

Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260461

Location: Little Cottage Ridge Lane Meopham Gravesend

Description: Erection of a self-build detached dwelling and retention and change of use of existing building for ancillary use to main dwelling.

Applicant: Mr Turner

Site Visit Date: 17 June 2026

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1Location (Location Plan)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1ExisBlock (Existing Block Plan)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1ExistDwelling (Existing Dwelling)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1PropBlock (Proposed Block Plan)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1PropDwellingFloor (Proposed Dwelling Floor Plans)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1PropDwellingElev (Proposed Dwelling Elevations)

Drawing no. 2026-2529v1PropOutbuilding (Proposed Outbuilding)

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20230320	Demolition of existing dwelling and associated outbuildings, removal of lawful touring caravans, and the erection of a replacement dwelling.	Permitted	20.05.2024
20181207	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for the continued use of the former stables building as a residential dwelling and associated curtilage (known as Little Cottage).	Granted	29.11.2019
20180655	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for the continued use of the former stables building as a residential dwelling and associated curtilage (known as Little Cottage).	Withdrawn	19.11.2018
20100930	Removal of two sheds on plots 1 and 2 and erection of two new garden stores, one of each plot.	Permitted	11.11.2010
20100456	Erection of two detached three/four bedroom replacement dwellings with rooms in the roofspace, each with a detached garage at the front.	Permitted	03.09.2010
20060528	Erection of a detached stable block to provide two stables and tack room.	Refused	13.09.2006
20060512	Application for Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the existing use for the stationing of a mobile home.	Granted	16.08.2006

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) 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 (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 4 – Decision-making
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 (amended June 2020)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) (2015)
- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Section 16(2) and Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) require special regard to be paid to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses when considering whether to grant listed building consent or planning permission respectively.

Emerging Local Plan as a Material Consideration

Paragraph 48 of the Framework makes it clear that planning applications can only be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An emerging

Local Plan does not form part of the Development. The Framework, at Paragraph 49 allows local planning authorities to give weight to relevant policies in emerging Local Plans, according to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the Framework, the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to those policies.

West Oxfordshire District Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government & Rosconn Strategic Land Ltd [2018] EWHC 3065 (Admin) is a High Court judgement that deals with the weight to be given to a Regulation 19 Local Plan. In this judgement the Court found that the weight to be given to an emerging Local Plan, was a matter of planning judgement, which had to be reached having fully considered the relevant part (Paragraph 49) of the Framework.

The Council's emerging Local Plan, is in the process of being consulted upon (it has reached Regulation 19 stage), the Council is not yet aware of whether third parties will support or object to specific policies within the Plan, or whether they will consider the policies with the emerging Local Plan to be broadly sound and consistent with the NPPF (2024). Taking this into consideration, one can only conclude that at this stage of the process, **limited (i.e. minimal) weight should be afforded to the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan**. This position would only change once the emerging Local Plan has progressed towards submission and examination, with the Council being fully aware of policies that are subject to unresolved objections and with knowledge of policies that have had their soundness and conformity against the Framework challenged.

This approach accords with the approach taken in a separate High Court case, Gladman Developments Ltd v SSHCLG & Corby Borough Council; & Uttlesford DC [2020] EWHC 518 (Admin) and Court of Appeal [2021] EWCA Civ 104, which was also the subject of a Court of Appeal Ruling [2021] EWCA Civ 104.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

KCC Biodiversity

SUMMARY

The proposed development is within the recommended 15m buffer ancient woodland should have from development. Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF 2024 states: "development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists".

A tree officer would be able to provide advice regarding the potential impact of proposals upon the root protection areas of trees within the nearby ancient woodland.

Ecological Impact Assessment

The proposed development appears to be on land which has had hardstanding or bare ground since at least 2013. We do not consider surveys for protected species necessary for this application due to the small scale and likely low risk of the site.

Ancient Woodland

We note that the site lies within the recommended 15m buffer ancient woodland should have from development. Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF 2024 states: "development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists".

We cannot advise as to whether these proposals are ‘wholly exceptional’, but we can advise on whether any loss or deterioration will result from the development and whether any proposed compensation is suitable. We point out that proposed compensation measures¹ should not be considered as part of the assessment of the merits of the development proposal². Government standing advice is clear: “Compensation measures are always a last resort. These measures can only partially compensate for loss or damage”.

When making its decision, the local planning authority should take into consideration the standing advice ‘Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions’ (Natural England and the Forestry Commission, 14 January 2022) which recommends a minimum 15m buffer between any development and ancient woodlands.

Ancient woodlands and ancient/veteran trees need to be protected with adherence to such measures as:

- putting up screening barriers to protect ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees from dust and pollution;
- measures to reduce noise or light;
- designing open space to protect ancient or veteran trees;
- rerouting footpaths and managing vegetation to deflect trampling pressure away from sensitive locations; and
- creating buffer zones.

The Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice states that the minimum 15m buffer zone between development and the boundary of any ancient woodland should include gardens (so the woodland should be at least 15m away from gardens). The guidance also requires consideration of the potential for additional impacts from proposals even when there is existing development within this minimum buffer. A larger buffer zone may be needed to account for any direct or indirect adverse effects associated with proposals, as well as to preserve the root protection area of trees within the woodland.

Larger buffer zones are more likely to be needed if the surrounding area is less densely wooded, close to residential areas or steeply sloped.

We would recommend that a tree officer is consulted regarding the potential impact of proposals on nearby trees and the ancient woodland should the development be permitted.

Despite the existing nature of the site, we would also recommend that a construction ecological management plan be secured by condition should planning permission be granted for this application to mitigate for potential negative impacts on the woodland during site clearance and construction.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Self-build

The applicant considers the proposals to be exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain under the self-build exemption. For this exemption to apply, the proposals must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings;
- on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares (The site is 0.15ha in size according to the information in the application form); and
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

It is not within our remit to verify that the proposed dwelling(s) meet the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in the 2015 Act. The LPA should therefore ensure that the proposals meet the definition and that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain does not apply.

Government guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding indicates that “[in] considering whether a home is self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout ... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the

plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”.

A recent appeal decision⁴ indicates that a “suitably robust mechanism such as a planning obligation/legal agreement or other means” is necessary to properly secure a development as self-build and to prevent it reverting to an open market dwelling where a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain would otherwise apply.

Retrospective

We note that the application is part-retrospective. Retrospective applications are currently out of scope for mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain.

KCC Public Rights of Way

Access to the proposed site is via Byway Open to All Traffic NS285, also known as Ridge Lane, which will remain unaffected by the proposals. I enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network maps showing the line of the path for your information.

The granting of planning permission confers no other permission or consent on the applicant. It is therefore important to advise the applicant that no works can be undertaken on a Public Right of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority. In cases of doubt the applicant should be advised to contact this office before commencing any works that may affect the Public Right of Way. Should any temporary closures be required to ensure public safety then this office will deal on the basis that:

- The applicant pays for the administration costs.
- The duration of the closure is kept to a minimum.
- Alternative routes will be provided for the duration of the closure.
- A minimum of six weeks’ notice is required to process any applications for temporary closures.

This means that the Public Right of Way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed (this includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases) or the surface disturbed. There must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future and no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without consent.

GBC Environmental Protection

There is no objection to this application. The following to be considered:

Code of Practice on Construction and Demolition

Please apply as appropriate.

Drainage/sewerage informative

The foul sewage shall be removed by means of the mains drainage system and not by the use of non-mains sewerage systems, unless connection to the drainage system is not reasonably practicable. If foul sewage is to be removed using non-mains sewerage systems, a sewage treatment plant or septic tank system will be considered in preference to a cesspool. Such a system may require the prior consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991. Applicants are therefore advised to discuss their requirements with the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity. It should be ensured that the septic tank or cesspool is of adequate capacity to serve the proposed development and suitable access and hardstanding area shall be maintained to it on site.

Lighting

Artificial lighting can cause a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is important that the applicants are not permitted to install external lighting that illuminate anything other than the ground within the curtilage of the new properties in order to assist in preventing a nuisance from occurring (which would be most likely if the bedrooms on neighbouring properties are illuminated).



Meopham Parish Council

We would recommend refusal on the grounds of development of this greenbelt site given the proposed retention of the existing dwelling as ancillary.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 7 properties, on site and in the press. The overall consultation period expired on 12 June 2026.

No letters of representation have been received.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted but no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks permission for the erection of a self-build detached dwelling and the retention and change of use of the existing building for ancillary use to the main dwelling. The dwelling is already under construction.

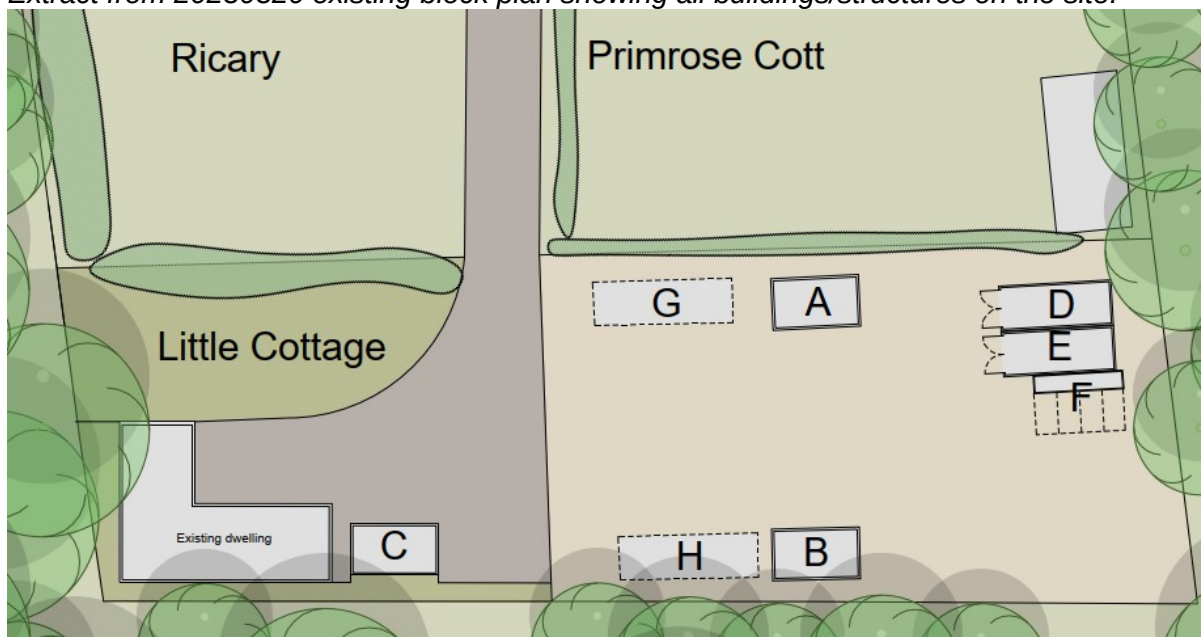
The dwelling will contain an open plan kitchen/dining room /lounge, three bedrooms (one with an ensuite) and a bathroom. The design of the house is fairly traditional and can be likened to a log cabin. Its finish will be in timber cladding, with slate effect roof tiles and white upvc windows.

The house is positioned towards the eastern end of the plot, with the front facing west. There would be a large area of hardstanding to the front of the house and the existing building on the site lies in the south-western corner.

Background

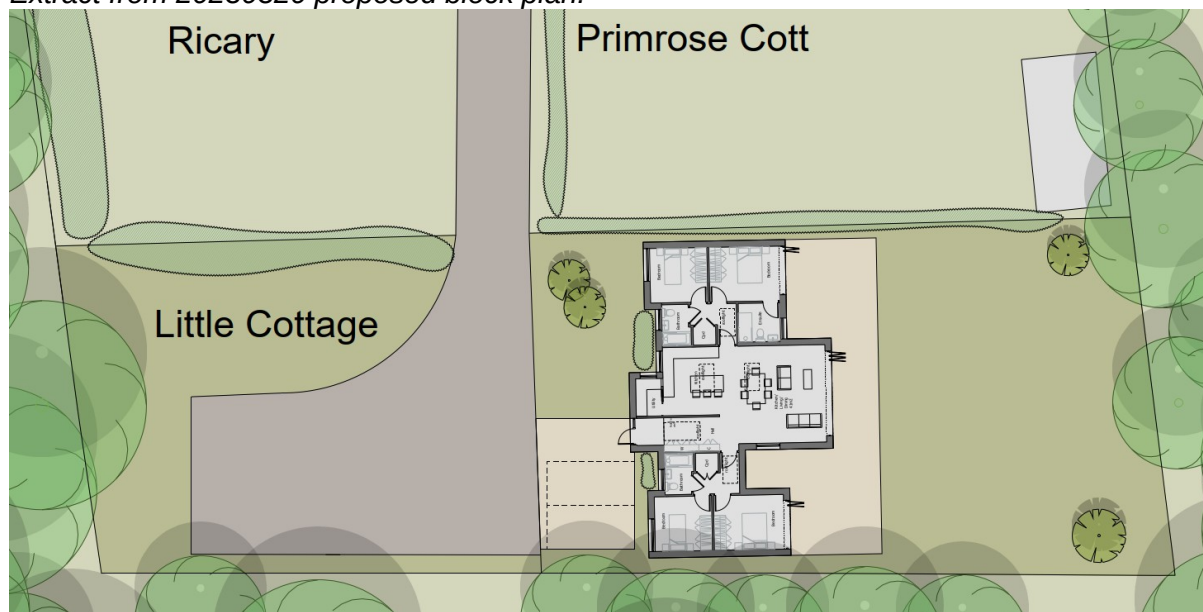
Under planning application 20230320, permission was granted for a replacement dwelling. The differences between the existing permission and the current proposal are as follows:

Extract from 20230320 existing block plan showing all buildings/structures on the site:





Extract from 20230320 proposed block plan:



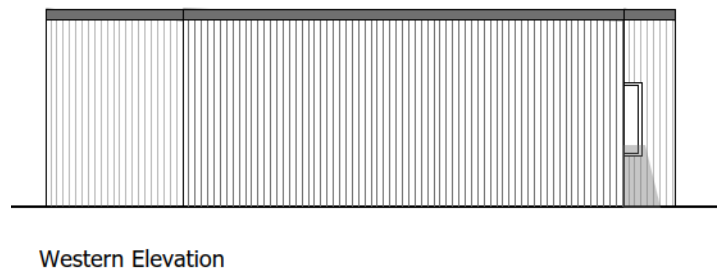
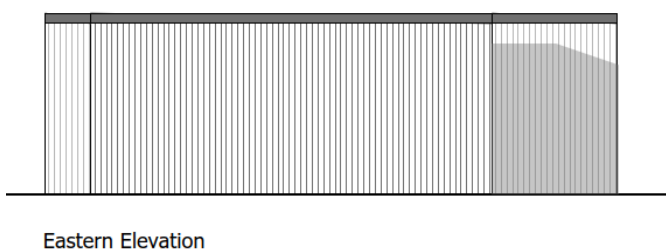
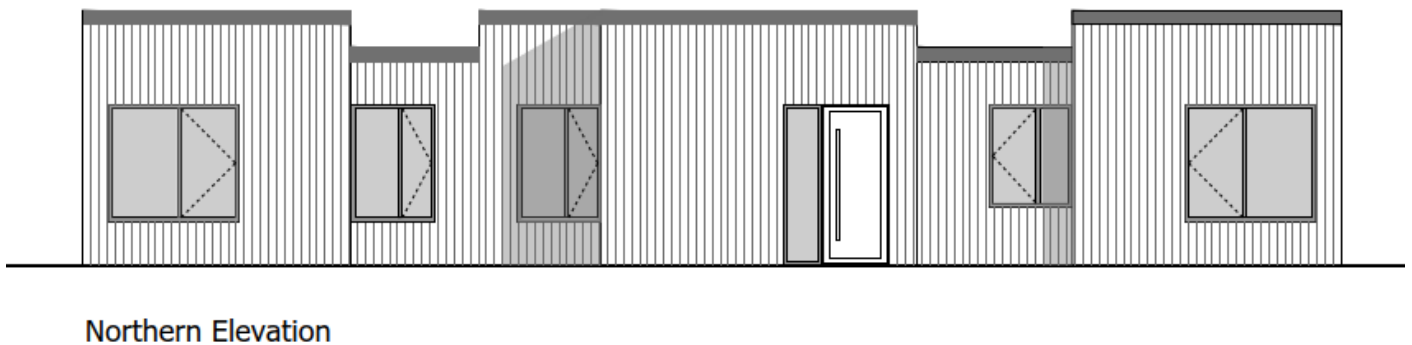
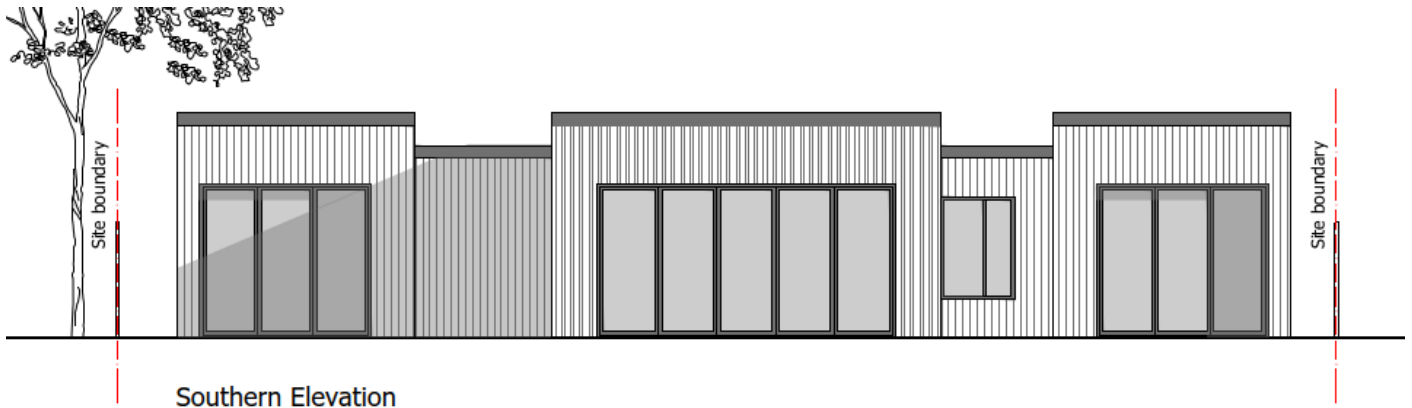
The footprint of the building was approximately 146m². There was approximately 336m² of hardstanding here. The rear garden depth was approximately 19m deep. There was a slight separation from the site boundaries. All the existing buildings on the site were proposed to be removed as part of the previous application, including the detached, single storey, 2 bedroom dwelling tucked into the south-western corner.

Extract from current proposed block plan:



The proposed dwelling, which has a footprint of approximately 155m², currently lies further back into the plot, with a minimum 6.7m distance between the rear elevation of the house and the eastern boundary. The footprint of the dwelling is stated as being 132m² in the submitted Planning Statement, but this measurement is the internal footprint, not the external, which is most relevant here. There is approximately 291m² of hardstanding. The existing dwelling is proposed to be retained as part of the current application, and the proposed floor plans show it being divided into a store/gym/office and shower/WC.

20230320 Proposed elevations:



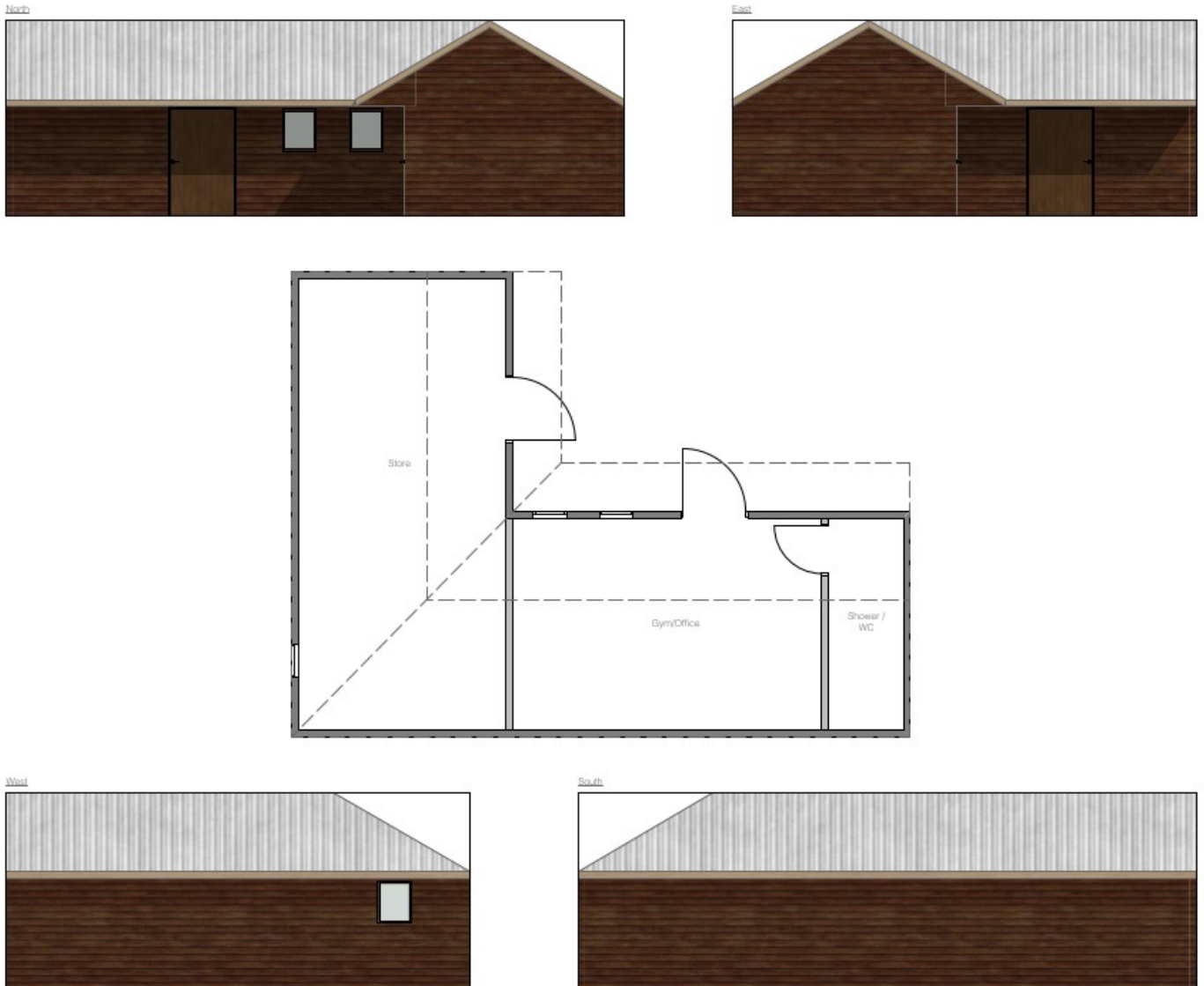
The house originally granted permission had a flat roof and was approximately 3.5m in height.

Current proposed elevations:



The current proposed dwelling has a height of 5.1m to the ridge and 3.4m to eaves.

Existing dwelling:



The existing dwelling is approximately 3.6m to ridge and 2.1m to eaves height. Its footprint amounts to 75m².

Principle Issues

The property is located in the countryside outside any settlement boundary, in the Green Belt and in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA). It is also adjacent a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and a Local Wildlife Site to the north and Ancient Woodland to the east and south.

The principle of a new dwelling on this site in the Green Belt has already been established by the previous permission and does not need to be assessed further. However, as the proposal also relates to the retention of an existing building on the site, the Green Belt remains the starting point for the determination of this application. The main issues for consideration with this proposal are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt
- Impact on openness and the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- Design
- Residential amenity
- Highways
- Biodiversity

Principle of Development in the Green Belt

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

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 (paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024). Paragraph 153 of the NPPF 2024 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

Any harm to the Green Belt should be given substantial weight. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless any one of the exceptions in paragraph 154 applies.

In relation to the new dwelling, this was previously assessed under application 20230320 as being acceptable in the Green Belt under paragraph 154(d), which allows:

d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

The proposed replacement dwelling amounted to a lesser spread of overall development than what was existing on the site when taking into account the existing dwelling, a potential extension to it and the existing outbuildings on the site. Openness on the site under the previous proposal was considered to be improved overall. It was also considered important to condition the removal of all the existing buildings to ensure that the openness gained on the site from the proposal was maintained.

The previous case allowed a replacement dwelling on the site. However, the existing dwelling it sought to replace is now proposed to be retained, albeit with a different use. What has been partially constructed on the site in terms of the replacement dwelling is materially different to the approved application and furthermore, the current case essentially proposes to add a further building to the site; and one that is larger than what would reasonably be expected for an incidental outbuilding (it would not meet permitted

development criteria). Furthermore, it is appreciated that the new dwelling is not yet finished, but there are still buildings on the site that have not been removed, and no program of demolition has been submitted, as required under condition 6 of the original 20230320 permission. The development is currently in breach of this and a number of other conditions on the permission. It is therefore understandable to question whether the site will end up as originally set out.

In the current case, the proposed house plus the existing dwelling would result in a built footprint on the site of 230m². The previous approved dwelling amounted to 146m². This was calculated to be approximately 50% bigger than the previous dwelling and was considered to be materially larger than the building it replaced, but as the removal of the other existing buildings on the site (including the existing dwelling) was taken into account as described above, the final judgement was that the development was that openness was improved and the development was not inappropriate in the Green Belt.

However, the current application seeks to retain the existing dwelling, which is the largest structure of those that were to be removed under the previous permission. This will have a substantial impact on the openness of the site.

It is not deemed appropriate to assess the proposal under paragraph 154(d) as the proposal no longer involves a replacement dwelling. Therefore, the proposed development would fall to be assessed under the paragraph 154(g) exception to inappropriate development, which involves:

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

The key point here is to assess the level of substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt from the proposal.

Openness

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 013 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2025 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated. These matters must be considered in relation to the proposal.

Spatially, the proposal will add significantly to the spread of built development on the site compared to what has been approved; indeed, it would equate to an additional 75m² for the existing dwelling plus the larger footprint of the proposed house (11m² larger than the previous approved dwelling), totalling 85m². Given the previously approved dwelling was approximately 50% larger than the existing dwelling, and an important consideration for allowing this was the removal of the existing buildings and structures on the site, this additional building on the site will unacceptably add to the spread of development and harm to the openness of this Green Belt site.

Visually, there would be more impact in terms of the amount of built form on the site with the retention of the existing dwelling, as there would be buildings at both ends of the site, with a large area of hardstanding between. It is recognised that this visual impact would be largely limited and localised to the site itself, rather than from the public realm, but the impact is worse than the approved proposal nonetheless, and out of keeping with the character of the area where outbuildings are far more modest in size. The retention of the existing dwelling building would be permanent and therefore the harm to the openness of the site would be ongoing, though as a single dwelling, activity levels would be unchanged.

Due to the spatial and visual impacts of the proposed material increase in the amount of built development on the site, substantial harm is considered to be caused. The proposal does not meet the relevant

exceptions listed in paragraph 154 of the NPPF, notably 154(d) and (g), and is therefore inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Conclusion on Green Belt

There are no special circumstances that have been put forward with this case to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The proposed development is therefore inappropriate and should be refused on this basis.

The exemption under paragraph 155 of the NPPF 2024 would not apply, largely as the site is not in a sustainable location. The application site is located in the open countryside, outside the nearest settlement of Culverstone Green. This settlement has limited services/infrastructure and these facilities are located some 0.8 kilometres away (as the crow flies – further when using public rights of way/roadways). The nearest bus stops on Wrotham Road are a similar distance.

The application site is accessible from Ridge Lane, which is a single track, rural route with no lighting. Ridge Lane is not hard surfaced and is steeply sloping at points. As such, this route is not conducive to regular walking or cycling. The route to the nearest main road (A227) is not safe and the distance on this kind of route is too far to reasonably expect residents to choose these modes of transport over the private car. For instance, a child would not be able to walk safely to school.

Housing need is not applicable in this case due to the proposal being a replacement dwelling; no additional dwellings are being gained on the site.

Impact on Landscape Character

Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The application site is in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area and as such, Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 is also relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA) will be taken into account in determining applications. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024 seeks to protect and enhance such valued landscapes.

In relation to the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area, the GLCA states that the key characteristics of this landscape include a varied topography with steep valley sides and ancient woodland, small paddocks and pasture. The condition and sensitivity of the area are moderate and the guidelines are to conserve and create.

The development of this site in the manner proposed would not have a significantly different impact to the existing proposal in terms of the impact on the wider landscape character of the area. The plot is set well back from the road, to the rear of other dwellings; it cannot be seen from any public vantage point. The use of landscaping conditions would help reduce any visual impact and retain a rural setting with appropriate boundary treatments and hard and soft landscaping. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of conserving the rural character of the site and surroundings. The proposal would comply with the requirements of the Gravesham LCA 2009, Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF 2024.

Design

Development Plan policy places considerable emphasis on the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The proposed dwelling would not appear incongruous given the pattern and varied styles of development in its immediate vicinity. The building would be lower than the immediate neighbouring houses, which are one



and a half storey chalets. The proposed single storey dwelling is fairly traditional and is similar to a log cabin in appearance. It will be in timber clad, with slate effect roof tiles and white upvc windows. The design of the building is appropriate for the rural, wooded setting.

View of rear of Ricary and Primrose Cottage to the north



In terms of the layout, the new dwelling would be set well back from the road as the plot has a backland position. The house is located further back in the plot than previously approved. It is apparent that some of the boundary planting has been replaced with new fencing adjacent the new house. No plans for boundary treatments have been submitted, despite the fact that soft landscaping and boundary details were conditioned to be submitted under the previous application. The existing trees/hedges along the boundaries would help mitigate visual impact beyond the plot if they are to be retained.

The previously approved scheme was generally considered as an opportunity to improve the appearance of the site, keeping the built form to one part of the plot, opening it up to either end, and softening the appearance with further lawned areas and planting. The current scheme closes in the western end of the plot with the retention of the existing dwelling and increases the amount of building on it, which as discussed above, will have an adverse visual impact. The previous scheme restricted permitted development outbuildings and open storage to ensure an improvement in the character and appearance of the site. The current scheme is at odds with this ambition.

As a backland site, it is recognised the plot layout is different to the road frontage development. However, in surrounding plots any outbuildings are generally much more modest in size, which is considered more appropriate in such rural and Green Belt surroundings.

Overall, there would be a worse visual effect on the character and appearance of the site and the proposal would not be in compliance with the requirements of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2024 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 135f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, 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.

Future Occupiers



It is considered that the proposal would comply with the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 in terms of the size of the proposed accommodation, which with a gross internal floor area (GIFA) of approximately 132m², would exceed the minimum standard of 95m² for a 1 storey, 3 bedroom, 6 person dwelling.

The proposal would also comply with the Council's residential layout guidelines in terms of the size of the proposed garden.

Primrose Cottage and Ricary would have views over the site but they are approximately 20m away from the shared boundary, and there would be no significant difference experienced between the impact on the proposed property compared to the existing situation in terms of overlooking or loss of light.

There is therefore no conflict with the requirements of the SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 in respect of the standard of amenity and living conditions for future occupants of the proposed dwelling on the site.

Neighbouring Properties

The continued residential use of the site for one dwelling would be in keeping with surrounding uses, and the replacement of the existing dwelling will have no additional impact on neighbouring properties with regard to noise, disturbance and activity levels.

Due to the change in the layout of the plot, the position of the proposed dwelling would be closer to the adjacent neighbouring property to the north (Primrose Cottage). However, the proposed dwelling is single storey (3.4m in height to eaves level). The building would also flank onto the rear of Primrose Cottage with only one window on the flank elevation serving an ensuite (though any windows would regardless be obscured by the boundary treatment) and there would therefore be no opportunity for overlooking. Additionally, there would be approximately 20m space between the buildings, with existing retained boundary screening between, and whilst the property would be visible from Primrose Cottage, the visual impact would be reduced by the distance between the buildings. Additional planting along the shared boundary would further assist with screening. It is considered that there would be no significant loss of outlook, privacy, sunlight or daylight for the occupiers of Primrose Cottage from the proposal.

View of shared boundary with Ricary:



View of shared boundary with Primrose Cottage:



Overall, the proposal would have a negligible impact on neighbouring properties. As such, it would comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2024.

Parking and Highways

A 3 bedroom dwelling would require a maximum of 2 car parking spaces, which can easily be

accommodated on the site plan. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with parking standards.

The proposal would utilise the existing access and would accommodate plenty of space for turning. As the proposal would result in similar traffic movements to the existing, there would not be a significant impact on highway safety. The proposal would therefore comply with Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Local Plan 1994 and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 in terms of parking and highway safety.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Environmental Protection

The application would have a low environmental risk. Conditions should be imposed relating to lighting, and drainage, and an informative relating to the code of practice on construction and demolition. The proposal would therefore comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 191 of the NPPF 2023.

Trees and Biodiversity

The site is adjacent a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and a Local Wildlife Site to the north and Ancient Woodland to the east and south.

The NPPF 2024 in paragraph 193(a) states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects this stance and states that sites designated for their biodiversity value will be protected. There will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough.

Paragraph 193(c) also states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

The previous proposal had sought to retain the existing planting and trees on the site and to provide additional planting and conditions were worded around this. However, no details have been forthcoming, and the current application does not offer any further details. As with the previous proposal, it would be important to keep additional hard surfacing to a minimum and use softer materials where possible (such as for the parking area to the front of the house; this could be shingled). Details of the landscaping would be important to be conditioned on any future planning permission to ensure appropriate improvements are carried out.

For the current application, the Council's KCC Biodiversity Advisor did not consider any further surveys for protected species necessary due to the small scale and likely low risk because of the area for the proposed house being hardstanding or bare ground since at least 2013.

With regards to the arboricultural impact, as KCC Biodiversity was previously satisfied that the submitted arboricultural report indicated measures could be put in place during construction to avoid significant adverse effects on the adjacent ancient woodland. The construction of a new dwelling is now largely complete and therefore such measures would not now be required.

Under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and paragraphs 193 of the NPPF 2024, biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. Enhancement refers to providing net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation and compensation. As such, and as with the previous case, if planning permission is granted, ecological mitigation conditions should be included, including relating to badger setts, carrying out methods for the protection of retained habitats and precautionary mitigation measures for protected species and ecological enhancement in accordance with the details contained in the submitted reports, and sensitive lighting design for biodiversity.

On this basis, the development is considered to be capable of providing a biodiversity net gain through a good level of additional planting and habitat creation. Subject to the above recommended conditions, this development complies with the requirements of paragraphs 193 of the NPPF 2024 and CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014.

Archaeology

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. However, it is considered unlikely that the proposals would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 203 of the NPPF 2024.

Conclusion

Due to the adverse spatial and visual impacts of the proposed material increase in the amount of built development on the site, the proposal is considered to cause substantial harm to the openness of the site. As a result, the proposal would not meet the paragraph 154 exception criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are no special circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the relevant requirements of Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, including paragraphs 142, 143, 153 and 154, and Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

The proposal represents overdevelopment of the site due to the proximity of the proposed dwelling to the eastern end of the plot along with the retention of the existing dwelling. The resultant increase in built form on the site overall is considered to have an adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the site, particularly as surrounding outbuildings on neighbouring plots are generally modest in size. The proposal would be contrary to the requirements of paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

Recommendation

Refuse.

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Mrs Faye Walsh
Signed:	<i>K. Parkin</i>	Signed:	<i>F Walsh</i>
Dated:	24 June 2026	Dated:	30 June 2026