

Timber framed extension to provide additional office space at Trosley Country Park, Waterlow Road, Vigo Village, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0SG – GR/18/0930 (KCC/GR/0427/2018)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 5th December 2018

Application by Kent County Council for a timber framed extension to provide additional office space at Trosley Country Park, Waterlow Road, Vigo Village, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0SG – GR/18/0930 (KCC/GR/0427/2018)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr B Sweetland

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Trosley Country Park is located to the eastern side of the A227 Gravesend Road, within the village of Vigo. The Country Park is one of Kent County Council’s Country Parks and covers 170 acres of woodland and chalk downland. The Park crosses the boundary between the parish of Vigo in the borough of Gravesham to the north, and the parish of Trottscliffe in the borough of Tonbridge and Malling to the south. The site is accessed via Waterlow Road to the north and is located wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
2. The Country Park comprises an existing amenity block to the west of the site, which provides visitor facilities including a café, public toilets, classroom/function room and storage area. The proposed extension is situated on the north east facing side of the existing amenity block, located within the parish of Vigo, Gravesham and is adjacent to the access road to the Country Park car park. A site location plan is attached.

Recent Planning History

3. Prior to Kent County Council running the facility, the site was part of a large woodland estate known as Trosley Towers. Kent County Council bought and opened the Country Park in 1976. In 2004 an amenity block was built providing facilities for visitors.

4. The most relevant recent site planning history is listed below:

KCC/GR/0049/2011 Non-material amendment to permitted drawings including provision of a servery hatch, changes to external doors, windows, decking area and wood stores and details of flue to boiler.
Details approved 11 April 2011

KCC/GR/0048/2011 Details pursuant to conditions 3 (foul & surface water drainage), 4 (external lighting) and 5 (archaeological watching brief) of planning permission KCC/GR/0261/2010 for a replacement visitor centre.
Details approved 11 April 2011

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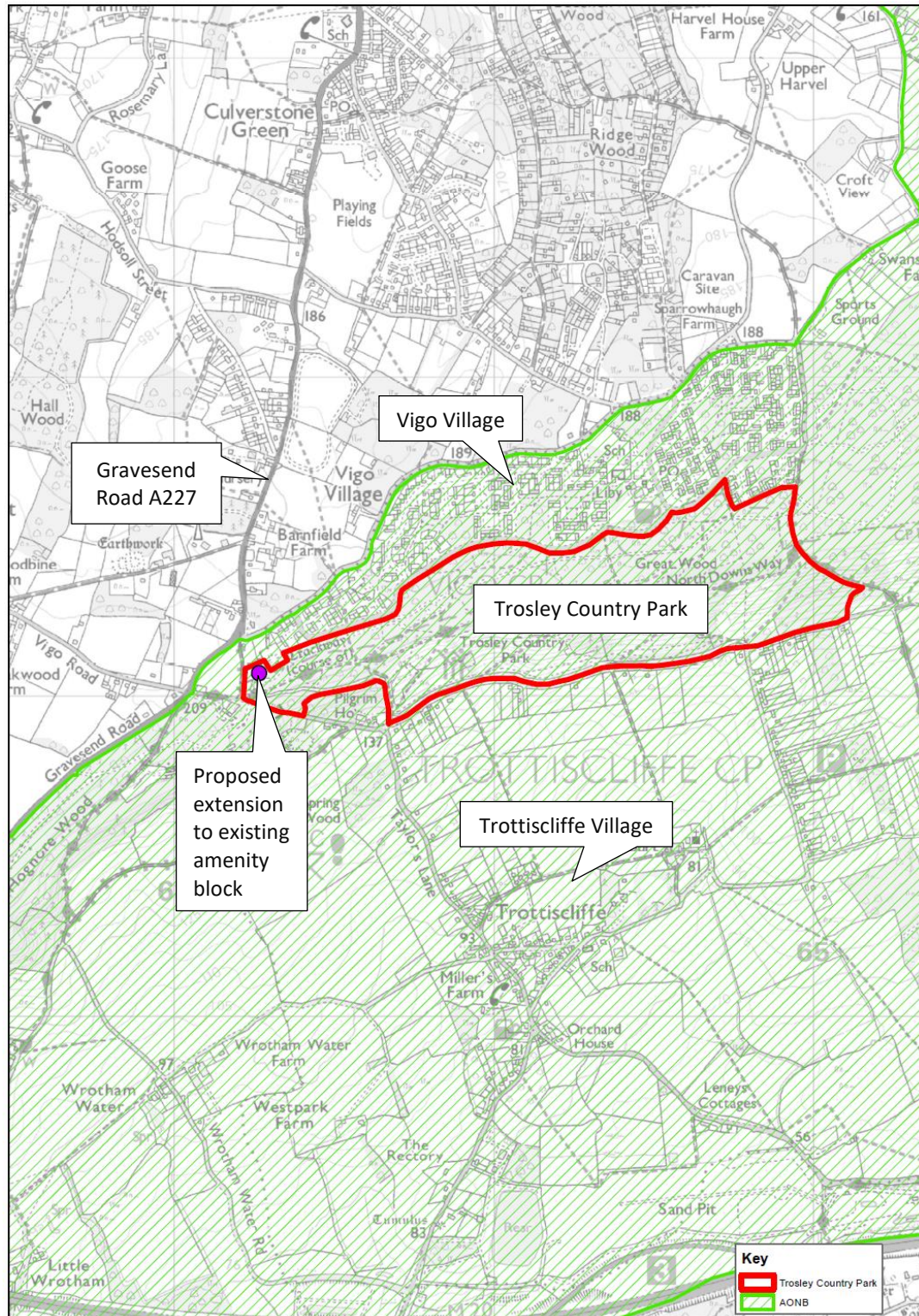
KCC/GR/0261/2010	Replacement visitor centre for Trosley Country Park. Granted with conditions 13 October 2010
GR/03/1052/R	Minor amendment to elevation drawing, comprising changes to roof to external covered area adjacent to amenity block permitted under planning permission GR/03/1052. Details approved 10 April 2008
GR/03/1052/R2	Amendments to planning permission reference GR/03/1052. Approved 2 November 2004
GR/03/1052	New amenity block providing male, female staff and disabled toilets, staff restroom and equipment store. Granted with conditions 27 January 2004

Proposal

5. This planning application seeks permission for a timber framed extension to the north east facing side of the existing amenity block at Trosley Country Park to provide a 12 square metre additional visitors reception office.
6. The proposed extension is located at the rear of the existing amenity block, situated at the far western side of Trosley Country Park and adjacent to the access/egress road to the Country Park car park. The proposed extension would be accessed both externally and from within the existing amenity block.
7. The timber framed extension would be constructed to match the existing amenity block structure with a sedum flat roof and would tie in to the surrounding environment. The extension would be built to achieve current standards for both Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Regulations and Building Control requirements, positioned to provide level access throughout the building and positioned to provide level access to the entrances and fire exits. The extension would provide a clear approach width of 1.8 metres and all doors would provide the required 1-metre width with vision panels for safe use.
8. The scheme has been designed in an attempt to provide better use of the current amenity block footprint with as much daylight as possible to the extension. The electricity for power, lighting and heating would come from the existing main supplies in the existing amenity block and there are no proposed alterations to the existing external lighting of the site, apart from a new 11 Watt linear emergency light that would be fixed above the new external entrance door.
9. The application also proposes to extend the existing paving and fencing and to relocate one of the existing disabled car parking spaces which would be lost by the proposed development. The application proposes to relocate the affected disabled car parking space elsewhere on site as well as to provide an additional disabled car parking space to ensure that there is no overall loss in the number of disabled car parking spaces at the Country Park.

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Site Location Plan

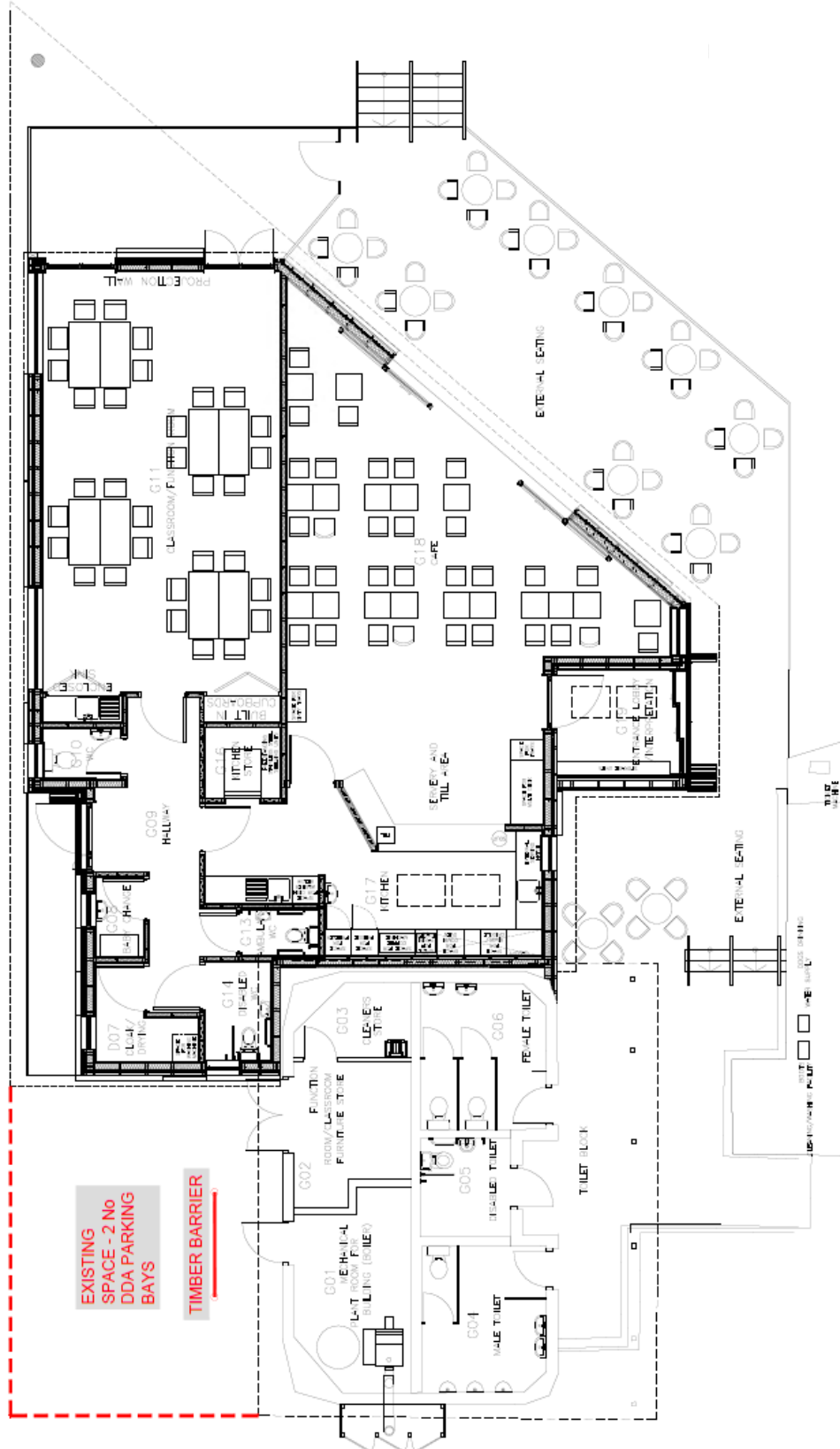


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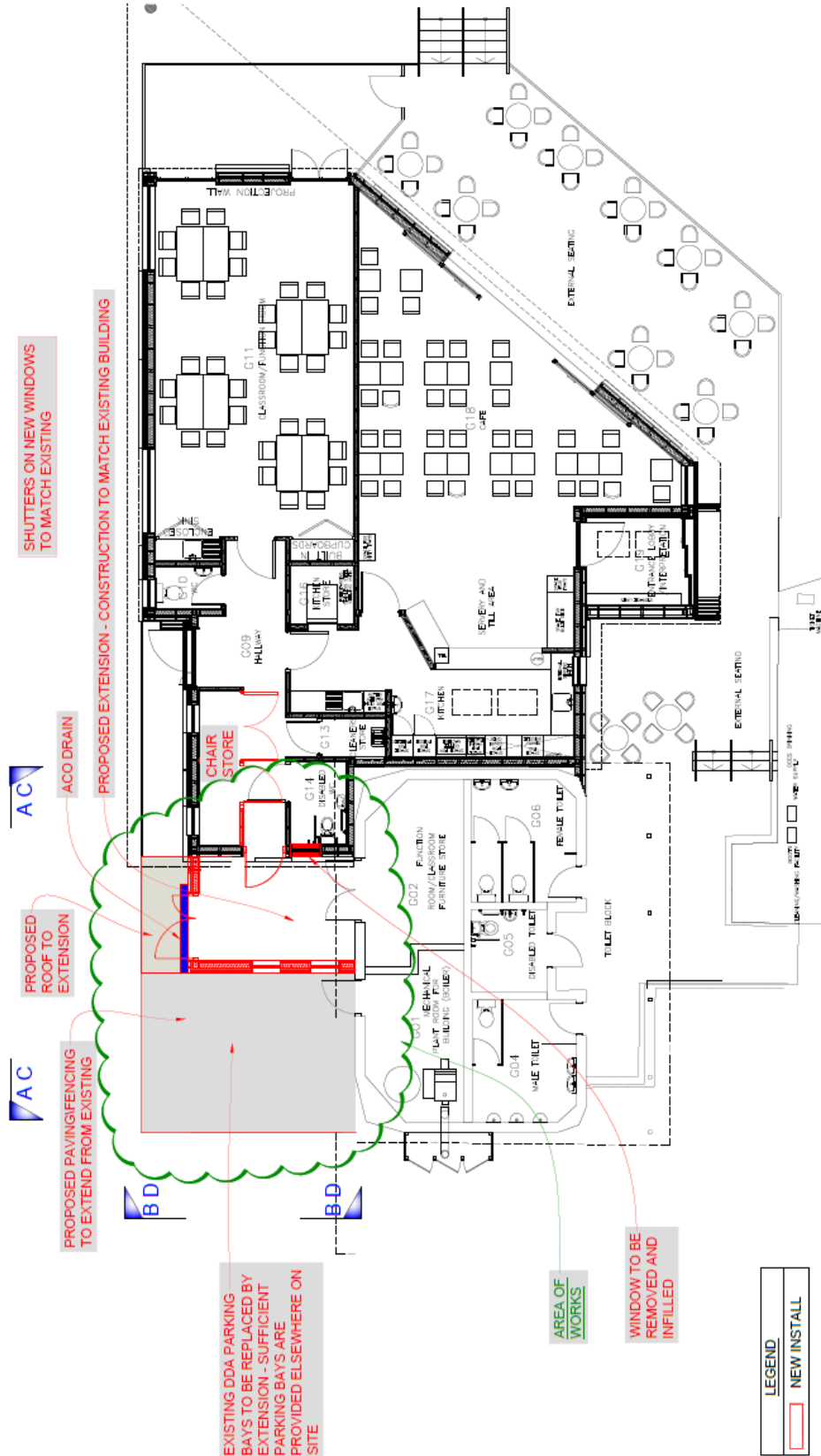
Existing Floor Plan



EXISTING FLOOR PLAN (1:100)

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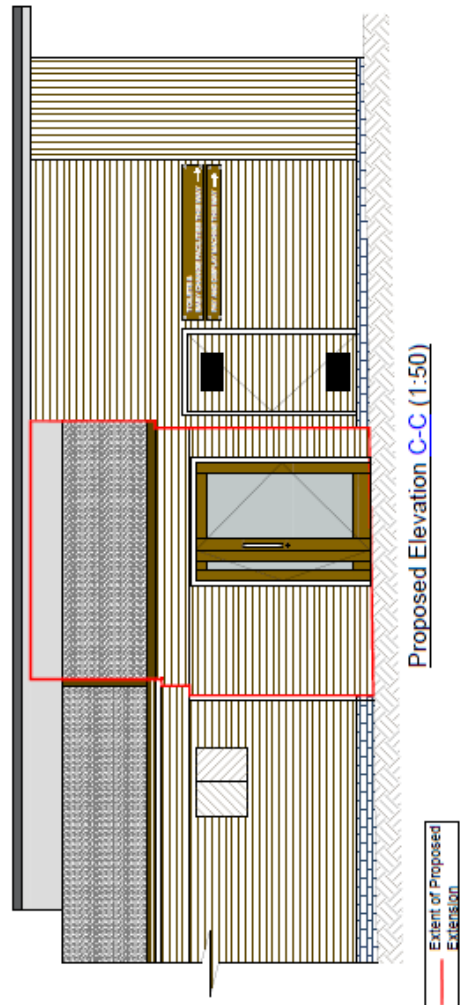
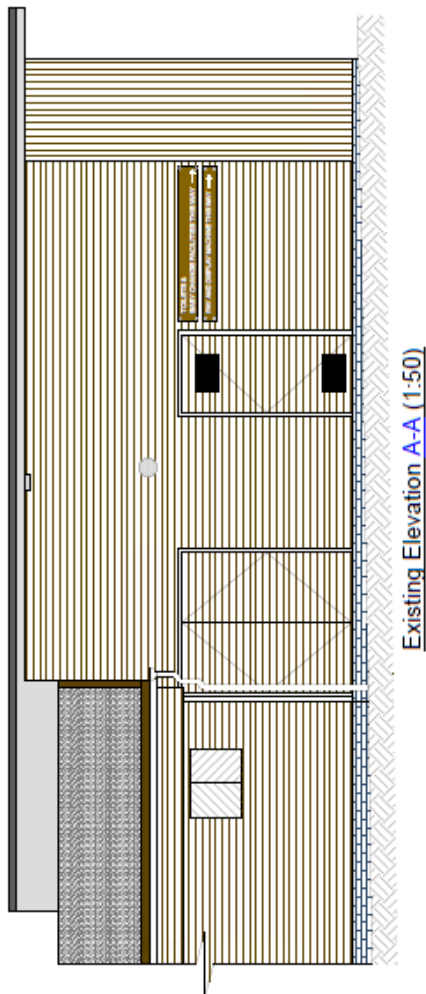
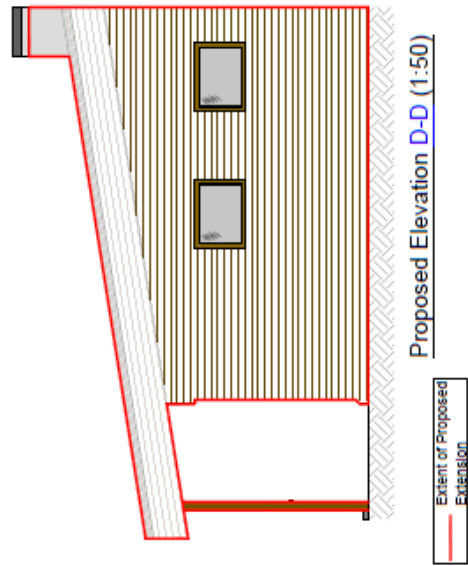
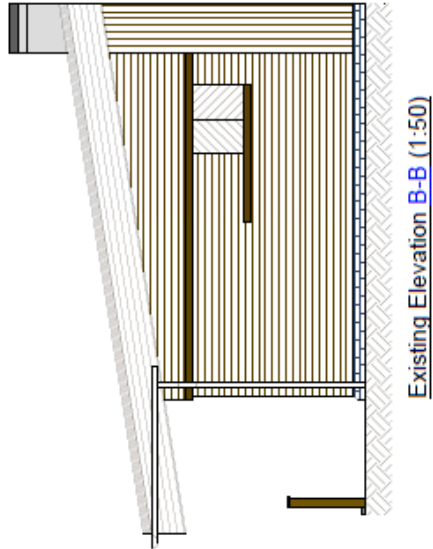
Proposed Floor Plan



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN (1:100)

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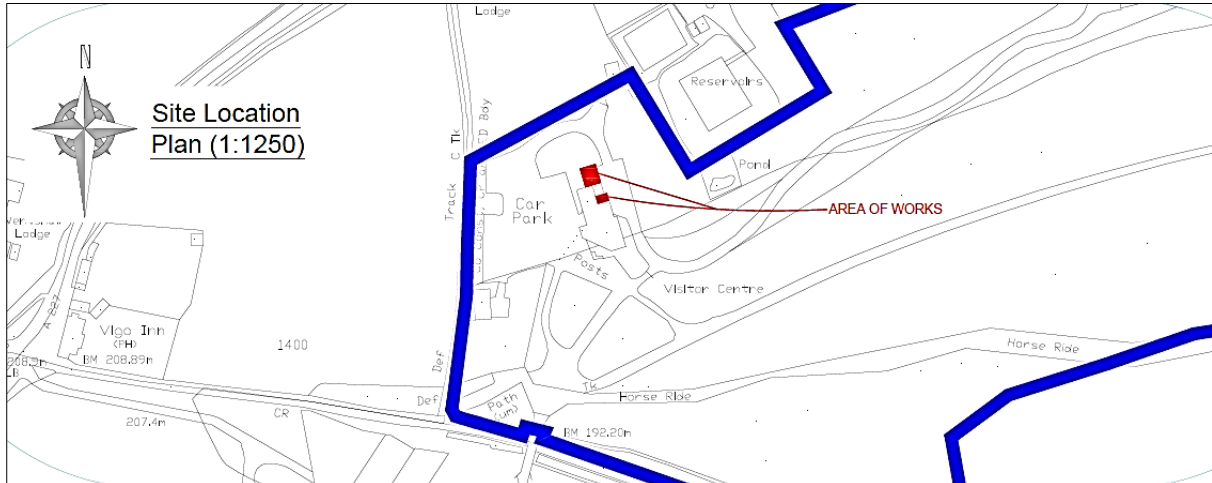
Existing and Proposed Elevations



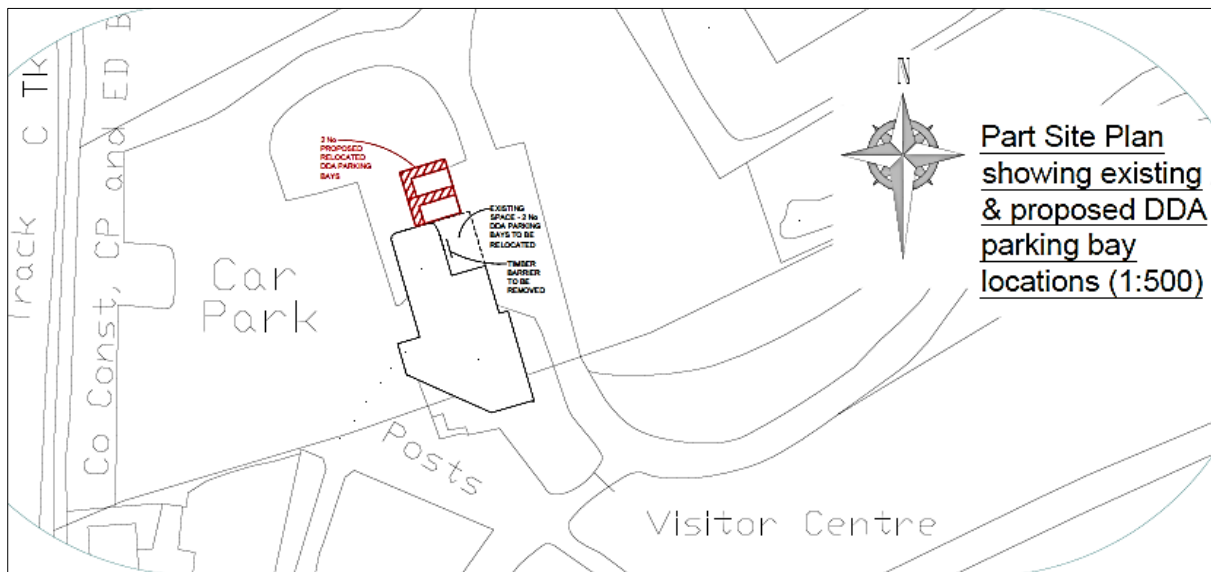
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Proposed Area of Works



Proposed Location of Disabled Parking Bays



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Planning Policy

10. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are appropriate to the consideration of this application:

- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2018** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- The great importance the Government attaches to Green Belts, with the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open;
- 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 is not regarded as inappropriate development within the Green Belt;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes; and
- Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

- (ii) **Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014**

Policy CS01 Sustainable Development

Seeks to achieve sustainable development whereby planning applications that accord with the Development Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Policy states that the Borough Council will take a positive approach reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the NPPF and the Core Strategy and work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves the economic,

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social and environmental conditions in the area.

- Policy CS02 Scale and Distribution of Development**
Seeks to prioritise development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development and supports developments inset from the Green Belt.
- Policy CS10 Physical and Social Infrastructure**
Supports proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure or lead to the provision of additional infrastructure that improves community well-being.
- Policy CS11 Transport**
Seeks to ensure that the impact of proposals on the highway and public transport network is managed and that there is sufficient new parking in new development in accordance with adopted parking standards.
- Policy CS12 Green Infrastructure**
Seeks to ensure landscape character and valued landscapes are conserved, restored and enhanced, with the greatest weight given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting.
- Policy CS19 Development and Design Principles**
Seeks to manage development and design principles to achieve visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive new development, which conserves and enhances the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrates well with the surrounding local area and meets anti-crime standards.

(iii) Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies 2014

- Policy P3 Policy for Vehicle Parking Standards**
Seeks to ensure that there is provision for vehicle parking, in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards, as interpreted by Gravesham Borough Council, unless justified as an exception. All vehicle parking provision should normally be made on the development site.

Consultations

11. **Gravesham Borough Council:** No comments received to date

Vigo Parish Council: No comments received to date

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit: Has no comments to make

Public Rights of Way: No comments to make

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KCC Highways and Transportation: Raises no objection subject to informatives relating to requirements for highway approvals.

KCC Highways and Transportation also commented that the applicant should ensure that there is no overall loss of disabled car parking spaces, and were necessary, additional provision should be made elsewhere on the site.

Local Member

12. The local County Council Member for Gravesham Rural, Mr Bryan Sweetland, was notified of the application on 4 September 2018, but no views have been received to date.

Publicity

13. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice at the front of the Country Park entrance, on the Country Park notice board and within the existing facilities building. There are no properties within the immediate vicinity of the application site.

Representations

14. No letters of representation have been received to date.

Discussion

15. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 10 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case relate to the siting and design of the proposed development, the acceptability of the proposed development given the Visitor Centre location within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the associated impacts arising from the proposal in terms of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designations.
16. The application seeks planning permission for an extension to an existing amenity block within Trosley Country Park, to allow space for an additional visitor's reception office. The application has not received any letters of objection or concern. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of governance conflicts arising from the applicant, Kent Country Parks, and the Planning Applications Group both being within the Environment Planning and Enforcement division of KCC. In these circumstances legislation requires that the decision is taken by the Planning Applications Committee even though there are no material planning objections to the proposal.

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Siting and design

17. The proposed extension is influenced by the shape of the footprint, layout, form and materials of the existing building. It involves a very minor addition to the building of 12 square metres together with an extension to the paving and fencing adjoining the extension. The sedum roof covering and timber cladding materials which would match the existing building are considered wholly appropriate. The proposal would accord with the NPPF objectives on design and Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles. Subject to the considerations below there would be no planning objection to what is proposed.

Principle of Development in the Green Belt and AONB

18. The proposed extension is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Policies in the NPPF and Gravesham Borough Council Core Strategy seek to preserve the openness within the Green Belt and to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
19. In terms of the Metropolitan Green Belt, consideration needs to be given as to whether the development would be classified as 'inappropriate'. Given the proposed development relates to a very small extension to an existing amenity block occupying a Green Belt location, and that the proposed development would be built to match the existing structure and tie into the surrounding environment, I can see no reason why the proposal would affect the openness of the Green Belt. No objection has been raised on Green Belt grounds by the District Authority and I consider that the proposed development would not conflict with the NPPF guidance or Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and is acceptable in principle.
20. The designation for the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty includes the whole of Trosley Country Park. The proposed extension would have a very limited impact on the wider landscape and setting of the AONB as it would be seen in context of the existing amenity block. The proposed extension would match the existing structure, would tie in to the surrounding environment and is well screened to areas outside the Country Park by the existing topography, hedgerows, scrub and mature trees. Neither the Kent Downs AONB Unit or the District Authority have raised any concerns about the impacts of the proposals on the AONB and I consider that the proposal accords with the general principles contained in Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure.

Transport Issues

21. The proposed application would cause a direct loss of one disabled car parking space located within the Country Park. The application therefore proposes to provide two disabled car parking spaces within the site; a relocation of the disabled car parking space affected by the proposed development, and an additional disabled car parking space to provide additional provision. This increase in the provision of disabled car parking spaces within Trosley Country Park is welcomed. Highways and Transportation have raised no objections to the application and have stated that they are satisfied with the application providing there is no loss of disabled car parking provision. The proposal is in general conformity to Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) Policy CS11:

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Transport and Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies (2014) Policy P3: Policy for Vehicle Parking Standards. It is therefore considered that the application does not pose unacceptable impacts on transport, specifically parking provision.

Conclusion

22. The proposal seeks to provide a timber framed extension to the existing amenity block at Trosley Country Park. The Country Park is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The siting and design of the extension are acceptable, and it would not have any significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt or any adverse impact on the landscape character of the AONB.
23. The application has not received any letters of objection or concern from members of the public or consultees. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of governance conflicts arising from the applicant, Kent Country Parks, and the Planning Applications Group both being within the Environment Planning and Enforcement division of KCC.
24. The development is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore my recommendation is that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

25. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
 - The standard three year time limit;
 - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details.

Case Officer: Chloe Palmer

Tel. no: 03000 415718

Background Documents: see section heading
