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PLANNING STATEMENT

Project: Westwood, 38 Rhododendron Avenue, Meopham

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling

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1. Introduction

This statement has been prepared in support of my clients' planning application. This is in relation to the demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling.

Firstly, this statement will set out the details of the site description to provide a context in which the proposal has been designed. Secondly, we review the sites planning history and set out the details of the proposal subject of this application. Next, we provide a summary of the relevant planning national and local planning policies. Following this we set out a detailed assessment of the proposal and the relevant material considerations. Finally, we provide a summary of the benefits of the proposal and why we consider that it should be approved.

In addition to this statement the following documents have been provided;

- Application forms
- Existing site plans
- Proposed floor plans, site plans and elevations

2. Site Description

The site is located on the western side of Rhododendron Avenue a residential road to the east of Culverstone Green. The site comprises a single storey detached dwelling set within a reasonably sized plot. The property itself is set back a considerable distance from the road. The site has a reasonable gradient, sloping up, away from the road side. A detached double garage is located to the front of the site.

As the site is located outside of the settlement boundary of Culverstone Green, it is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Whilst the property is located within the Green Belt it is surrounded by other residential properties on all sides. As a result, the property is not within an isolated location. The settlement boundary of Culverstone Green is located approximately 190m to the west of the property.

Other dwellings within the immediate area, vary in terms of their size, design and positioning within the plot. As such there is no specific character or style which needs to be maintained. Boundary treatment within the area varies from close boarded fences to mature boundary planting.



Figure 1: Aerial View of Site

3. Planning History and Proposal

1. Relevant Planning History

Planning permission was originally granted in February 1991 for the erection of a bungalow (ref 19910023).

Subsequently planning permission was granted for the erection of a detached double garage at the rear and construction of a new roof to provide three bedrooms and bathroom in proposed roof space in January 2005. (Ref 20040726).

Planning permission was more recently refused for the erection of rear extension, construction of a first floor level incorporating dormer extensions in the proposed first floor front and rear roof slopes at first floor level and erection of an open front porch. (Ref 20190247). This application was refused for the following reasons;

1. The proposal, by virtue of its proposed scale, massing and form is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it will result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling and harm the openness of the Green Belt. In the absence of any very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, the proposal is contrary to Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review, Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to the policies for protecting the Green Belt set out in section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. The proposal, by virtue of its design, will create a more substantial building which will be prominent, intrusive and out of character with the scale of existing built development in the locality. The proposal will not integrate well and will cause material harm to the character of the area and the appearance of the original building, contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Section 12 of National Planning Policy Framework.

Of paramount importance is the more recently refused scheme reference 2022/0070 which was for a number of extensions to the existing property.

The application was appealed, and we received a positive decision at Appeal ref APP/K2230/D/22/3298308. We have attached a copy of that decision notice at **Appendix 1**.

The Inspector considered that the extensions to the house were indeed modest extensions in the Green Belt and that with Local Plan Policies being out of date, the NPPF provided clear reason to support the application.



2. Planning Proposal

Having considered the construction costs of extending and renovating the property, it is considered that a more cost effective and energy-efficient dwelling can be created by the demolition and rebuild of the existing property.

The application is simply seeking to create the same dwelling allowed by virtue of the successful planning appeal, but by means of a demolition and rebuild on the exact same scale, height and position within the existing plot.

None of the external appearance and scale would alter through this new proposal. The client was advised to seek full planning permission as the description of the application would change; even though the end result would be identical to that already approved.

We have therefore submitted exactly the same drawings that were allowed at Appeal.

4. National Planning Policy Summary

The NPPF (2021) sets out the government's planning policies which Local Plans need to accord with. Relevant paragraphs include;

Achieving Sustainable Development

Para 7 of the NPPF states that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

Para 8 states that Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Para 11 of the NPPF states that '*plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*'

For **decision-taking** this means:

(c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

(d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date ⁸, granting permission unless:
(i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed ²; or

(ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Achieving well-designed places

Para 126 relates to achieving good design and states that 'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

Para 130 states that; Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

(a) 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;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

(f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users ⁴⁹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Green Belt

Para 137 relates to the Green Belt and states that;

'The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.'

Paragraph 149 states that '*a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt.*' A list of exceptions are set out which includes;

'the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.'

5. Local Planning Policy Summary

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy – 2014

The Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014 and sets out the Councils long term spatial vision for the Borough. The Core Strategy covers the period from April 2011 to March 2028. The relevant policies are as follows;

- Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- Policy CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy CS18 – Climate Change
- Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Policy CS19 states that;

New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change. This will be achieved through the criteria set out below:

- *Using the collaborative approach advocated in Building for Life 12 and in line with the guidance set out in Kent Design, the design, layout and form of new development will be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and will make a positive contribution to the street scene, the quality of the public realm and the character of the area. Account will be taken of the scale, height, building lines, layout, materials and other architectural features of adjoining buildings. Account will also be taken of the wider site context, including strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place;*
- *New development will encourage sustainable living and choice through a mix of compatible uses which are well connected to places that people want to use including the public transport network, local services and community facilities encourage sustainable travel; enhance Green Grid links and encourage lifestyles;*
- *New development will be located, designed and constructed to:*
 - *safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land;*
 - *avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution, and land contamination; and*
 - *not pose an unacceptable risk or harm to the water environment, including the quality and/or quantity of ground waters, surface waters, wetlands and coastal water systems;*
- *The design and layout of new residential development, including conversions, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines;*
- *New development will be designed in an inclusive way to be accessible to all members of the community;*
- *New development will provide appropriate levels of private and public amenity space;*
- *New development will include details of appropriate hard and soft landscaping, public art, street furniture, lighting and signage and will ensure that public realm and open spaces are well planned, appropriately detailed and maintained so they endure;*
- *Car parking will be well related to the development it serves;*
- *New development will protect and, where opportunities arise, enhance biodiversity and the Borough's Green Infrastructure network. Support will be given to environmental enhancements where opportunities arise;*



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- *New development will be fit for purpose and adaptable to allow changes to be made to meet the needs of users;*
 - *The design and layout of new development will take advantage of opportunities to build in resilience to the effects of climate change. This will include protection against flood risk, where relevant, delivering carbon reduction, provision for low carbon and renewable energy, and minimising energy consumption and water use;*
 - *New development will incorporate appropriate facilities for the storage and recycling of waste; and*
 - *The layout of new development will create a safe and secure environment and provide surveillance to minimise opportunities for crime and vandalism.*

Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies – 2014

The Local Plan was originally adopted in November 1994. In September 2007 a number of policies were saved through direction from the Secretary of State. In September 2014 the Council adopted their Core Strategy and as a result a number of saved policies were deleted. The remaining saved policies relevant to this proposal are as follows;

- Policy P3 – Vehicle parking standards

Supplementary Planning Documents

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020).
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006).
- Landscape Character Assessment (2009).
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021).

6. Planning Assessment

Material Considerations

Principle of Development

The site is located within the Green Belt and therefore we have made an assessment to consider whether the development forms appropriate development. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which includes the replacement of a building, providing it is not materially larger and is in the same use. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF sets out that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

There is no set definition of what development comprises a proportionate addition to the dwelling. We consider that an assessment of the proposed design should be undertaken to fully assess the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt. Basing an assessment of whether a proposal is a proportionate addition solely on numerical data is not appropriate.

Of paramount importance is our successful Appeal decision appended to this application. There is no clear reason why, given the Inspectors' comments, that planning permission should be withheld or delayed with this application.

Green Belt

Whilst we acknowledge that the proposal is located within the Green Belt the property is set in close proximity to neighbouring dwellings, such that the site is surrounded by development on all sides.

The replacement of the dwelling would not be materially larger, given the inspector findings into the extension permission we already have in place.

Landscape

Core Strategy Policy CS12 states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes within the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that proposals will take account of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment.

The site is located within the Harvel Wooded Downs character area which is described as lying '*to the south of Gravesham Borough, encapsulating the historic settlement of Harvel and the more recent surrounding settlements*'

Key characteristics of the character area have been identified as follows;

- *Varied topography with steep valley sides and plateaux*
- *Ancient woodland chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pasture*
- *Traditional historic settlement of Harvel set around village green*
- *Occasional traditional farmsteads*
- *Haphazard mosaic of residential plots and small holdings set within the woodland*

The site fits the final characteristic and this proposal would not adversely affect this wider character.

A set of guidelines have been set out as guidance for future proposals. These include;

- *Conserve and manage woodland*
- *Conserve and maintain characteristic narrow lanes*
- *Assess development proposals throughout the area to modify variety in building styles and materials*
- *Resist proposals that introduce inappropriate designs and materials*

We consider that the proposal has been appropriately designed to reflect the character of the area which is mixed in terms of its design and style. The wider wooded area would be respected and no alterations would be made to the existing access arrangements,

Overall we consider the proposal would not adversely affect the Harvel Wooded Down character area.

Design and Character

Core Strategy Policy CS19 requires new proposals to '*conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards.*'

The property is set back a reasonable distance from the public highway and therefore set back from the street scene. As a result, views of the dwelling from the public realm are limited.

The existing bungalow is not of any particular architectural merit and is in need of remodelling. As such, it does not currently provide a positive contribution to the character of the wider area.

The proposal has been carefully designed to complement the character of neighbouring properties and provide high quality design that respects the character of the area which is reasonably varied in its style.

The increase in height is identical to that allowed at Appeal.

Residential Amenities

Core Strategy policy CS19 relates to design principles and requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to '*safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land.*'

The proposed dwelling is set within a reasonably large plot with sufficient separation distances to neighbouring properties. Taking into account the positioning of the proposed extensions we believe that they would not have adverse impact upon amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light or outlook. One window is proposed at first floor level on the side elevation of the property. This would serve a bathroom and as such a condition could be imposed to require it to be obscurely glazed. Again, this aspect is already permitted via the Appeal.

Highways and Parking

Saved Local Plan policy P3 requires new proposals to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent Council Vehicle Parking Standards. These standards require a maximum on-site car parking provision of three spaces for dwellings with four or more bedrooms. Our proposal would ensure that sufficient on-site parking to serve the proposed dwelling.

No alterations would be made to the existing access and as a result we consider there would be no significant impacts on highway safety.

Very Special Circumstances

As set out above, we consider that the proposal would have a limited adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. We also consider that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon residential amenities or character of the street scene. Therefore the harm we have identified is fairly limited and as a result only limited very special circumstances are required to outweigh the harm.

In this case we already have consent for alterations and extensions to the dwelling to result in the identical scale, bulk, mass and appearance to that already approved.

7. Conclusion

The scheme accords with the NPPF (2021), Policies CS01, CS02, CS12, CS18 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Local Plan Saved Policies C13 and P3. The application should therefore be approved without delay.

I trust this letter sets out my clients' planning application proposal in full, if however you require any further information please let me know.

Yours Sincerely



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Director, SJM Planning Ltd

