

MC/16/3240

Date Received: 29 July, 2016

Location: 15 Rochester Crescent, Hoo St Werburgh, Rochester ME3 9JH

Proposal: Construction of retaining wall together with the relocation of steps; hardstanding and vehicular crossover to facilitate off road parking;

Applicant: Mr Gillett

Ward Peninsula

Case Officer Robert Neave

Contact Number 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 16 November 2016.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Section A-A, Section B-B, Section C and Section C-C as received on 1st August 2016.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 Within 2 months of the date of this permission the approved changes to the hardstanding, including the landscaping, shall be undertaken on site and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This is a part retrospective application for engineering works to provide a vehicle parking area and dropped kerb with retaining walls and repositioned steps. The hard standing area measures approx. 6.2m wide by 5.3m deep and the retaining wall

has a height of approx. 1.6m. The hardstanding area has drainage to the rear and is proposed to include soft landscaping down either flanks.

Relevant Planning History

MC/15/2349 Retrospective application for engineering works to provide vehicle parking area and dropped kerb with retaining walls and repositioned steps.
Refused 23 September 2015

Representations

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

2 Letters of support have been received making the following summarised comments;

- Improve appearance of streetscene
- Relieving parking pressure from the highway

5 Letters of objection have been received making the following summarised comments;

- Location of steps cause loss of privacy and overlooking into No. 13's front window
- Not well constructed
- Boundary fence with No. 13 has been removed and not replaced

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003. The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

A previous application was submitted under MC/15/2349, which was refused as the vehicle parking area had resulted in the loss of a front garden area and was considered to be a harsh form of development, by virtue of its size, depth and lack of any soft landscaping to soften the appearance. It was therefore detrimental and out of character with the streetscene. Furthermore, at that stage no drainage had been provided in order to ensure surface water was carried away from both the application site and neighbouring property. An appeal was lodged however insufficient information was received by the Planning Inspectorate.

Soon after, the homeowner engaged with the Local Planning Authority to address the

above reasons of refusal. In this respect the current proposal sets out landscaping measures to try to address the street scene concern, while surface water drainage has already been installed to address that area of concern.

Streetscene & Design

The application property is a two-storey semi-detached property located within a residential area. The area is characterised by two-storey semi-detached properties of varying designs. There are several examples of hardstandings within the immediate area which appear to be a feature of the evolving streetscene. Therefore, the principle of the application is acceptable.

The application property sits lower than the highway. The hardstanding as constructed has resulted in the land level being raised to the front to provide a fairly level area for parking a vehicle. The result of the raised level is that the hardstanding is more prominent in the street scene. Prior to the construction of the hardstanding, the property had laid to lawn front garden with soft landscaping and approx. 1m high boundary fence to the front.

The hardstanding has been constructed of block paving and falls to the south of the property. The revised application would seek to level the hardstanding area and introduce soft landscaping down either flanks to mitigate the loss of front garden at the front of the property.

There are a number of properties in the immediate vicinity of the site that have had their front gardens replaced with driveways and hard-standings. The neighbouring property on the corner has had it done, as well as a number of the properties opposite - and many of them have been created without leaving any front lawn or soft landscaping. Some of these may not have required planning permission as there is not the degree of engineering and land raising as proposed in the current scheme.

The applicant proposes to mitigate the starkness of the hardstanding by the inclusion of soft landscaping down either flank. This is considered to mitigate the visual impact on the streetscene and therefore considered acceptable subject to a condition requiring the landscaping to be undertaken in the next available planting season. As such, the proposal conforms to the design objectives of the NPPF and BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Amenity

The relocation of the steps from the northwest of the site to the southeast has resulted in some overlooking into the front facing window of the neighbouring property. However, as this window is front facing, an existing level of overlooking would occur from the highway and although the new location of the steps has to a degree exacerbated the situation, it is not considered to be so harmful as to justify a refusal of planning permission.

The development does not cause any impact regarding daylight or sunlight.

The development therefore accords with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan

2003.

Highways

The hardstanding requires the provision of a vehicular cross over to provide access to it and this matter has been drawn to the attention of the Highways Authority. It is noted though that there is no highway safety reason why permission for a cross over will not ultimately be granted and constructed.

In terms of surface water drainage, the applicant has now installed drainage measures to ensure that surface water neither drains onto the public highway nor onto neighbouring property.

The development will provide for off street parking and thereby removes pressure for on street parking in the area.

The proposal does not therefore conflict with Policies T1 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The proposed development does not have an unacceptable detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the street scene subject to the landscaping provision being conditioned. There will be no unacceptable impact on residential amenity that would be sufficient to refuse the application and the proposal is acceptable from a highway safety perspective. The development conforms to Policies BNE1, BNE2, T1 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and is therefore recommended for approval.

This application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to committee for determination due to the number of representations contrary to officers recommendation.

This application was considered by Members at the Planning Committee on the 21 September 2016, when it was determined to defer a decision to enable a Members' site visit to be held.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>

