



Planning Statement

Land adjacent to Foxdene Wrotham Road Meopham
Kent DA13 0QG

Erection of a 3 bedroom detached chalet with
associated parking, amenity space and landscaping.

Mr. & Mrs Walden
1 March 2022

BARRONEDWARDS
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr. & Mrs Walden in support of this planning application for the erection of a 3 bed chalet bungalow with associated car parking, amenity space and landscaping on land adjacent to Foxdene Wrotham Road Meopham Kent DA13 4TQ.

1.2 In addition to the application form and certificates the following documents are submitted;

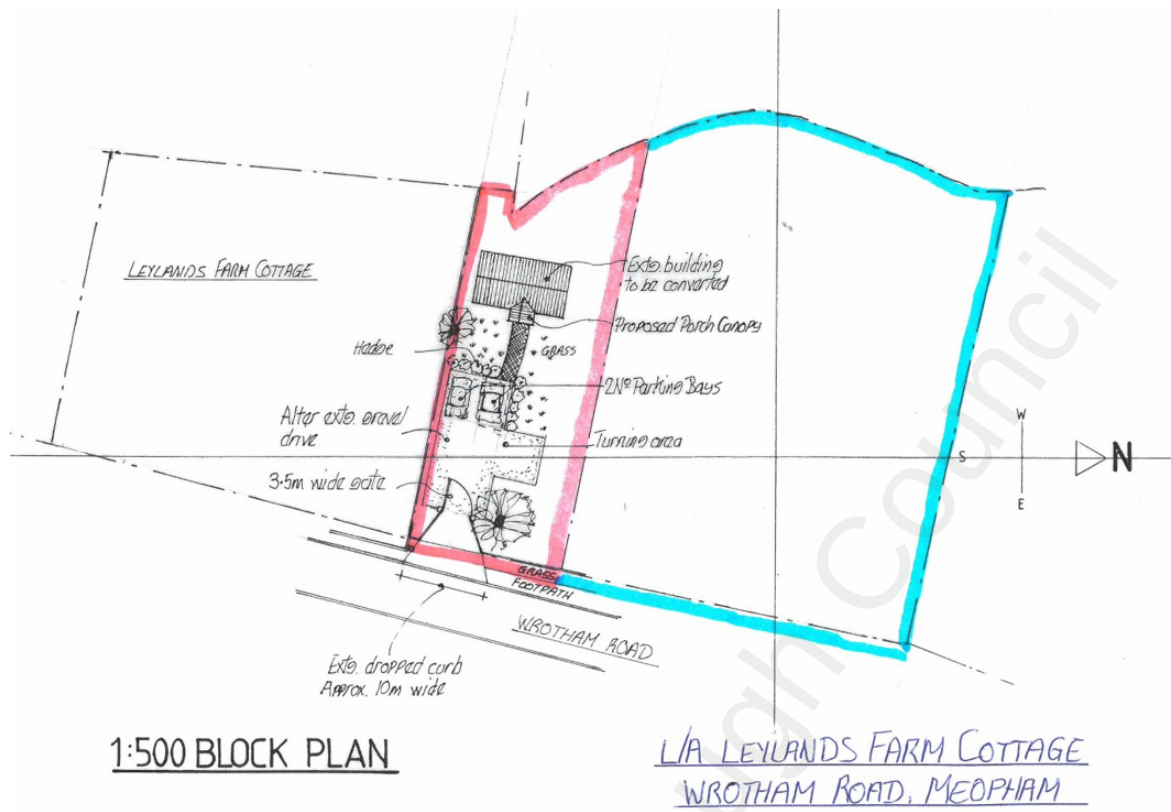
Application plans:

- Drawing No. 220205 – 001 (Block Plan)
- Drawing No. 220205 - 002 (Proposed Floor Plans)
- Drawing No. 220205 - 003 (Proposed Elevations)
- Drawing No. S039.4 (Sections)
- Planning Statement

2.0 Site and Surrounding

2.1 The application site is located on the western side of Wrotham Road (A227) just outside the village to the south of Meopham Green. The site is outside the village envelop and within the Green Belt. The site is immediately to the north Leylands Farm Cottage and formerly was part of its residential curtilage. The site contained a substantial outbuilding that was used as a garage to the Cottage. The outbuilding and its adjoining garden land were sold away from Leyland Farm Cottage in 2007. Permission was granted on 12 October 2015 (20150812) to convert this to a two bedroom dwelling. The approved plan showed the current application outlined in blue being in the same ownership. This permission was revised in 2016 (20151255). When the building works were completed the dwelling, now known as Foxdene, was sold with just its redline boundary. The area outlined in blue being retained by the applicant – Mr.W. Walden and now subject of this application.

2.2 The land is however still regarded as residential garden land and has historical been used as a lawned area with vegetable garden enclosed by mature trees and hedging. The land benefits from its own gated entrance giving access to Wrotham Road with its own dropped kerb.



3.0 Planning Policy Context

Development Plan Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that, when making a determination under the Planning Acts, the determination shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Article 35 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requires that, when issuing a decision, councils must also include a statement explaining, whether, and if so how, in dealing with the application, the local planning authority have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with a planning application. The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It emphasises that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Council's Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy

3.2 National planning policy is enshrined within the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in July 2021 and its accompanying revised the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). The PPG seeks to set out how to implement the strategic vision contained within the NPPF.

3.3 With regards to decision-taking, the revised NPPF advises that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and should look for solutions rather than problems. Decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. It is acknowledged that the decision was made on the basis of the February 2019 version of the NPPF but the revisions relating to Section 13 are minor in nature with just the paragraph number being changed.

3.4 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that, "the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development". It goes on at paragraph 8, that there are three dimensions of sustainable development as: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states that a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" which is at the heart of the Framework to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way. Paragraph 11 which states that there is a '**presumption in favour of**

sustainable development'. Para.12 goes on that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the status of the development plan and states that where a development that is contrary to an up to date development plan that permission should not be granted.

3.5 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF states that it aims to support the government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes and that land is developed without unnecessary delay. It reinforces the principle that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 71 emphasises the need to make the use of windfall sites as they provide a reliable source of supply.

3.6 Section 119 of the revised NPPF (July 2021) encourages the effective use of land and Paragraph 120 (c & d) encourage the use of sites that have been previously developed (brownfield land) and the development of underutilised land. It says that planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing reflecting local demand.

3.7 Paragraph 126 says that the Government attaches great importance to the creation of high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, which creates better places in which to live and work. Quality of design is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The Council does not have any design guides or codes as a supplementary planning document. Paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:-

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
- Are sympathetic to local character and history Including surrounding built environment and landscaped setting.
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.
- Optimise the potential of the site.

- Create places that are safe, which promote health and wellbeing with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

3.8 Paragraphs 131 states that trees make a contribution to the character and quality of urban environment and we are content that the site is predominantly urban in nature. We would therefore confirm that the tree and hedge to the western boundary will be retained and enhanced where necessary.

3.9 Paragraph 134 has been altered to reflect that developments that are not well designed should be refused where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance. These should lead to an improvement of the character and quality of the area and how it functions.

3.10 As the application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, NPPF Green Belt policies will apply. Paragraph 137 notes that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open with the essential characteristics of Green Belts being their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 138 further goes on to list five purposes that the Green Belt serves:

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

3.11 Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

3.12 Paragraph 148 requires LPAs to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt and indicates that 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

3.13 Whilst the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is considered inappropriate, Paragraph 149 lists exceptions, with Bullet point g) stating ***the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or continuing use which would;***

- ***not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development***
- ***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 housing need within the area of the LPA.***

314 In the same vein it could also be argued that ‘functionally’ the site is more aligned with Meopham than the surrounding land and could be considered to be the **‘limited infilling in the village’ and would see the use of former residential garden land.**

Local Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy

4.15 The following policies have been taken into consideration in the formulation of this appeal statement:

- Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- Policy CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy CS14 – Housing type and size
- Policy CS15 – Housing Density
- Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994 Saved Policies

3.16 The following policies are relevant to the consideration of this appeal:

- Policy T1: Impact of Development on Highway Network
- Policy T5: Access to the Identified Highway Network
- Policy P3: Vehicle Parking Standards
 - Landscape Character Assessments

4.0 Principle of Development

4.1 The NPPF sets out in paragraph 11 a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In terms of decision-making, the document states that where a development accords with a local plan, applications should be approved without delay. Where a plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

4.2 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The document also encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) – Paragraph 119. Housing is a priority use for all Boroughs particularly those that are not meeting their Housing Delivery Test target. **We understand that the latest figures issued in January 2022 for the years 2019 – 2021 show that Gravesham was only delivering 57% of its required target. They show that the council has only achieved 661 of its required 1154 target (57%) in the last three periods and the government has now placed it in the ‘presumption of sustainable development’ zone whereby it will be required to grant permission for any application deemed to be sustainable. The Council does not have the required 5 year supply of housing land and has identified 21 Greenbelt sites across the borough for the construction of up to 3,790 houses to assist with meeting growing housing needs..** Given its location within outskirts of Meopham the site is well served by numerous bus services and is a sustainable location. We are also of the opinion that the proposal would aid in strengthening the line of built development on the northern boundary of Meopham Village and prevent any urban sprawl into the more rural areas.

4.3 It is central government policy to encourage redevelopment on previously developed residential land in rural areas provided that it is designed to complement the character of surrounding developments. We are satisfied the design and layout make suitable residential accommodation, and it provides for garden and amenity space.

4.4 It is accepted that this application is within the Green Belt but is located within the former garden land to Leylands Farm Cottage which has already seen the conversion of a former outbuilding into a chalet bungalow (Foxdene). The application site is the remaining garden land that was not sold with Foxdene. The land has always been residential garden and has not be used in

connection the adjoining agricultural land to the east. It is primarily laid to lawn with well established trees to its eastern and western boundaries.

4.5 In considering this application, we regard the main planning considerations as being:

a) Is the proposal inappropriate development or do any 'very special circumstances' exist to justify the development in terms of exemption to Green Belt policy..

b) Does it adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt

c) Is the proposal in keeping and character of the area.

Inappropriate Development in the Green Belt

4.6 It is accepted that the application site is not located within a designated settlement boundary; however, it is situated within a cluster of residential dwellings on the southern boundary of Meopham and the proposed development would be more related to the village than the surrounding Green Belt. Whilst the NPPF establishes that new buildings within the Green Belt are inappropriate, unless amongst other things, would not affect the openness or harm the Green Belt. In this case it is an area that was previously used as residential garden, and the proposal would not result in a material change in the use of the land. The proposed dwelling is for a modest 3 bed dwelling on an infill plot within an otherwise built up frontage in an entirely sustainable location.

4.7 It is our contention that the circumstances of the location and authorised use of the land amounts to 'very special circumstances' and relates to land that is owned by the applicants and who previously owned Leylands Farm Cottage & Foxdene. **It is our view that this would represent very special circumstances, which justify the development proposed. The proposed development for a net increase of 1 unit would offer a marginal but modest contribution towards meeting the council's outstanding local need.**

Openness

4.8 The main criteria of Paragraph 149g) relates to the building being not having any greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt or causing any harm to it in terms of the 5 reasons for including it within the Green Belt. This being particularly so in terms of its potential intensification of the use of the

site and prospect of additional outbuildings and general residential paraphernalia.

4.9 Whilst it is accepted that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and as set out in paragraph 137 of the Framework, the fundamental aim is to avoid urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It is our view that the existing development on the site is well integrated into its semi-rural location. It is residential garden land and is well related to the existing built development that surrounds it. The actual application site is currently grassed being formerly part of the residential garden area of Leyland Farm Cottage and is completely screened by established hedges and trees to the western highway boundary. These will be retained and the new dwelling should not be readily visible from outside the site. The proposal will be well set-back from Wrotham Road and any 'residential paraphernalia' will not be visible from anywhere that the public have a general right of access. Any such development could be controlled by condition. It is our view that the current proposal for a single dwelling would have little adverse impact on the openness than outbuildings that could be constructed on the site without the benefit of planning permission were it still part of Leyland Farm Cottage or Foxdene. The size and massing of the development is considered moderate in comparison with the size of the plot and neighbouring properties within the immediate area.

Character, Appearance and Space Standards

4.10 Design is a key consideration in the planning process. Good design is an important aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF refers to the need to secure a high-quality design and Paragraph 130 states that new development should integrate with the existing built development. The site is situated on the edge of an existing suburban residential enclave in the area characterised by a mix of semi-detached and detached dwellings of varying designs standing in their own spacious plots. The proposal would therefore be totally in keeping and character of the area and be an ideal infill development of this previously developed land.

4.11 It is our contention that the proposal is visually attractive. It will integrate well with the surrounding area and will not be detrimental to the current street scene. This is in accordance with policy in the NPPF and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy. The design policies of the Council's Core Strategy (CS19) and SPG2 set out a number of criteria for the design of new development and state that development should be imaginative and attractive to look at, should complement the scale, form, layout and materials of adjacent buildings and areas.

4.12 Policy CS19 of the CS seeks to ensure that new development is visually attractive and locally distinctive. Whilst the development proposed would alter the character and appearance of the appeal site, the new dwelling would not appear incongruous given the pattern and varied styles of development in its immediate vicinity. The roof height would be slightly higher than the host dwelling and its immediate neighbours due to the topography of the land. It would be set well back from the front of the site and centrally located with all of the existing mature landscaping and trees along the western boundary retained, mitigating any visual impact.

4.13 The new dwelling would not have a prominent or overbearing appearance and would blend in with its surroundings. Therefore, there would be no harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the development proposed would not be contrary to Policy CS19 which seeks to new development is visually attractive and is in keeping with the character and appearance of its surroundings.

4.14 The layout of the new dwelling is spacious, set within the site and meets the Council's SPG2 space standards along with the nationally described space standards (March 2015). The new development will have a private amenity area and garden space at the front. As such, the location and orientation of the proposal means it will not have an overbearing effect on the neighbouring residential properties, neither will there any overshadowing or loss of privacy.

4.15 In regard to the Council's Landscape Character Appraisals it is clear that the site is not used as 'agricultural farmland', has never been used for agriculture and is residential garden land. The character of the site is more in keeping with the character of the adjacent built development and adjacent urban area than any open arable farmland.

Parking and Access

4.16 The proposal makes provision for off-street parking for 3 individual parking spaces for the new residential unit and turning area within the site. The proposal will utilise the existing access onto Wrotham Road. We are satisfied that the provision of three spaces for the proposal would be in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards (adopted July 2006). The parking and turning area is arranged around a hardstanding which would allow for manoeuvring within the site to allow forward entry and exit. It is our contention that it is unlikely that there will be any conflict with vehicles or pedestrians on Wrotham Road and we are satisfied that it would not raise any highway safety issues.

Ecology and Biodiversity

4.17 The application site is located in a suburban area and has always been used as residential garden. It is maintained as grassed lawn with large vegetable patch. As such the site offers little habitat for protected species although hedgehogs, foxes and rabbits may be found in the western boundary trees and hedge and this will be retained. It is intended that biodiversity and ecological enhancements will be implemented subject to permission being granted and can be subject of condition.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The applicants have taken on board all the Council's and National policies to provide a sustainable solution to the need to provide a workable scheme for the site that provides a suitable dwelling as an infill plot at the edge of the established village envelope. Although the site is allocated Green Belt much of the adjoining land to the east will be lost by highways works – LTC. It is our assertion that the site is sustainable in terms of its location within an established suburban residential area and as an infill on previously developed land. We are satisfied that the prospective layout and design is in keeping with the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and would not be out of character with the area. It would not be inappropriate development being in accord with Para. 149g) and e) and would not have any adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt or the reasons for designating as such.

5.2 We are satisfied that the proposal would have no detrimental effect on the residential amenities of its neighbours or visual amenity of area. It is a site that fulfils the requirements of the NPPF as a 'very special circumstance' and is not considered to be contrary to Council Policy for the protection of the Green

Belt. It is our view that the application should be supported particularly in the light of the extenuation circumstances regarding the safeguarded land for the LTC.

James Barron BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI
Planning Director