



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260013

Location: Longreach, 27 The Russets, Meopham, Gravesend

Description: Change of use of land to residential and erection of a single storey self-build dwelling.

Applicant: Mr Anthony Pritchard

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form

Self-build form

Planning Statement Rev A

Materials

Drawing no. P-001 (Site Location Plan)

Drawing no. P-002 (Site Plan, Site Section A-A as Existing)

Drawing no. P-003 (Plans and Elevations as Existing)

Drawing no. P-004 A (Site Location Plan as Proposed)

Drawing no. P-005 B (Site Layout Plan, Section AA as Proposed)

Drawing no. P-006 B (New Dwelling Plans Elevations as Proposed)

Superseded following revisions:

~~Planning Statement~~

~~Drawing no. P-004 (Site Location Plan as Proposed)~~

~~Drawing no. P-005 (Site Layout Plan, Section AA as Proposed)~~

~~Drawing no. P-006 (New Dwelling Plans Elevations as Proposed)~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20191047	Erection of first floor extension above the ground floor integral garage and utility room to provide a replacement master bedroom, en-suite and hobby room.	Permitted	09.01.2020
20120568	Erection of a stock fence along boundary of land.	Permitted	10.08.2012
20100007	Continued use of agricultural/grazing land as residential gardens for 27, 28, 29 and 30 The Russets.	Refused	23.03.2010
20050956	Conversion of existing integral garage into a study.	Permitted	28.12.2005
19870254	Erection of single storey side and rear extension to existing garage to form double garage	Permitted	18.05.1987
19860975	Erection of detached double garage	Refused	29.01.1987

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the identified 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 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

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 (2015)
- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Gravesham Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society would wish to raise an objection on the grounds that the site is in an area within which Green Belt Policies apply.

The site is outside the established settlement, on land acquired by the applicant, and is enclosed but not part of the curtilage which is outside the village envelope.

In the Society's opinion this is not Grey Belt Land.

Environment Agency

We have no objection to proposed development; however, we offer the following advice and request an informative on foul drainage.

Please refer to the following sections for our full response:

- Section 1: Technical comments
- Section 2: Informative

Section 1: Technical comments

The site is located within a Source Protection Zone 2 and upon a principal aquifer. Groundwater is therefore sensitive in this area.

The application form indicates that the drainage proposal is soakaway for surface water and mains sewer for foul sewage, but it is unknown whether a connection to the existing system will be made.

Foul drainage should be connected to the main sewer. Where this is not possible, the hierarchy of drainage options set out within the national Planning Practice Guidance (Water supply, wastewater and water quality – considerations for planning applications, paragraph 020) should be followed in order.

Should planning permission be granted, we request that the informative set out in Section 2 of this letter be included on the relevant decision notice.

Section 2: Informative

Note to the LPA: Informative wording

If you wish to amend the wording of our requested informative or if you wish to merge them with other statutory consultees/LPAs informative, please contact us to discuss the revised wording.

Informative

Government guidance contained within the national Planning Practice Guidance (Water supply, wastewater and water quality – considerations for planning applications, paragraph 020) sets out a hierarchy of drainage options that must be considered and discounted in the following order:

1. Connection to the public sewer
2. Package sewage treatment plant (adopted in due course by the sewerage company or owned and operated under a new appointment or variation)
3. Septic Tank

Foul drainage should be connected to the main sewer. Where this is not possible, under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 any discharge of sewage or trade effluent made to either surface water or groundwater will need to be registered as an exempt discharge activity or hold a permit issued by the Environment Agency, additional to planning permission. This applies to any discharge to inland freshwaters, coastal waters or relevant territorial waters.

Please note that the granting of planning permission does not guarantee the granting of an Environmental Permit. Upon receipt of a correctly filled in application form we will carry out an assessment. It can take up to 4 months before we are in a position to decide whether to grant a permit or not.

Domestic effluent discharged from a treatment plant/septic tank at 2 cubic metres or less to ground or 5 cubic metres or less to surface water in any 24-hour period must comply with General Binding Rules

provided that no public foul sewer is available to serve the development and that the site is not within an inner Groundwater Source Protection Zone.

A soakaway used to serve a non-mains drainage system must be sited no less than 10 metres from the nearest watercourse, not less than 10 metres from any other foul soakaway and not less than 50 metres from the nearest potable water supply.

Where the proposed development involves the connection of foul drainage to an existing non-mains drainage system, the applicant should ensure that it is in a good state of repair, regularly de-sludged and of sufficient capacity to deal with any potential increase in flow and loading which may occur as a result of the development.

Where the existing non-mains drainage system is covered by a permit to discharge then an application to vary the permit will need to be made to reflect the increase in volume being discharged. It can take up to 13 weeks before we decide whether to vary a permit.

Further advice is available at:

Septic tanks and treatment plants: permits and general binding rules

KCC Archaeology

Thank you for your letter consulting us on the above planning application. In this instance I suggest that no archaeological measures are required.

KCC Biodiversity

In providing the following comments all relevant information has been submitted including ecological information (where submitted) and site plans. In addition other documents when considered useful have been reviewed this will include (but not limited to) the design and access statement and arboricultural reports.

Additional supporting information can be found at the end of the report regarding requests for additional information and BNG.

Where applicable, suggested condition wording can be found at the end of the report. The conditions have been numbered and referred to in the below text.

BNG -exemption custom and self build. We defer to the LPA if this meets this custom and self build criteria.

Aerial imagery shows the majority of the plot for the proposed new dwelling is regularly maintained grassland with an existing access shown in the planning statement photographs. As such we consider that no ecology surveys are required and a precautionary mitigation method statement (3) would be sufficient.

A enhancement plan (1) and sensitive lighting plan (2) conditions would be required.

Suggested Condition Wordings

1. Ecological Enhancements

Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include full details of the biodiversity enhancements to be implemented on-site. The Plan shall include provision of durable and suitably placed bat/bird boxes, the creation of hedgehog highways (by creating small 13×13cm gaps in close board fencing), the provision of bee bricks and/or the provision of log piles/artificial refugia for reptiles and amphibians.

The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

2. Sensitive Lighting (if any external lighting is proposed)

The condition requiring a lighting plan must have the following requirements:

- Be designed following best practice guidance within Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night'¹
- Site plan showing the location and types of lighting
- Lighting must be downward facing and/or on motion sensors.

3. Precautionary Mitigation

From commencement of works (including site clearance), to avoid impacts to protected and priority species, the following precautionary mitigation shall be implemented:

- Any hedgerow and trees to be retained, including its roots, shall be protected from damage in line with The British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012);
- All temporarily stored building materials (that might act as temporary resting places) shall be isolated within hardstanding areas and raised off the ground, e.g. on pallets.
- Any work to vegetation/structures that may provide suitable bird nesting habitats should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (1st March to 31st August inclusive) to avoid destroying or damaging bird nests in use or being built. If within the breeding bird season a survey by a suitably qualified person needs to be conducted to confirm absence, prior to commencing works.
- If at any time a protected species is discovered within the works area all works must stop while a suitably qualified ecologist and/or Natural England are consulted.

KCC Highways

Referring to the above description, it would appear that this development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. If there are any material highway safety concerns that you consider should be brought to the attention of the HA, then please contact us again with your specific concerns for our consideration.

It is important to note that Local Planning Authority (LPA) permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

Any changes to or affecting the public highway in Kent require the formal agreement of the Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and it should not be assumed that this will be a given because LPA planning permission has been granted.

For this reason, anyone considering works which may affect the public highway, including any highway-owned street furniture or landscape assets such as grass, shrubs and trees, is advised to engage with KCC Highways and Transportation at an early stage in the design process.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens and near the highway that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the public highway.

Some of this highway land is owned by Kent County Council whilst some is owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have 'highway rights' over the topsoil.

Works on private land may also affect the public highway. These include works to cellars, to retaining walls which support the highway or land above the highway, and to balconies, signs or other structures which project over the highway. Such works also require the approval of the Highway Authority.

Kent County Council has now introduced a pre-application advice service in addition to a full formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. Further details are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>

This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process. Further details on this are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/apply-for-a-dropped-kerb/dropped-kerb-contractor-information>

Once planning approval for any development has been granted by the LPA, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that before development commences, all necessary highway approvals and consents have been obtained, and that the limits of the highway boundary have been clearly established, since failure to do so may result in enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority.

The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under the relevant legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Further guidance for applicants, including information about how to clarify the highway boundary and links to application forms for vehicular crossings and other highway matters, may be found on Kent County Council's website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>

Alternatively, KCC Highways and Transportation may be contacted by telephone: 03000 418181.

Internal Consultees

GBC Environmental Protection

There is no objection to the application. However, as the land has been in agricultural use, there is a risk of contamination through the use/application of herbicides/pesticides and also fuel/oils associated with farm machinery. A contaminated land assessment will therefore be needed. In order to address this and other matters, the following are recommended:

Contaminated Land

No development approved by this permission shall be commenced prior to a contaminated land assessment (in accordance with the Environment Agency's Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance) and if necessary an associated remedial strategy, together with a timetable of works, being submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval.

- a) The contaminated land assessment shall include a desk study to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The desk study shall detail the history of the site uses and propose a site investigation strategy based on the relevant information discovered by the desk study. The strategy shall be approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to investigations commencing on site.
- b) The site investigation, including relevant soil, soil gas, surface and groundwater sampling, shall be carried out by a suitably qualified and accredited consultant/contractor in accordance with a Quality Assured sampling and analysis methodology.
- c) A site investigation report detailing all investigative works and sampling on site, together with the results of analysis, risk assessment to any receptors and a proposed remediation strategy shall be submitted to the

Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority shall approve such remedial works as required prior to any remediation commencing on site. The works shall be of such a nature so as to render harmless the identified contamination given the proposed end-use of the site and surrounding environment including any controlled waters.

d) Approved remediation works shall be carried out in full on site under a quality assurance scheme to demonstrate compliance with the proposed methodology and best practice guidance). If during any works contamination is encountered which has not previously been identified then the additional contamination shall be fully assessed and an appropriate remediation scheme agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

e) Upon completion of the works, this condition shall not be discharged until a closure report has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The closure report shall include details of the proposed remediation works and the quality assurance certificates to show that the works have been carried out in full in accordance with the approved methodology. Details of any post remediation sampling and analysis to show the site has reached the required clean-up criteria shall be included in the closure report together with the necessary documentation detailing what waste materials have been removed from the site.

f) Where applicable, a monitoring and maintenance scheme to include monitoring the long-term effectiveness of the proposed remediation over an agreed period of time, and the provision of reports on the same, must be prepared and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Following completion of the measures identified in that scheme, and when the remediation objectives have been achieved, reports that demonstrate the effectiveness of the monitoring and maintenance carried out must be produced and submitted to the local planning authority.

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).

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 2 properties and on site. The overall consultation period expired on 16 February 2026. Following revisions and reductions to the scheme, further neighbour consultation was not considered necessary in this instance. The original objections are noted below and contributed to the revisions being submitted.

Five letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties, objecting on the following grounds:

- Green belt location – inappropriate development with no special circumstances. Previous applications have been refused.
- Agricultural land.
- Building will block countryside views.

- Reduction in amount of on-street parking
- Access and parking are insufficient for the size of the property
- Parking for current dwelling will be reduced by removing part of its parking for access to the new dwelling.
- Visibility onto the close is poor and there are no pedestrian walkways, as well as limited on street parking. Additional dwelling would increase risks to pedestrians and other vehicles. No demonstration that additional vehicle movements can be accommodated without detriment to safety or residential amenity.
- Proposed dwelling not ancillary to current dwelling.
- Impact on drainage – an additional house will add to the already overloaded sewage system.
- Noise and disturbance during construction and subsequently once built.
- Covenants on land restricting development.
- Lack of consultation and apparent attempt at concealing application.
- Suspicions over integrity of the Council if the application is approved, as the application relates to a former Councillor.

[The latter three points are not material planning considerations and involve matters to be dealt with outside of the planning process.]

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

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks permission for the change of use of the land to residential and the erection of a single storey self-build dwelling.

Following initial concerns about the layout and size, revised plans were submitted, which reduced the northern extent of the dwelling by over 2.2m. The amount of hardstanding on the site has also been reduced – the rear patio has been reduced, the perimeter hardstanding has been omitted and the driveway has been changed to permeable gravel.

The dwelling would be constructed within an area of land attached to the existing dwelling at No. 27, currently used as a paddock.

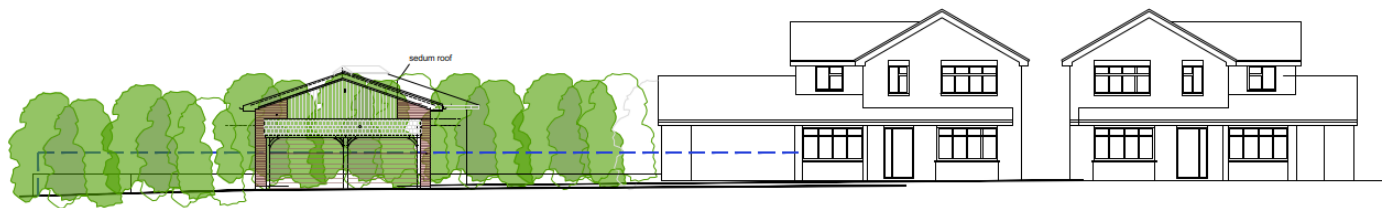
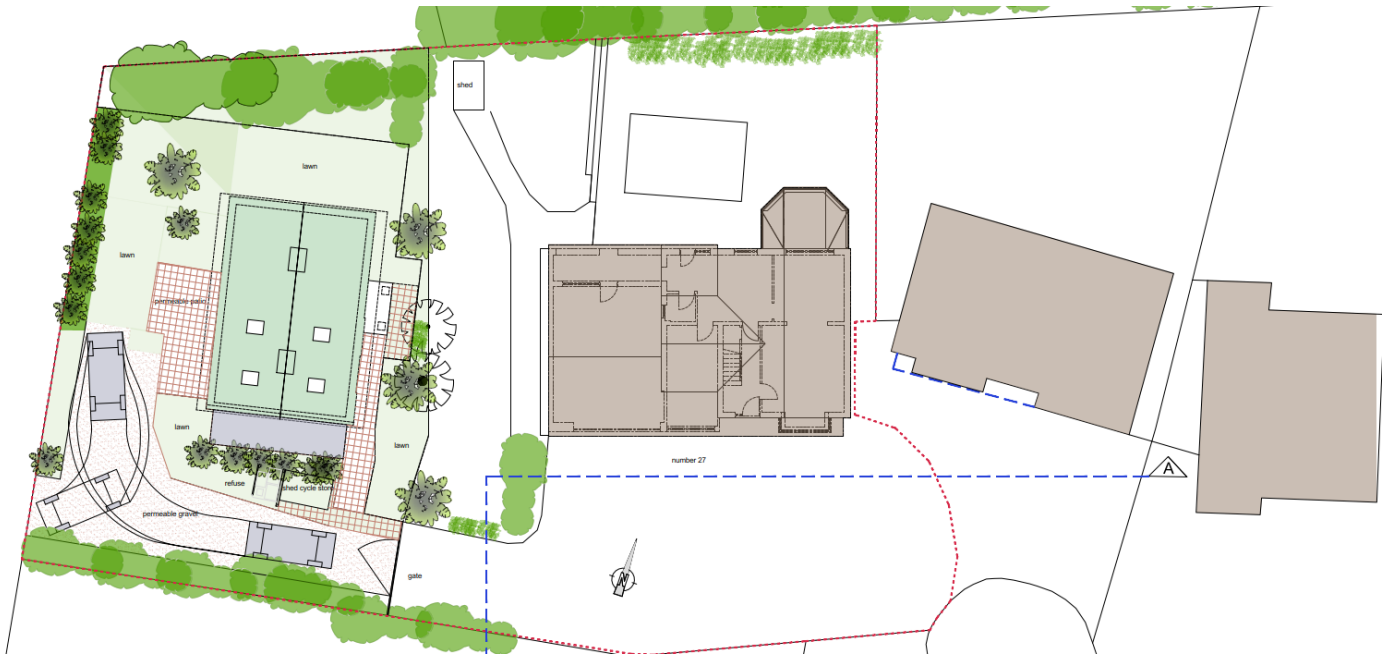
Aerial View of Site (Source: Planning Statement):



Existing Block Plan

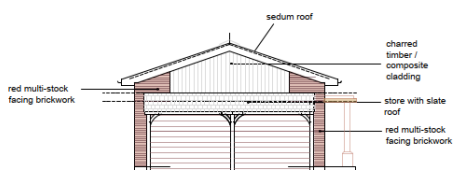


Proposed Block Plan:

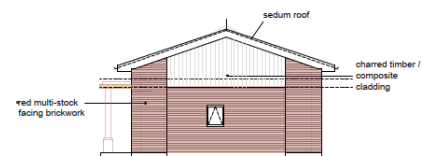


The dwelling would be single storey and would comprise an open plan kitchen/living/dining area, a bedroom, a bathroom and a utility/store. The gross internal floor area is 62.5m².

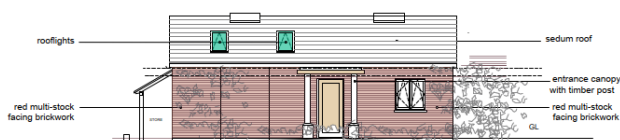
The entrance would be gained via an existing gate with vehicle access extending along the southern boundary of the site. A shed/cycle store and refuse storage would be alongside this access. There is a patio area to the western side of the dwelling and a path leading to the front door on the eastern side.



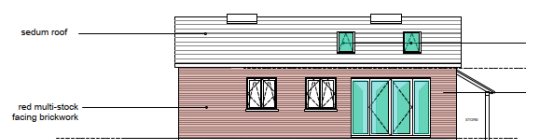
South Elevation



North Elevation



East Elevation



West Elevation

The house would have a sedum roof with four rooflights within it, and the walls would be red brick (red multi-stock with courses pointed with standard bucket handle mortar laid to Flemish Bond) with composite timber cladding on both side elevations (north and south). There would be an entrance canopy over the main door on the eastern elevation and an open store with a slate roof to the southern flank elevation.

Existing boundary treatments would remain with additional planting as shown on the plans.

Principle Issues

Whilst No. 27 The Russets, a detached two storey dwelling, is within the settlement boundary of Meopham, the application site which comprises a paddock, is located in the countryside, outside the rural settlement and in the Green Belt. It is also within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. Taking into account these designations, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are the principle of the development in the Green Belt, the impacts on landscape character and the appearance of the surrounding area, on residential amenities and on highways.

Green Belt Matters

Firstly, the use of the land must be considered. The site forms part of an area of agricultural land that is enclosed with 1m wire stock fencing and maintained by the applicant. The agricultural paddock area is separated from the garden of No. 27 with a matching wire stock fence, and this creates a sense of openness across the site characteristic of the Green Belt. This is at odds with the other properties to the south who purchased agricultural land at the same time, and who have erected 1.8m close boarded fencing:



As seen in the Planning History above, the previous application to change the use of the agricultural/grazing land to residential gardens for 27, 28, 29 and 30 The Russets was refused under application 20100007. Looking back over time, this land has been enclosed since March 2011 and No. 27 was approved planning permission for stock fencing around its land in 2012:

Google Earth Image 3/2011



Google Earth Image 4/2015



These applications all pre-date the current Development Plan (the Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and the NPPF (2024)), against which the current proposal must be determined.

As the application site is located in the Green Belt, paragraphs 142 and 143 and 152-156 of the NPPF (2024) and Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy (2014) are most relevant.

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 either one of the exceptions in paragraph 154 applies:

- a) *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) *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;*
- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- 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.*
- h) *Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*
 - i. *mineral extraction;*
 - ii. *engineering operations;*
 - iii. *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
 - iv. *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
 - v. *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
 - vi. *development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.*

In this instance, the proposed dwelling does not fall within any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF (2024) and would therefore be deemed inappropriate development.

The proposal then falls to be considered against paragraph 155 of the NPPF (2024), which provides a further exception for the development of homes.

The submitted Planning Statement considers the development is potentially not inappropriate under paragraph 155, which states as follows:

The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a) *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed⁵⁶;*
- c) *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework⁵⁷; and*
- d) ~~*Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.*~~

[Note – (d) is not relevant to this proposal as it does not meet the threshold for major development.]

The proposal relates to the development of a home and can therefore be considered under this paragraph. All the criteria should be met in order for the development to be deemed not inappropriate. Each point will

be considered in turn below:

(a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan

The definition of 'grey belt land' is set out in the Glossary (Annexe 2) of the NPPF (2024) and is defined as:

Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

Footnote 7 states:

The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

The proposal is not considered to be on land where the application of policies related to the areas or assets in footnote 7 of the NPPF (2024) provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development; the only applicable asset would relate to heritage as the site is within an archaeological notification area. This will be examined in more detail below.

Whether the site is Grey Belt Land?

Paragraph 155 (a) has two parts. One is the assessment of the land as grey belt (above) and the second part is a determination of whether the development would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

In relation to the second part of the definition, paragraph 143 of the NPPF (2024) sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt (with the relevant points highlighted):

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

The largest built-up area closest to the application site is the town of Gravesend. As Meopham is considered a village, it is not a large built up area. The site therefore does not contribute to the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (a). In relation to (b) the land is not close to a town and therefore does not prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. As Meopham is not a historic town point (d) does not apply.

Therefore, the proposal is not considered to fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. Point (a) of paragraph 155 is therefore met.

(b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed

In relation to criterion (b) of paragraph 155, 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 2014 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.

With regard to housing need, Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 sets out the Borough's objectively assessed need for housing over the Plan period (up to the year 2028) and finds that there is a need for at least 6,170 new dwellings to be delivered at variable rates over the plan period (2028).

Paragraph 78 of the NPPF 2024 states that the Borough's five-year land supply should be demonstrated against either the housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies or against the local housing need where strategic policies are more than 5 years old. As the Borough's Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) is more than 5 years old, the Government's Standard Method now forms the basis of the Borough's housing need against which supply must be identified.

Evidence now available shows that the Council is not able to demonstrate a five-year housing supply. A 3 year supply has most recently been calculated within the Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement 2024-2029 (dated February 2025), and as the delivery of housing was substantially below that required by the Housing Delivery Test (less than 75%) at 59%, which engages the presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires a 20% buffer to be applied to the Borough's housing need figure. As set out in the 2024-2029 statement, the Borough's five-year local housing need figure with a 20% buffer is 4,032 dwellings which equates to an annual requirement of 672 dwellings.

This engages footnote 8 of the NPPF 2024, which means that, for decision taking, as set out in Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF 2024, planning permission for applications involving the provision of housing should be granted, unless there are clear areas or asset protection reasons (including land designated as Green Belt, as is the case with the proposal site) for refusing the development or any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. A balancing exercise would therefore be undertaken when considering any future application for housing on these sites, to ensure that the correct weight is attached to the shortfall in meeting the five-year housing land supply requirement and the provisions within the NPPF.

In determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will therefore apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, having regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals when evaluated against development plan policy, the need to make efficient use of land (paragraph 129(c)) in context, the relative contribution the proposal makes towards the alleviation of any shortfall in housing delivery at that time and any other considerations material to the proposed development.

The proposed development would provide a net increase of 1 residential unit on the application site, which would contribute towards meeting the identified unmet housing needs of the Borough. Consequently, it would comply with criterion (b) of paragraph 155.

(c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework

Paragraph 110 states:

The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

Paragraph 115 states:

In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- (a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location;*
- (b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;*
- (c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and*
- (d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.*

The site is within close proximity to Meopham Railway Station, with lit footways making the station and bus stops on Wrotham Road walkable (approx. 1.6km). The site is also near to amenities at two local centres; Meopham Station and Meopham Parade. As such, it is considered a sustainable site and would comply with criterion (c).

On this basis, as the proposed development would comply with all the relevant criteria under paragraph 155 of the NPPF (2024).

Conclusion on Green Belt

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF (2024) states that the development of homes in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where all the paragraph 155 criteria apply. In this case, the proposal would meet the applicable criteria and as a result the development is not regarded as inappropriate, and the Green Belt would not be harmed. The proposal is acceptable on this basis.

Landscape Impact

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.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024 aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The application site is located in the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area within the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA) 2009 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 LCA will be taken into account in determining applications.

The Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area has gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland. The overall condition of the landscape is good and has moderate sensitivity. It is recommended that key landscape elements should be conserved and reinforced.

The application site is read in the context of surrounding residential development and is therefore not considered to be within a visually sensitive area. This proposal for one single storey dwelling on the established rural edge of a built settlement, with a barn appearance, and with a low pitched sedum roof. Such a proposal will not adversely affect the wider landscape character area, and the proposal will therefore comply with the requirements of Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

However, no specific hard and soft landscaping submissions have been included with the proposal. Given the rural location, and there is a concern about the amount of hardstanding over the site, particularly where it is proposed around the whole of the dwelling. It is considered that this could be reduced further, and it will be important that the proposed materials for surfacing are also appropriate. Landscaping details should therefore be conditioned to ensure the site is appropriately landscaped taking account of its position in a Landscape Character Area.

Design, Character and Appearance

Section 12 of the NPPF 2024 relates to achieving well-designed and beautiful places and sets out the Government's requirements in relation to design issues. Paragraph 131 emphasises the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. 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.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 also 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.

Whilst it is recognised that development which makes effective use of land should be supported (paragraph 124 of the NPPF 2024), this comes with the proviso that it should safeguard and improve the environment and not conflict with other policies in the NPPF. Relevant to this proposal, paragraph 129 of the NPPF states that developments that makes efficient use of land should be supported, taking into account the identified need for different types of housing, the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), and the importance of securing well-designed places.

In a similar vein, Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy sets out that new housing development is expected to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes, taking into account the existing character of the area and evidence of local need to create sustainable and balanced communities. The proposal forms a 1 bedroom detached dwelling and would therefore be supported by Policy CS14, providing design and character is also acceptable.

Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy seeks to achieve a minimum density for new residential development in the rural area of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph), subject to the overriding consideration that all new housing will be at a density that is consistent with achieving good design and does not compromise the distinctive character of the area. The application site measures 0.11 hectares; 1 dwelling on this site would be well below the density target at 9 dph and would be appropriate for the area.

The proposed building has been designed in a barn style, with a low-pitched green sedum roof. It is acknowledged that the design is at odds with the style of the neighbouring properties in The Russets, which are generally modern two storey detached houses. This is intentional in order to respect the slightly more agricultural setting of the proposed dwelling. The position of the proposed dwelling also differs from the line of built development around the close, as it will sit outside of this. However, due to the position of the plot being tucked away to the side at the end of the cul-de-sac, this would be a one-off development that would not be able to be replicated elsewhere due to the restrictive size and orientation of neighbouring properties.

The general appearance of the proposed dwelling is considered to be subservient and appropriate for the edge of this built settlement with agricultural fields to the west. The green roof will help soften the appearance of the building and add to the biodiversity provision on the site. It will not compete with the existing neighbouring dwellings, and due to its set back to the side of No. 27 and its low scale, it will not be obtrusive within the street scene:

Google Earth Street View:



On balance, the proposed dwelling is considered to be appropriate in terms of its size, scale and appearance, and would respect the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would comply with the requirements of Policies CS14, CS15 and CS19 of the Core Strategy (2014) and paragraphs 124, 129, 131 and 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, and avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution.

Future Occupiers

The proposal complies 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 62.5m², exceeds the minimum standard for a 1 bedroom, 1 storey dwelling (the largest 2 person, 1 bed unit would require a minimum GIFA of 50m²). The has been reduce from the original submission, as it was considered the property was excessive in size for its most location. The Agent agreed to reduce the sized of the dwelling by some 10m².

The proposed garden amenity space would measure approximately 130m² (the area measured included the garden areas to the north and west of the building). The proposed accommodation and amenity space would therefore be acceptable for future occupiers.

Due to the detached nature of the existing and proposed dwellings, which would be well separated, there are no neighbouring properties that would cause any unacceptable amenity impacts on the future occupiers of the dwelling in terms of loss of light or privacy.

View of flank of No. 27:



The garden area for No. 27 will remain as existing. The proposed dwelling will be located on the paddock to its side, which is fenced off from the existing garden. The remaining garden area for No. 27 will therefore be acceptable.

Neighbouring Properties

The neighbouring property most likely to be affected by the proposal due to proximity would be No. 27. The neighbouring property to the south (No. 29) is well separated and orientated away, and as the proposed dwelling is single storey it will be largely screened from the view of this property. The presence of one additional dwelling within the existing residential context of detached single dwellings is unlikely to cause any significant amenity or environmental impacts on No. 29 over and above what would be expected to be experienced in such surroundings.

View to south towards boundary with No. 29:



In terms of the impact on the neighbouring dwelling No. 27, the proposed new house will be largely in line

with building lines and will not have any dominating impact on the existing property or affect light or privacy to any significant degree. Existing flank windows to No. 27 are all non-habitable (from previous floor plans, the only first floor window that would face the proposed dwelling serves a bathroom). Ground floor windows for the existing and proposed properties would be obscured by boundary treatments, which where new, should be conditioned for details to be provided.

Overall, the proposal is not considered to adversely affect amenity and would comply with the requirements of the SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy (2014) and paragraph 135f of the NPPF (2024).

Parking and Highways

Neighbour objections have been received in relation to parking and highway safety matters, particularly relating to a reduction in on-street parking and insufficient access.

The proposed development should be considered against Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy (2014) which states that new development should mitigate the impact on the public highway and that transport assessments should be provided and implemented to ensure delivery of travel choice and sustainable opportunities for travel.

Furthermore, it states that sufficient car parking in new developments will be provided in accordance with adopted standards which will reflect the availability of alternative means of transport accessibility to services and facilities. This is also reflected by saved Policy T1 of the Local Plan (1994), which requires proposed development to be adequately served by the highway network and Saved Policy P3, which sets out highways parking standards for development.

The proposed development would utilise the existing access serving Longreach, with a dedicated gated driveway with sufficient space for two vehicles. This meets the adopted parking standard for this type of development. The supporting plans show adequate turning space for vehicles to enter and egress in forward gear. No. 27 will retain its driveway, with turning and access to its integral garage. There is no existing on-street parking provision and therefore this remains unaffected. In highway terms, this proposal for one additional dwelling is not considered to have any detrimental or severe impact on the highway network.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Heritage

The NPPF 2024 places great significance on the desirability of sustaining and enhancing heritage assets, and on new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 203). This is echoed in Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014, which states that the significance of the Borough's heritage assets and their setting should always be preserved or enhanced. Saved Policy TC7 states that development on important archaeological sites will not normally be permitted.

The site is within an Area of Archaeological Potential. KCC Heritage has confirmed that no archaeological measures are required in respect of the development. It is therefore unlikely the proposal would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact.

In this respect the proposal complies with the relevant requirements of saved Policy TC7 of the Local Plan 1994, Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Section 16 of the NPPF 2024.

Environmental Protection

There is no objection to the application in respect of environmental protection matters. However, as the land has been in agricultural use, there is a risk of contamination through the use/application of herbicides/pesticides and also fuel/oils associated with farm machinery. A contaminated land assessment

will therefore be needed and should be conditioned, as well as drainage/sewerage and lighting informatives. The Environment Agency has no objections but has also requested a drainage informative.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity net gain is a way of creating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity.

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This statutory framework is referred to as 'biodiversity net gain' in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

In this case, the proposed development is covered by an exemption: it is a self-build development and meets the conditions necessary to qualify for such an exemption. Therefore, the development would not be subject to biodiversity net gain. However, the proposed green sedum roof will add to the biodiversity provision on the site, and further details of biodiversity enhancement measures can be included in an appropriate condition to ensure such provision on site, as well as a lighting condition to ensure a wildlife sensitive lighting scheme is brought forward.

Conclusion

The proposed development would provide a net increase of 1 dwelling on the site and would offer a small contribution towards meeting general housing need in the Borough. Accordingly, this weighs in support of the application, particularly where evidence has shown that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing supply.

This also has to be balanced against safeguarding and improving the environment, matters which are sought throughout the NPPF (2024). In this case, as discussed above, it is considered that the proposal is not inappropriate in the Green Belt. Furthermore, it is also acceptable in relation to the design and impact on the application site and the character and appearance of the surrounding buildings and landscape, and with regards to residential amenity and highways matters, and complies with the requirements of Policies CS11, CS12, CS14, CS15 and CS19 of the Core Strategy (2014), saved Policies T1, T5 and P3 of the Local Plan (1994), and paragraphs 115, 124, 129, 131, 135 and 154 of the NPPF 2024. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

Permission subject to conditions.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Mrs Faye Walsh
Signed:		Signed:	

Dated:	14 April 2026	Dated:	16 April 2026
---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------