

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 30 September 2020

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Chair)
Cllr Harold Craske (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Conrad Broadley
Brian Francis
Bob Lane
Elizabeth Mulheran
Tony Rice
Gary Harding
Lyn Milner

Vicky Nutley	Deputy Head of Legal Services (Place)(Medway Council)
Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Richard McEllistrum	Planning Manager (Development Management)
Peter Price	Principal Planner
Richard Hart	Principal Planner (Major Sites)
Dave Herrington	Digital Manager
Lauren Wallis	Committee Services Officer (minutes)

19. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Steve Thompson and Cllr Lyn Milner attended as his substitute.

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Jordan Meade and Cllr Gary Harding attended as his substitute.

20. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 2 September 2020 were signed by the Chair.

21. Declarations of Interest

Led by Cllr Bob Lane, all Members present at the meeting made a voluntary announcement of another interest in respect of application 20200604 in that they all knew Councillor Diane Marsh who was the applicant. However, It was confirmed that this would not affect their decision making.

Cllr Harding made a further voluntary announcement of another interest in respect of application 20200604 in that Cllr Diane Marsh was a personal friend. However, he and Cllr Marsh had not discussed her application and there had been no-predetermination on this matter.

Cllr Tony Rice made a further voluntary announcement of another interest in respect of application 20200604 in that he was the Chair of the Gravesham Conservative Association of which Cllr Diane Marsh was also a senior member and was a close colleague. He confirmed that this would not affect his decision making.

Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran made a voluntary announcement of another interest in respect of application 20200604 in that she was friends with a resident who lived at Timberlee who would be affected by the proposal. However, she and the resident had not discussed the application and there had been no-predetermination on this matter.

22. Planning applications for determination by the Board

22.1 20200604 - Garage Blocks, Arnold Avenue, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0NU

The Committee considered an application reference 20200604 for the demolition of existing lock up garages and the erection of one 1 bedroom wheelchair accessible and adaptable chalet bungalow with associated parking.

The Principal Planner showed a plan of the site with the land in Borough Council ownership outlined in blue, with 8 lockup garages and an access road. It was confirmed that only two of the garages were in use. An aerial view showed the overgrown nature of the site and the garages in a state of disrepair. It was noted that the access road had been recently resurfaced. The site had experienced problems in the past with anti-social behaviour. The properties on Arnold Avenue had been mainly erected in the 1940s and were of mixed character.

The proposal was for a single storey L-shaped bungalow wheelchair accessible and adaptable with one parking space with a turning area and a small garden. The site included a small corner of the garden of 20 Arnold Avenue which had agreed by the tenant of that dwelling. It was intended that the mezzanine floor would be useable as a guest bedroom or for a carer and there would be a gable window and two small rooflights in the roof. It was noted that the amenity space of the proposal had been slightly constrained by the site. However, a wheelchair user occupant might find it difficult to look after a bigger space.

The proposal would have a slight impact on neighbouring properties at 19 and 21 Arnold Avenue and Timberlee on Whitehill Road. The gable window in the first floor of the proposed dwelling would be 21 metres away from the nearest houses in Arnold Road. The proposed dwelling would be 7 metres away from Timberlee but the part of the bungalow facing this residence at its nearest point would be only slightly higher than a garden outbuilding.

In conclusion, the officer recommended that permission be granted subject to the conditions, reasons and informatives set out in the report.

The application was before the Board because the applicant was Gravesham Borough Council.

The Committee heard the views of the public speaker who spoke in objection to this application and who answered questions from Members.

The following points were raised during discussion on this application.

- It was noted that the garages were not used because it was likely they were not big enough for the modern car.
- In relation to the outlook of Timberlee, it was suggested that the height of the proposed dwelling be reduced by 0.9 metres. The Committee was advised that a reduction would bring an inferior design to the dwelling for example, a flat roof and would also cause the loss of storage space and the mezzanine floor.
- The suggestion that a wheelchair user would prefer a small garden was considered to be patronising and it was also noted that the amenity area might be only outlook that the future occupant would have. The site was also surrounded by 2 metre high fences which would give the appearance of being hemmed in which might give rise to mental health issues. The officer advised that his comments had not meant to patronise and he had taken the advice of the Council's New Homes Strategy Development Manager with regard to the suitability of the amenity space. The need for a wheelchair user dwelling and the quiet location had also been taken into account. The officer suggested that some soft landscaping in relation to the fences might improve the outlook and the officer undertook to discuss the matter with the Council's Horticultural Manager.
- It was noted that 23 Arnold Road had access to the site to allow parking in the rear garden and there was no formally agreed right of way, the scheme did accommodate this right of way.
- A suggestion was made about the turning area for a vehicle on the site being made smaller to expand the amenity area. However, Members were advised that the turning space would allow for the manoeuvring of a visiting vehicle as well as the neighbouring access.
- Concern was expressed at the removal the corner of the rear garden no. 20 Arnold Road which was a Council-owned property, to enable the expansion of the application site. The Committee was advised that the resident of no. 20 had been approached in October 2019 and had agreed to give up a corner of the rear garden. It was noted that the resident considered the loss of this part of the rear garden a welcome step as the resident was struggling to maintain the garden. The Planning Manager (Development Management) confirmed that Council officers would use the same approach for owner occupiers and tenants irrespective of who owned the property.
- A suggestion was made that if the resident of no. 20 was struggling with the maintenance of the garden, perhaps the resident would be amenable to giving up more of the garden to enable the enlargement of the application's amenity space.
- The support of Meopham Parish Council for this application was noted.
- Concern was expressed that the proposal was away from the road and isolated from neighbouring properties precluding neighbourliness and community spirit.
- Following a question from a Member, the registered speaker confirmed that neighbouring properties were slightly concerned about where visitors to the proposed dwelling would park but nothing more negative had been expressed.
- The Principal Planner confirmed that the proposed residence conformed to the Council's residential layout guidelines and privacy guidelines which were set out with the Council's planning policies.
- It was noted that the Council had approved similar applications in similar locations in the past with limited amenity space.

Resolved that application be PERMITTED subject to the conditions, reason and informatives as set out in the officer's report.

Note: Mr Lee Schofield (a resident)(an objector) addressed the Committee.

22.2 20200670 - 135 Sun Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5HW

The Committee considered an application reference 20200670 for the demolition of the garage, the erection of a single storey rear extension, the construction of dormer extensions in the front and rear roof slopes with alterations to the roof and conversion of the roof space into habitable rooms.

The Principal Planner advised that the site was on the north east side of Sun Lane and the Committee was shown photographs of the front and rear of the hipped roof bungalow. It was noted that the garage in the rear garden had been demolished, two garden outbuildings built and that the existing vehicular access remained. The neighbouring terraced houses had been built in the early 1900s and the dwelling on the other side had been built in the garden of the application site. Three storey flats and Pegasus Court were on the opposite side of the road to the application site.

The Principal Planner confirmed that the property had never been extended. The application proposed to alter the current hipped roof design to a half hipped barn ends and this would increase the existing roof height by 0.55 metres and with box type dormers both front and rear. The Committee was shown a number of photographic examples of both types of traditional and box type dormers at the front of dwellings at the front of dwellings nearby and locally or elsewhere within the Borough that had been built or had been granted planning permission. The dormers would enable the provision of three bedrooms, an ensuite bathroom and another bathroom in the roof space and would convert the existing bungalow into a chalet bungalow increasing the number of bedrooms from three to four in total. The key issues were set out in the report and it was noted that the rear dormers did not require planning permission.

An objection had been received from a neighbour living to the rear of the site. However, the proposal was a significant distance from the property line and the proposed single storey extension lined up with the property line of neighbouring properties. It was also noted that the single storey extension could be built under permitted development rights.

A Parking Plan had been submitted since the publication of the agenda which showed there was space for 3 vehicles to be parked alongside the dwelling which for the proposed 4 bedroom property should be sufficient. The Principal Planner also suggested an additional condition to prohibit the future use of the flat roof as an amenity space/sun terrace.

In conclusion, the officer recommended that permission be granted subject to the conditions, reasons and informatives set out in the report together with the suggested additional condition in relation to the flat roof of the single storey extension.

The application was before the Board as the applicant was a Gravesham Borough Councillor.

The following points were raised during discussion on this application.

- Following a question from a Member, the officer confirmed that had the applicant not been a Borough Councillor, then the application would have been determined by officers.
- It was noted that the proposed Juliet balcony would prevent the use of the flat roof being used as a sun terrace. However, it was also noted that this could easily be removed to enable access to the roof.
- It was confirmed that there was space to park three cars on the existing access, alongside the dwelling, in lieu of the former garage in the rear garden of the site.
- The officer advised that he was not aware of any objections from the applicant of the agent to the proposed conditions and informatives etc.
- Following a concern raised in relation to the proposed box type dormer at the front of the house and whether a precedent would be set, the Committee was reminded that every application should be considered of its individual merits. However, the officer acknowledged that not many examples of the use of box type dormers in bungalows, however he felt that the proposal would fit comfortably, was modest in size and would not be harmful to the street scene or in terms of amenity. The box dormers had been set into the sides of the hipped roof and down from the ridgeline in an effort to alleviate the visual impact on the street scene.
- The Chair cited the example of the guidelines for windows in Conservation Areas and noted that perhaps guidelines for the use of dormers would also be useful, and whether the proposal was consistent with the Council's draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Residential Extensions. The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that the draft SPD had only very recently been consulted upon and was not yet a material consideration.
- The officer advised that the proposal met the residential space guidelines including those for privacy and distance. It would be close to the properties at the rear of the dwelling but was set at an angle so there would be no direct view or overlooking. Members also noted that many properties, including Victorian houses, had flat roofs.
- A motion for a site visit was moved, seconded and put to the vote and the vote was lost.

Resolved that application 20200670 be PERMITTED subject to the conditions, reasons and informatives as set out in the officer's report including an amended condition in relation to parking and an additional condition prohibiting use of the flat roof of the rear extension as a terrace area.

23. Planning applications determined under delegated powers by the Director (Planning & Development)

A schedule showing applications determined by the Director (Planning & Development) under delegated powers had been published on the Council's website.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm