



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Application No:	20230074
Location:	Mitford House, Wrotham Road, Culverstone, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0QW
Description:	Installation of roof alterations to convert attic into habitable space with front and rear dormer windows
Applicant:	Mr Sonny Singh
Site Visit:	28.02.23

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application Form - dated 26/01/2023;
- Drawing No. PL.1 Rev A - Elevations (West) Front - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.2 Rev A - Elevations (East) Rear - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.3 Rev A - Elevations (North) Side - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.4 Rev A - Elevations (South) Adj - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.5 Rev A - Section S-01 - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.6 Rev A - Section S-02 - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.7 Rev A - Section S-03 - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.8 Rev A - Floor Plans (Ground) - Existing and Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.9 Rev A - Floor Plans (First) - Existing;
- Drawing No. PL.10 Rev A - Floor Plans (First) - Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.11 Rev A - Floor Plan (Second) - Proposed;
- Drawing No. PL.12 Rev A - Roof plan - Existing;
- Drawing No. PL.13 Rev A - Roof Plan - Proposed; and
- Drawing No. PL.14 Rev A - Block Plan - Existing and Proposed with Site Location Plan.

Plan Note

The plans were submitted with erroneous titles, confusing the front and rear elevations. The agent was not contacted regarding this issue as it does not impact on the reading of the plans for any neighbouring property with knowledge of the dwelling.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20120904	Application for minor material amendment to planning permission reference number 20110638 for the retention of outbuilding to form gym and a shed store and construction of new pitched roof over existing garage; for removal of the side shed structure, double doors and window and return the room to a store as permitted.	Permitted	12.12.2012

20110638	Retention of outbuilding to form gym and a shed store and construction of new pitched roof over existing garage.	Permitted	22.09.2011
20040481	Erection of part two storey and part single storey rear extension to form kitchen/breakfast room and lobby at ground floor level with bedroom at first floor level and construction of a dormer window in side (southern) roof slope to provide an en-suite bathroom in the roof space.	Permitted	02.07.2004
19760782	Erection of a block of 3 stables at rear.	Permitted	16.11.1976
19530132	Erection of private garage.	Permitted	06.08.1953
19530072	Erection of dwellinghouse.	Permitted	06.05.1953
19500207	Erection of a Chalet.	Permitted	10.01.1952

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 - Vehicle Parking Standards
- C13 – Extension to dwellings in the countryside

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) 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 (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural 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)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)

- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

Meopham Parish Council - No objection subject to it meeting the requirements of GBC's Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide.

Internal Consultees

GBC Highways Officer - This dwelling is located in a large plot with a significant driveway and as such there are no car parking issues. However, to comply with standards there should be one secure covered cycle parking space per bedroom, so two cycle parking spaces should be provided.

Local Ward Councillors - No comment received

Neighbouring properties

A notice was displayed on site 9th February 2023.

In addition, eight surrounding properties were consulted and no responses were received. The overall consultation period expired on 3rd March 2023.

Officer's Analysis

Site Description

Mitford House is a two storey detached property located on the eastern side of the highway, on a generous plot within the Metropolitan Green Belt.



The property has been extended previously through a part two storey, part single storey rear extension and dormer window on the flank roof slope (ref. 20040481). A porch and conservatory were added to the property, however there is no planning history for these additions. Furthermore, there are a number of outbuildings on site including a gym and stables.

Proposed Development

This application proposes alterations to the roof, with the erection of front and rear dormer windows to create space for habitable rooms.

The proposal would increase the gradient of the roof pitch on all elevations and create a table-top flat roof. The height of the dwelling will remain the same, however the characteristic Dutch gable roof will be removed. There would be one pitched roof dormer window on the front elevation and two smaller pitched roof dormers on the rear.

Existing



Proposed



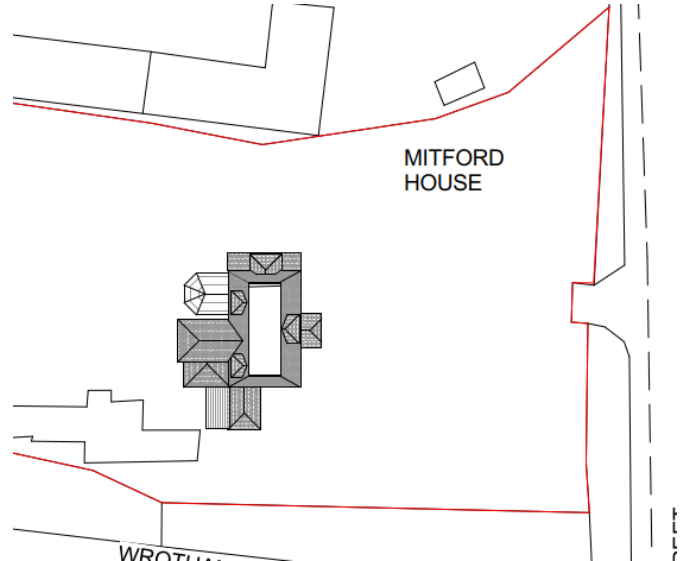
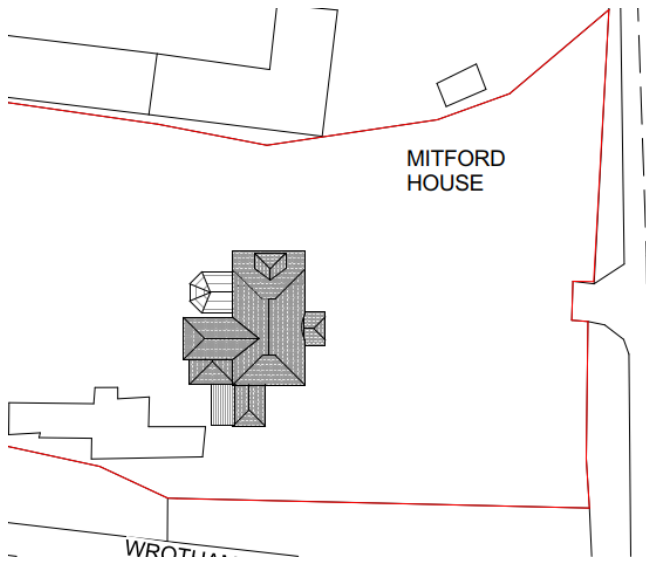
The dimensions of the dormer windows are listed below:

Front Dormer:

- Depth - 1.55m
- Width - 2.48m
- Height (max) - 2.75m
- Height (eave) - 1.9m

Rear Dormers:

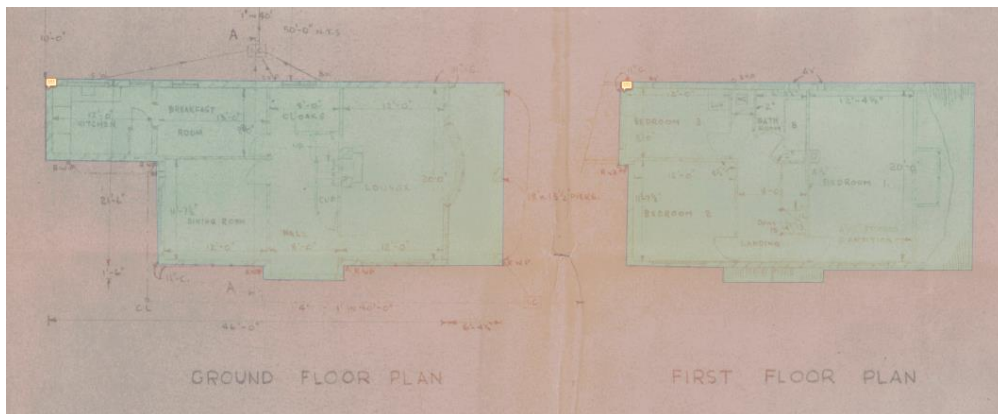
- Depth - 1.3m
- Width - 1.96m
- Height (max) - 2.45m
- Height (eave) - 1.8m



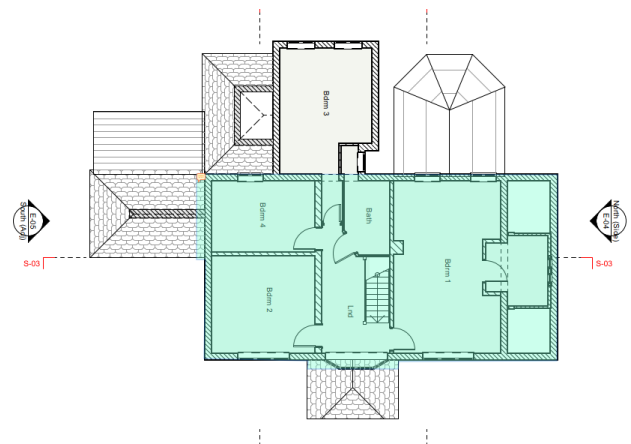
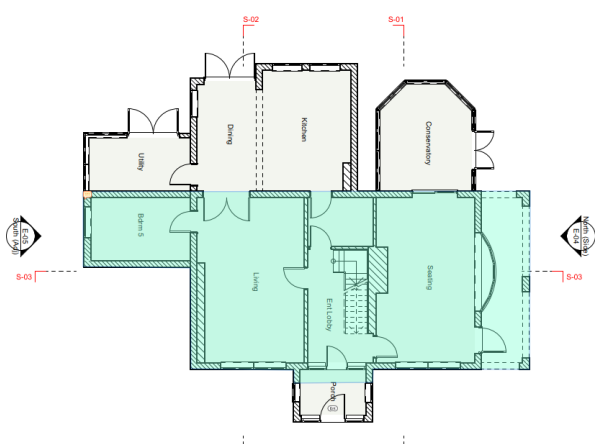
The extensions will be constructed using matching materials. The development will create space in the loft for two double bedrooms and a shower room, with no other change to the ground and first floor levels.

The Original Dwelling

Given the properties location within the Green Belt it is important to establish the 'original dwelling'. The original permission for a new dwelling was granted in 1953 (ref. 19530072), the below extracts show the original dwelling (highlighted in green):



The overly plan below compare the original floor plans to the existing floor plans.



Extension to Dwelling

The application site is located in the Green Belt and as such Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014) is relevant. Development in the urban area is prioritised as the sustainable location for development. In the rural area, Policy CS02 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, i.e. in the Green Belt, will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the LPCS.

There are five principle issues in determining this application;

1. Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?
2. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
3. Any very special circumstances?
4. Impact on the Landscape;
5. The effect on the character and appearance of the area; and
6. Other matters.

1. Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

There are strict policy considerations within the Green Belt whereby paragraph 147 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 goes on to say that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless it falls within the specified exceptions. The relevant exception to consider for this application is part c of paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021), which states that it may be acceptable to extend or alter a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

In determining this proposal account will be taken of Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (LPFR) (1994) which relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. It sets out a number of criteria that should be met when considering proposals for domestic extensions. As the policy pre-dates the NPPF, the weight attached to the policy must be considered carefully, with greater weight being given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021).

In particular Saved Policy C13 (LPFR) (1994) places an overall limit on extensions of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling unless the increased floor space has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling (criteria ii). It also requires the massing, scale and form of any extension to be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting (criteria vi). It is considered that these factors are relevant in determining whether the size of an extension is proportionate and as such, these aspects of the policy are broadly in line with the NPPF (2021) and should be afforded due weight.

	Original Dwelling	Existing Dwelling	Proposed Dwelling	% increase above original
Footprint (m²)	92.4m ²	147.7m ²	147.7m ² (+0m ²)	59.8%
Internal Floorspace Area (m²)	154.8m ²	219.2m ²	264m ² (+44.8m ²)	70.5%
Volume	-		-	-

The calculations demonstrate that the proposed additions, along with previous extensions, to the original dwellinghouse exceed the one third limit set out in saved policy C13. Therefore, in purely numerical terms, the cumulative extensions to the property are contrary to the local plan Green Belt policy, potentially representing a disproportionate increase over the original floor area of the building. The volume calculations of the extensions, over the original dwelling, have not been calculated in this application and will instead be visually assessed.

However the numerical calculation forms only a part of the overall assessment. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) states that it may be acceptable to extend or alter a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It is does not provide a figure.

The proposed alterations to the property are not considered to be disproportionate to the original dwelling. Although increasing the perceived bulk of the roof considerably, by increasing the pitch of the roof and creating a table-top flat roof section, this is not significant additions over and above the original roof space. As such, the development hereby proposed is not inappropriate development given that the roof is not out of proportion to the original dwelling.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would result in a disproportionate addition to the property in Green Belt terms and as such the proposal would be inappropriate development which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is therefore contrary to Policy CS02 (LPCS), Policy C13 (LPFR) and to paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021).

2. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

Any new built form of development is likely to impact on the openness of the Green Belt, however it is important to establish the degree of harm. The development does not involve any increase in footprint, however would add significant bulk to the property by virtue of increasing the roof pitch and introducing a table-top flat roof section.

The changes are contrary to good design strategies (assessed later in this report) and add perceived bulk to the dwelling, which would be harmful to the open character of the Green Belt. The proportions of the existing dwelling are well considered, with the Dutch gable roof being subordinate to the dwelling and with matching pitches on the flat catslide and the single storey side projection. This symmetry and balance would be eroded as a result of the extension creating a bulky and boxy roof form.

Notwithstanding this, whilst the additions would have a minor impact on the openness of the Green Belt through increased perceived bulk this is not considered to be significant impact, and on balance the open permanence of the Green Belt will be preserved.

Reference back to paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF (2021) informs us that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Whether the development causes any other harm and whether there are any other relevant considerations to balance the overall planning argument, should now be considered.

3. Very special circumstances

No specific arguments have been put forward by the applicant in relation to the assessment of 'very special circumstances'.

4. Impact on the Landscape

In addition to being within the Green Belt, the site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. This area is characterised by gently undulating topography with a mix of arable and pasture farmland, three large settlements located along the A227 and traditional architecture surrounding village greens providing local vernacular.

Policy CS12 (LPCS) seeks to protect the Green infrastructure within the Borough and states at 5.7.26 the overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced.

The proposed extensions are not considered to cause any detrimental harm to the character of the Meopham Downs landscape. The property fronts Wrotham Road which is a main arterial road and relatively well developed, as such the development will not impact the setting of the Meopham Downs.

5. The effect on the character and appearance of the area

Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) states that new development will be visually attractive and locally distinctive. It should also conserve and enhance the character of the local built and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding area.

Gravesham's newly published Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guidance SPD (2021) set out key principles for new developments. This SPD highlights the importance of extensions being subordinate to the host building, that compliment and correspond with the character of the dwelling and wider context. Furthermore, the SPD states that extensions should match roof styles and pitches, and that *"in most cases a flat-roofed extension to the front or side, or where clearly visible from the street, will not be supported (unless the original house main roof is flat)"*.

The roof alterations hereby proposed are considered to be poor design by virtue of failing to respond or respect the character of the dwelling. The existing property has an attractive Dutch gable roof, which matches the pitches of the catslide roof and side projections on either flank side, and therefore has a balanced and symmetry that contributes to its attractiveness. Moreover, there is an attractive eyebrow roof feature above the bay. These features will be removed to facilitate the dormer window and the bulky and boxy roof form, with a table-top flat roof section. Therefore, the extensions erode the attractive characteristics of the property and fail to compliment or correspond to its original character contrary to Gravesham's Design SPD (2021).



Furthermore, the introduction of the table-top flat roof conflicts with the existing roof style and pitch contrary to the SPD. The flat roof exacerbates the poor design, bulky appearance and harsh edges. This flat roof section is also out of character with the vernacular of the surrounding area, where all other properties have pitched roofs with traditional ridges and is contrary to policy guidance that seeks extensions to correspond with the wider context and integrate with the surrounding area.

The placement of the dormer windows is also considered to be poor design. The large front dormer is central on the roof slope, but its scale dominates the roof and its large window is at odds with the existing fenestration of the property. The SPD states that front dormers are generally not acceptable, unless there is an existing character of such forms in the surrounding context, in this case the application property is unique in the street scene but the front dormer is considered to detrimentally impact the character and appearance of the property.

There is no objection to the rear dormers which are not visible from public vantage point and therefore would not impact on the character of the property.

Overall, the proposed alterations and extension to the roof by virtue of bulky and incongruous flat roofs are poor design contrary to Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 (NPPF).

6. Other matters

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires that all development should be 'fit for purpose' and be 'adaptable to allow changes to meet the need of users' and that 'the design and layout of new residential development, including conversion, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines' (RLG) (2020).

The proposal will safeguard the amenity of future occupiers. The garden is large and will not be significantly reduced as part of this development. The rooms proposed are in accordance with Gravesham's Residential Layout Guidelines (2020) and will receive sufficient natural light. Therefore, the development is considered to safeguard the amenity of future occupiers in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2021).

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CS19 (LPCS) seeks to protect amenity and ensure acceptable future living conditions. Section 16 of the NPPF (2021) also assists and seeks to ensure developments will function well, do not undermine quality of life and create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit and seeks to "secure high-quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings".

There will be no impact on the amenity of adjoining properties in terms of loss of light, overlooking, sense of enclosure or loss of outlook. As such the proposal is considered to safeguard the amenity of adjoining properties in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 (NPPF).

Parking and Highways

There are no parking or highways issues relating to the proposed development.

Conclusion

The application has been fully considered and is contrary to local and national planning policy.

The proposed roof alterations are detrimental to the character of the existing property and are poor design. The increased roof pitch and new flat roof section are at odds with the existing roof features and erode the attractive characteristics of the property and create an unbalanced and incongruous appearance, with the front dormer dominating the roof space further impacting on the appearance. As such, the proposed development is in conflict with good design strategies set out in Gravesham's Design Guidance SPD (2021), and the application is contrary Policy CS19 (LPCS), and Section 12 of the NPPF (2021).

Therefore, it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

Recommendation

Refusal

(For detailed reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mr Ethan Bonthron	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	17 th March 2023	Dated:	17 March 2023