeguards the character of the Kent Downs National Landscape;
- introduces no adverse impacts upon neighbouring amenity;
- retains adequate off-street parking;
- satisfies the underlying purpose of Planning Condition 10;
- improves the appearance of the front elevation through sympathetic architectural design;
- introduces additional soft landscaping that enhances the visual quality of the frontage and contributes positively to the street scene;
- represents an efficient and sustainable use of existing residential floorspace.

Whilst the proposal departs from the original intention that the integral garage remain available for vehicle parking, the planning objective underlying that condition—the continued provision of adequate off-street parking—is fully maintained.

There are therefore no material planning considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld.

11. Conclusion

The proposed conversion of the integral garage into a sitting room represents a modest, sustainable and well-designed alteration to an existing dwelling.

The proposal is wholly contained within the existing building envelope and has no material impact upon the character of the dwelling, neighbouring residential amenity or the special qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

The property continues to provide adequate off-street parking and therefore satisfies the planning purpose of Condition 10 by avoiding parking inconvenience to other road users and protecting residential amenity.

In addition, the proposal introduces improvements to the front elevation through sympathetic architectural detailing and new soft landscaping, delivering a modest enhancement to the appearance of the site.

Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Gravesham Local Plan and all other material planning considerations, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal constitutes sustainable development and that planning permission should be granted.