

Pre Application Response

Reference	PRE20230197
Site	Former Tollgate Hotel Watling Street Gravesend Kent
Proposed Development	Demolition of all existing buildings on the Site, in favour of an EV Hub albeit with an initial petrol offer Provision of 24 Electric Vehicle Charging points Erection of a single storey building that is likely to be used as a forecourt shop and café area similar to a petrol filling station with wraparound canopy Erection of six petrol/diesel fuel pump islands in a domino six layout, with a canopy above and fuel storage tanks below, all to the rear of the amenity building, Provision of two air/water bays Provision of customer parking to the front on the retail building Construction of vehicle access and circulation areas, with access to the site via the existing albeit improved crossover Provision of supporting infrastructure such as a sub-station and plant room and Perimeter landscaped areas, including new trees, to provide a soft interface between the development proposal and its wider context.
Case Officer Details	Mrs Alison Webster E-mail: Alison.webster@gravesham.gov.uk
Date of Advice	19 September 2023

I am writing with reference to your request for pre-application advice at the above site, received as valid on 11 July 2023 and following our meeting on 22nd August 2023 with Senior Planner (Alison Webster) and Team Leader (Richard Hart).

I have now had the opportunity to review your proposal and can offer the following comments:

Proposal

Demolition of all existing buildings on the Site, in favour of an EV Hub albeit with an initial petrol offer
Provision of 24 Electric Vehicle Charging points
Erection of a single storey building that is likely to be used as a forecourt shop and café area similar to a petrol filling station with wraparound canopy
Erection of six petrol/diesel fuel pump islands in a domino six layout, with a canopy above and fuel storage tanks below, all to the rear of the amenity building,
Provision of two air/water bays
Provision of customer parking to the front on the retail building
Construction of vehicle access and circulation areas, with access to the site via the existing albeit improved crossover
Provision of supporting infrastructure such as a sub-station and plant room and
Perimeter landscaped areas, including new trees, to provide a soft interface between the development proposal and its wider context.

General advice was provided under reference PRE20220162. Following on from this advice the proposal has changed slightly. These amendments are discussed below.

Site Description

The application site is located next to what was the former off slip road to the former line of the A2 trunk road, now a linear greenspace, following the Highways Agency (now National Highways) scheme that relocated the route of the A2 southwards in 2009. The site is within the Green Belt just beyond the urban area of Gravesend and Northfleet to the north but part of the site is previously developed land.

Constraints

The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and an Area of Archaeological Potential. It is also within an Air Quality Management Area, within the Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Buffer, adjacent to a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, within the High Speed 1 Safeguarding Zone, SGN Medium Pressure Pipeline, Groundwater Source Protection Zone 2, Gravesham Fringe Landscape Character Area, Smoke Control Zone and close to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20160215	Demolition of all former Tollgate hotel/restaurant buildings and construction of a petrol filling station and forecourts, sales building, ATM, underground fuel tanks, refuse/recycling, AC/refrigeration units, vehicular access, substation, parking and all associated works and services on part of site.	Approved by Planning Committee, quashed, appeal against non-determination, appeal withdrawn	13.01.2020
20150952	Request for a screening opinion in respect of development comprising demolition of former hotel/restaurant and erection of a petrol filling station and forecourts with underground fuel tanks, sales building with ATM, AC/refrigeration units, refuse/recycling, substation, vehicular access, parking provision and associated works.	Environmental Impact Assessment Not Required	12.10.2015
20140888	Request for a screening opinion in respect of development comprising demolition of former hotel/restaurant and erection of a petrol filling station and forecourts with underground fuel tanks, sales building with ATM, restaurant with drive-through facility, AC/refrigeration units, refuse/recycling, substation, vehicular access, parking provision and associated works and services.	Environmental Impact Assessment Not Required	07.10.2014
20131018	***REVISED PLANS/ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION/REVISED RED LINE PLAN*** Demolition of former hotel/restaurant and erection of a petrol filling station and forecourts with underground fuel tanks, sales building with ATM, restaurant with drive-through facility, AC/refrigeration units, refuse/recycling, substation, vehicular access, parking provision and associated works and services.	Withdrawn following two JRs	15.11.2017

20060823	Change of use of hotel complex into temporary site offices for 'A2 Pepperhill to Cobham' road widening scheme involving erection of a two metre high hoarding around the site.	Permitted	23.11.2006
20050136	Variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission reference number GR/2001/475 for outline planning permission to extend the existing hotel, to allow the time for the submission of the reserved matters to be extended from three years to four years.	Permitted	24.03.2005
20010475	Outline application for the demolition of single cottage and conference suite and erection of two and three storey linked extensions to existing hotel to form 63 rooms, leisure centre and swimming pool, function rooms, restaurant, bars, ancillary offices and formation and laying out of associated car park and coach park together with improved and new vehicular access to Wrotham Road.	Permitted	22.04.2002
20010047	Renewal of planning permission ref. No. GR/96/127 for the infilling and construction of pitched roof to existing covered walkways from main reception to the London Block and formation of new gantry with ramps and steps.	Permitted	27.03.2001
19960128	Infilling of existing covered access decks to 'London' and 'Dover' Blocks.	Permitted	23.04.1996
19960127	Infilling and construction of pitched roof to existing covered walkways from main reception to the 'London' Block and formation of new gantry with ramp and steps.	Permitted	23.04.1996
19960126	Alterations to the front elevation of the existing 'Cheers' bar incorporating the formation of a new false pitch roof and brick panelling.	Permitted	12.04.1996
19950347	Erection of front extension to form enlarged entrance area & porch and single storey side extension to enlarge the reception area on the main building.	Permitted	13.07.1995
19940621	Retention of marquee attached to the rear of the garden suite.	Permitted	03.07.1995
19940172	External & internal refurbishment, erection of extension to main building incorporating reception facilities, conservatory and verandahs attached to restaurant & layout of car parking & landscaping.	Permitted	08.08.1994
19940171	REVISED DESCRIPTION: External refurbishment and extension of Meopham Block to form lobby at lower ground floor, entrance lobby at upper ground floor with balcony over.	Permitted	08.08.1994
19940108	REVISED DISCRIPTION - Alterations to all elevations of garden suite including erection of canopy on north south and west elevation, internal alterations and formation of base for marquee and landscaping of garden area; formation and laying out of associated car parking spaces.	Permitted	08.08.1994
19900470	Erection of two storey & three storey linked extensions to existing hotel to form 63 bedrooms, leisure centre inc. swimming pool, 2 function rooms, 3 syndicate rooms, restaurant, 2 bars, ancillary office & sanitary accommodation; formation & laying out of associated car & coach park.	Permitted	06.06.1994
19880987	Erection of external fire escape at the rear.	Permitted	01.03.1989
19880205	Erection of single storey building to form shop with staff room and Bureau de Change	Permitted	22.08.1988

19850519	Change of use of first floor staff accommodation to restaurant and bar and erection of external fire escape	Permitted	22.10.1985
19850501	Retention of single storey building for use as a document store	Permitted	13.08.1985
19850002	Erection of entrance lobby and change of use of existing eight bedroom unit into a reception lounge area for coach parties and provision of toilet accommodation	Permitted	26.02.1985
19800463	Retention of single storey building for document store	Permitted	29.07.1980
19800010	Erection of a prefabricated building for use as a temporary personnel training centre	Temporary consent	19.03.1980
19770058	Erection of 3 linen rooms	Permitted	15.02.1977
19760018	Erection of a single storey extension to provide a store and an office	Permitted	30.03.1976
19740649	Erection of single storey Marley building for document store.	Permitted	19.02.1975
19630451	The erection of a petrol filling station	Permitted	16.12.1963

Development Plan and other related Planning Policies and Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Borough Council to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are other material considerations, the development plan should be the starting point, and other material considerations should be taken into account in reaching a decision.

One such consideration will be whether the plan policies are relevant and up to date.

The Development Plan for Gravesham currently comprises:

- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Map, September 2014;
- Saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review, November 1994; and
- The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013 - 2030 (July 2016, revised 2020).

The relevant policies for your proposal are as follows:

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014:

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS07 - Economy, Employment and Skills
- CS08 - Retail, Leisure and the Hierarchy of Centres
- CS11 - Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Design and Development Principle
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994:

- Policy TC7: Other Archaeological Sites
- Policy T1: Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- Policy T2: Channelling of Traffic onto the Primary and District Distributor Network

- Policy T3: Development Not Well Related to the Primary and District Distributor Network
- Policy T4: Development Outside the Built-Up Area
- Policy T5: New Accesses onto Highway Network
- Policy P3: Vehicle Parking Standards

National Planning Policy Framework 2023:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 - Decision-making
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 - Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance and other Documents:

The Council has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents, Development Briefs and Conservation Area Appraisals. These elaborate on saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and policies in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and are material considerations in determining planning applications.

In addition, the Council has adopted a number of documents that have been produced by Kent County Council also as Supplementary Guidance.

<https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/local-plan-policy/supplementary-planning-guidance>

The following documents are relevant to the consideration of this enquiry:

- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006).
- Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- KCC Development Contributions Guide (2007)
- SPG1 – Landscape Character (2006)
- SPG2 – Biodiversity Conservation (2006)

Background

The planning application background of the site was provided under the previous pre-application advice reference PRE20220162 and therefore is not repeated here. In terms of the difference between the plans submitted under PRE20220162 and PRE20230197 the main changes are as follows:

Reduction in parking; increase in soft landscaping

Reduction in built form by the removal of jet wash and car wash

Reduction of width of shop from approx. 25m to approx. 23m.

Increase in height of shop from approx. 5.8m to approx. 6.8m

Reduction in height of canopy over petrol offer from a total of approx. 6.3m to approx. 5.08m

The proposed shopfront has evolved from:

Elevation A

Since the previous application for advice, the layout and design of the site has evolved. The jet wash bays and car wash have been removed which results in less structures onsite. This is a positive enhancement in terms of built form within the Green Belt and is welcomed. The number of parking bays has also been reduced which lessens the need for as much hardstanding. Again, this will have less of an impact on the Green Belt as the previously proposed development and weighs in its favour. Whilst the main building is shown as higher than the previously proposed building, the reduction in width and sedum roof aids in reducing the overall bulk.

Biodiversity Net Gain and surrounding Landscape Character Area

This is something that will need to be addressed. From the plans submitted there is now a greater opportunity to introduce more biodiversity onto the site which will have a positive contribution. The landscaping is improved which will result in less of a visual impact from surrounding areas including the Landscape Character Area. As discussed previously a green roof will aid in improving both the biodiversity and appearance of the site and this is now shown on the plans. It may be worth considering a sedum roof for the petrol canopy too if that needs to remain.

Further details of the government requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain>

Neighbouring Amenity

In terms of neighbouring amenity the previous comments remain the same.

Highways & Parking

The previous comments remain the same.

In terms of the accessibility of the site, it would be advisable to create links to the surrounding area by way of footpaths and cycle paths. This would not only encourage additional customers who are not accessing the site for fuel but would allow those charging vehicles to perhaps stretch their legs and utilise surrounding footpaths. It would create interlinkages between the site and areas beyond becoming part of the community rather than a site cut off from the surrounding area.

Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water Run Off

The previous comments remain the same.

Contaminated Land

The previous comments remain the same.

Refuse Storage and Collection Arrangements

The previous comments remain the same.

Heritage

The previous comments remain the same.

Summary

The documents to be provided and list of consultees remain the same.

Questions that may arise from a Members' Presentation that might be worth addressing prior:

How is charging managed?

Would a queue form on the forecourt or are slots booked?

Could there be an alternative to the forecourt canopy to further reduce built form on the site?

Next Steps

If planning permission is sought, an application can be made through the Planning Portal, here:

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/applications>

Please be aware that should you wish to submit an application it must be compliant with local and national validation requirements. You can find the requirements at:

<https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/downloads/file/382/local-validation-list>

Prior to submitting a planning application, you may wish to engage the services of planning agent;

<https://www.rtpiconsultants.co.uk/#/>

For further pre-application services I would refer you to our website;

<https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/home/planning-and-building/pre-application-planning-advice/pre-application-service>

You are advised that **PRE20230197** is now closed.

Note: The comments contained herein are offered on an informal basis and without prejudice to the determination of any subsequent planning application. The Borough Council reserve the right to add to or amend the comments in the light of any further information coming forward or matters that were not previously considered.