



Planning Promotion Agreement

A smaller version of the George Nelson logo, consisting of the text 'George Nelson' in a bold sans-serif font, with a red house icon replacing the 'o' in 'Nelson'.

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Planning Statement

Retrospective building works to convert ancillary residential building for use as a home office and home gym
at

Clijon Farm, Whitehill Road, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0NY

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1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for Retrospective building works to convert ancillary residential building to be used for purposes incidental to the main dwelling (as a home office and home gym) at Clijon Farm, Whitehill Road, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0NY.

The document outlines the relevant local and national planning policy, and the material planning considerations in this instance.

2. Site Context and Description

Clijon Farm, located on White Hill Road in Meopham, Kent, sits within the Green Belt and a designated National Landscape Character Area (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB).

Over the years, the property has undergone various modifications, including extensions and alterations to its access points. It has also been subject to planning applications related to walls, gates, and roadway construction.

R/11/0262 Retention of external staircase and raised decking area at the rear; retention of open fronted gazebo, boundary walls, fences and gates with stepped landscaping to the east of the main building. Approved 01.08.2011

GR/11/0263 Retention of raised patio area incorporating retaining walls. Approved 23.12.2011

GR/11/0264 Retention of 7 lighting columns. Refused 01.08.2011 and dismissed at appeal dated 13.12.2011

GR/11/0265 Retention of walls and gates located at original entrance to the site. Refused 01.08.2011 and dismissed at appeal dated 13.12.2011

GR/11/0274 Non-material amendment to permission

GR10/0770 for infill panels in wrought iron and provision of planting area in front of north wall of the entrance. Approved 08.09.2011

20130484 Erection of single storey rear extension to form playroom, two bedrooms and bathroom/wc and single storey front extension to form study. Approved 17.10.2013

20150595 LDC for Existing storage building attached to the existing stable block used for storage associated with the dwelling. Refused 25.08.2015



3. Background

This application follows building works carried out by the landowner to modernise a dilapidating ancillary residential building to make it more useable space for use as a home office and gym. The building works have been carried out to make good the previous structure and ensure the building is more energy-efficient.

There have been communications with the council Planning Enforcement Officer, who has been advised by the landowner that the building works carried out should be considered to constitute a refurbishment of the original building.

4. Proposal

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the building works that have been necessary for converting the building to be used for purposes incidental to the use of the main dwelling as a family home.

The owner intends for the building to be used as a home office and gym, and therefore the use of the building would remain as it has historically been recognized, as a use which is incidental to the use of the main house as a dwelling.

The works that have been carried out to modernise the building enable it to serve such purposes in a comfortable and energy-efficient manner. The building has been re-clad and re-roofed with modern materials, and the framework has been replaced. The owner has stated that all work has been carried out whilst the building remained in situ and it is strongly considered by the owner that the works carried out to the building should be considered to constitute the maintenance and upkeep of the building.

- Timber framework has been replaced, bit by bit, with new timber framework
- Timber cladded elevations have been replaced with dark-stained timber cladding
- Metal sheet roofing has been replaced with contemporary metal sheet roofing

On this basis, given that the replacement materials have been on a like-for-like basis and therefore do not materially alter the external appearance of a pre-existing building, it is considered by the owner that the works should actually be lawful and therefore not requiring of planning permission.

Nevertheless, following recommendations from the Planning Enforcement Officer, this application has been submitted in the form of a planning application, in order to allow the council to regularise the matter and impose a suitable condition to ensure the building continues to be used for purposes incidental to the main dwelling.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

The principle of the proposal aligns with national and local planning policies, including:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Emphasises sustainable development and high-quality design

The NPPF supports sustainable development and the efficient use of land. Paragraph 154 states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is generally inappropriate, except for certain exceptions. In this case, the specific circumstances are considered to constitute valid exceptional circumstances;

- 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;
 - As demonstrated by the plans submitted, the works to the building at this site have actually reduced the overall massing of the building, such that there would clearly not be 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;
 - There has been some dialogue with the council's Enforcement Officer with respect to whether the extent of the works carried out would amount to a 'rebuild' or replacement of the previously existing building. Whilst the Applicant strongly contends that the extent of works carried out should be considered to amount to a conversion of the existing building, it is a valid and material consideration that, notwithstanding any ambiguity as to whether the works should be considered to constitute a rebuild, the NPPF clearly sets out that the replacement of a building is acceptable an exceptional circumstance for the construction of a building in the Green Belt, where the building would be in the same use and not materially larger than the original building. In this case, the submitted plans clearly show that the existing building is in fact materially smaller than the original building, and the intended use of the building would remain as an ancillary residential use, incidental the use of the main dwelling at Clifton Farm.

In summary in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework, the conversion of an existing ancillary residential building aligns with the principles of preserving the openness of the Green Belt (even if it may be considered to constitute a rebuild) as it does not introduce new built form but rather adapts an existing structure for modern use.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

The Gravesham Local Plan sets out policies for development within the borough, including:

- Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development) – Supports development that makes efficient use of land while respecting local character.



- The Council undertook 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.
- Policy CS12 (Green Belt) – Reinforces national Green Belt protections but allows for the re- use of existing buildings where appropriate.
- Policy CS19 (Design and Development Principles) – Requires high-quality design that respects the character and setting of the area.

The proposed conversion maintains the existing footprint of the building, ensuring minimal impact on the openness of the Green Belt while enhancing its functionality.

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

Policy C13 of the Saved Policies of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review relates to Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside. It says (vii) proposals for outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be (1) well designed, (2) discreetly sited and (3) subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot. Works to an existing outbuilding are not to be considered against part vii of Policy C13 on the basis that the work is not a proposal for an outbuilding. Nonetheless, the works are considered to have fallen within the intended parameters of this Policy, as set out as follows;

- Well-designed – the building is well-designed with contemporary materials and modern, energy-efficient openings.
- Discreetly-sited – the building is situated at the rear of the site when viewed from the public highway. It is largely screened from any views from the highway by the main dwelling itself and the topography of the site.
- Subservient – The dark colouration of the building, the use of lightweight materials, and the lower position of the building relative to the main dwelling, ensures the building is read as being subservient.

The Gravesham Borough Council Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

Reference has been had to this document and whilst it is considered to relate specifically to extensions to dwellings, as opposed to outbuildings within the established residential curtilage, the principles of this Supplementary Planning Document are considered to have been adhered to



insofar that the works comply with the key principles of new development. Specifically, the principles listed in the Supplementary Planning Document are addressed as follows;

- The existing building benefits from high design quality and character, which given the timber cladding and dark materials used, ensures that the building continues to appear ancillary to the main dwelling.
- The building is set against the backdrop of the steep incline of land to the north and so does not cause any overshadowing issues
- The openings on the building all face to the south over land within the curtilage of the main dwelling and so there is not any loss of privacy issues.
- There is no loss of amenity by appearing overbearing or creating any sense of enclosure.
- Architectural detailing is appropriate for the appearance as a residential outbuilding.
- Materials used ensure the building appears subordinate to the main dwelling, which is constructed with heavier-appearing rendering and is set at a high topography on the site.
- The extent of the historically established gardens remains unaffected and the extent of tree coverage remains in tact.

Given the above policy framework, the retrospective application is considered compliant with national and local planning policies, supporting its approval.



6. Material Planning Considerations

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan “unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

This Section seeks to set out that there are not any material planning considerations which indicate that this application should not be approved in accordance with the Development Plan

The retrospective nature of this application does not alter its compliance with planning policy or its impact on material planning considerations. The key factors supporting approval include:

Principle of Development

The conversion of an existing ancillary residential building aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Gravesham Local Plan, which support the re-use of existing structures rather than new development. The proposal does not introduce additional built form but adapts an existing building, ensuring efficient land use.

Impact on the Green Belt

The site is located within the Green Belt, where development is generally restricted. However, Paragraph 154 of the NPPF allows 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.

Reference has been had to Officer's delegated comments in relation to an approved planning application for the 'Replacement of outbuilding forming single storey gym and retrospective external repairs to other outbuildings' at White House Farm, School Lane, Higham, Rochester (under reference 20240733). There (see Appendix 1), Officer's noted in relation to the new building;

“In terms of the proposed size and height of the proposed replacement gym building, it will be smaller in footprint than the existing structure, but slightly higher. The use of the building will remain the same, as it is a building within a residential curtilage in incidental residential use. On this basis, as the proposal is for a replacement building that will be in the same use and will not be materially larger than the one it replaces, it would therefore fall within one of the exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023 and would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt”.

In the case of the current application, the converted structure will also be the same footprint than the pre-existing structure. The eaves height is slightly lower and ridge height is slightly higher following improvements to the roof of the building, but ensuring that the overall height is no higher than the building had always been when taking account of the vents that were formerly situated at the top of the roof. It also remains in the same use, as it is a building within residential curtilage in incidental residential use. It is therefore respectfully concluded that the existing building in this case must also fall within one of the exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023 and would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.



Impact on Landscape Character

The building is sited within a National Character Area (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB). The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan requires development to preserve landscape character.

With regard to the impact on the landscape character, Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 is relevant to this application, relating to green infrastructure. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) 2009 will be taken into account in determining applications.

The site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. Whilst the proposals would result in some new built development on the site, notably in the form of the new materials used to convert the pre-existing building into a useable home office / gym building, this would not represent a significant change in the character and appearance of the site and would not therefore result in any adverse visual impact on landscape character.

Overall, as the works have made no significant alterations to the site's external appearance, and as there has been a sustainable re-use of a building, it is considered to preserve the character of the area and the landscape quality of the surrounding rural area. The proposals are therefore considered acceptable in design and landscape terms and would comply with the requirements of Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, and paragraphs 135 and 180 of the NPPF 2023.

Design and Appearance

Development Plan policy places considerable emphasis on the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The converted building remains in keeping with the character of Clijon Farm and its surroundings. The Gravesham Local Plan (Policy CS19) requires high-quality design that respects local character, which this proposal achieves by:

- Utilising traditional timber weatherboarding but with a black-stained finish to reduce visual impact
- Simple building form avoiding intrusive alterations that would disrupt the aesthetic harmony of the site.
- Modernising opening positions and sizes to enhance usability while maintaining the rural character.



Residential Amenity

The building works does not cause any negative impact neighbouring properties or public rights of way. The home office and gym use:

- Generates no additional noise or disturbance beyond typical residential activity, or the alternative use of the building prior to recent improvements to the building.
- Does not affect privacy or outlook for nearby properties as it is set at a lower land level than the nearest neighbouring property, and all openings within the building are situated on the southern elevation facing the curtilage of the application property.

Highways and Parking

The proposal does not introduce additional traffic or require any new vehicle movements to the site by itself. The existing site layout accommodates the home office and gym use without affecting highway safety or parking availability.

Sustainability and Efficient Land Use

The conversion supports sustainable development principles by:

- Improving the heat retention of the building by using airtight replacement windows and door openings.
- Enhancing the functionality of the site, aligning with modern living needs.
- Minimising environmental impact, as no significant alterations affect the landscape.



7. Conclusion

The retrospective application is policy-compliant, preserves the openness of the Green Belt, respects the AONB, and maintains residential amenity. Given these considerations, the proposal is justified and should be approved.

We respectfully request that the planning authority grants permission for this proposal.

8. Suggested Planning Conditions

George Nelson aims to assist Planning Officers with their decision-making, and in the interests of assisting with the determination of this application in a positive and pragmatic manner, it is respectfully suggested that the following planning conditions may be applied and would be supported by the Applicant;

- The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- The development hereby permitted relates only to the retrospective works that have been carried out, as per the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure the quality of the development is maintained and to prevent harm to the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- The use of the annex hereby approved shall only be incidental to the domestic use of the main dwelling house and shall not be used for any other purpose.

Reason: In the interest of the character and openness of the area.



9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Officer's delegated comments in relation to an approved planning application for the 'Replacement of outbuilding forming single storey gym and retrospective external repairs to other outbuildings' at White House Farm, School Lane, Higham, Rochester (under reference 20240733)

