

Application Number	PA/2023/0218
Location	15 Warwick Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9EH
Grid Reference	Easting (x) 602243 / Northing (y) 144390
Parish Council	Kennington Community Council
Ward	Bybrook
Application Description	Proposed conversion of a 3-bedroomed house to No.2 self-contained 1-bedroomed flats
Applicant	Ashford Borough Council
Agent	ABC - Housing Development and Regeneration
Site Area	0.03 Hectares

Introduction

1. This application is reported to the Planning Committee because Ashford Borough Council (ABC) is the applicant.

Site and Surroundings

2. The application site comprises a two storey semi-detached property within the Kennington area of Ashford. The site occupies a corner plot on Warwick Road and Shepway with the main access on Warwick Road. The property currently benefits from 3 bedrooms all on the first floor with a lounge, kitchen, utility and shower room on the ground floor. There is currently parking for one vehicle on the driveway. It is also worth noting that there are no parking restrictions in the surrounding streets.
3. The prevailing character of the street scene is one of properties of a similar style/design with a mix of terraced and semi-detached dwellings, in either render or facing brickwork. There is a fair degree of landscaping in the vicinity with trees, amenity areas, low hedgerow and some picket fencing.

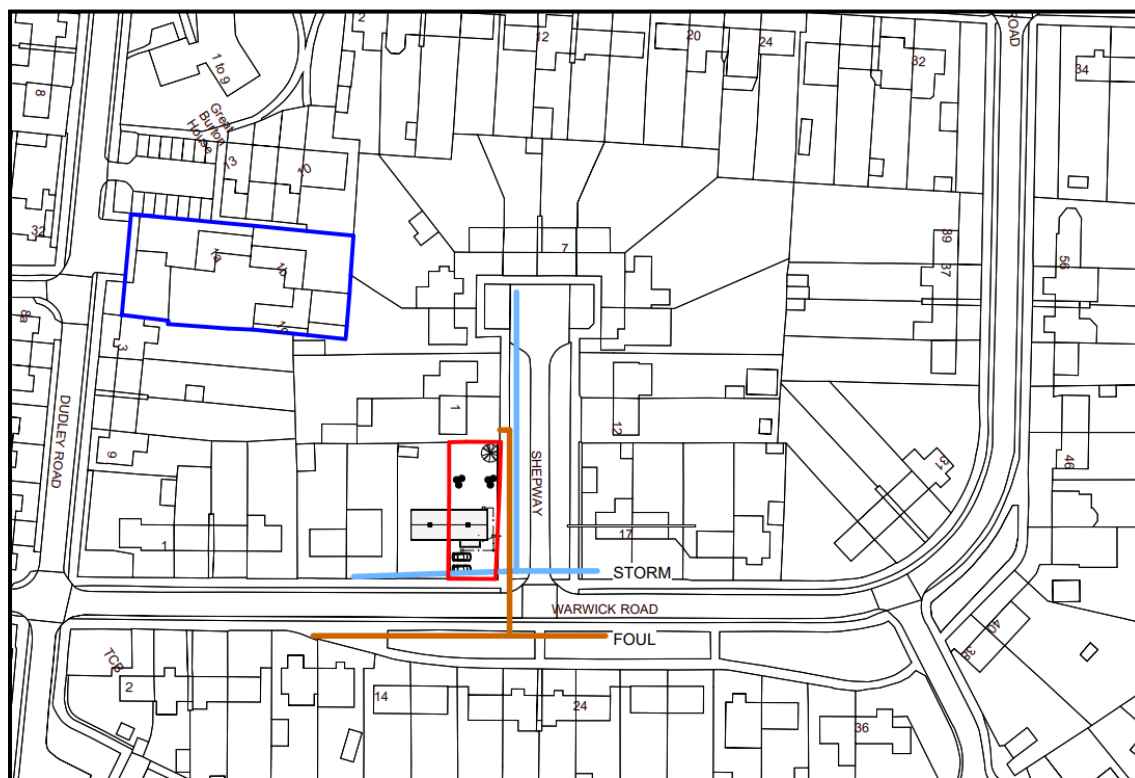


Figure 1 - Site Location Plan outlined in red – blue signifies other land owned by ABC

Proposal

4. Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the dwelling to 2 self-contained 1-bedroom / 1 person flats (one on each floor). There are associated internal alterations, but the external alterations are minimal with some slight fenestration alterations on the front facade of the building, and the blocking up of a small ground floor window on the flank elevation of the property. As well as the provision of solar panels on the front roofslope, water butts to the front and rear and electric vehicle charging points to the front along with enlarging the front curtilage hardstanding area to provide two off-road vehicle spaces.
5. The conversion of this building is proposed as part of a scheme under the Government's Levelling Up agenda with the aim to help rough sleepers rebuild their lives under a Government supported scheme. The property was bought by the Council specifically for this project. The applicant has confirmed that this property will be for single person occupancy of each unit only.
6. It is of note No. 15 Warwick Road is one of a number of properties being converted to provide housing for rough sleepers in the Borough. At this time Ashford Borough Council has identified that a minimum of 15 properties are required to accommodate the needs of this project in the Ashford Area. A

similar application was heard by the Planning Committee in November and December 2022 under application reference 22/00569/AS at 240 Beaver Road, Ashford. It was resolved to permit that application subject to Stodmarsh criteria. It is also of note that another, separate application has been submitted for the same scheme under application reference PA/2023/0225 at 36 Hurst Road, also in Kennington.

7. In support of this application, the Development & Regeneration Manager, Housing has set out the context behind this proposal.
- The property has been purchased by ABC specifically for the conversion, as part of the above mentioned scheme.
 - Private and Council households can be under or over occupied. This can be due to personal circumstances (children left home, or two single parents with children) as well as financial.
 - The conversion is part of a nationwide programme to provide rough sleeper accommodation.
 - Two units of accommodation next to each other provides a concentration of provision for management without being excessive.
8. The Development & Regeneration Manager, Housing further highlights that the Council's waiting list will always be different to the national picture and that ABC address' the needs of those who are more vulnerable. The table below provided by the applicant sets out the needs of those on the Council's housing waiting list. The numbers at the top of the table are the number of bedrooms needed (i.e. there is a need for 728 x 1 bedroom properties at present in the Borough).

Need	1	2	3	4	5	6
Total	728	281	352	95	23	1

Figure 2 – Housing waiting list needs



Figure 3 – Existing Plans and Elevations

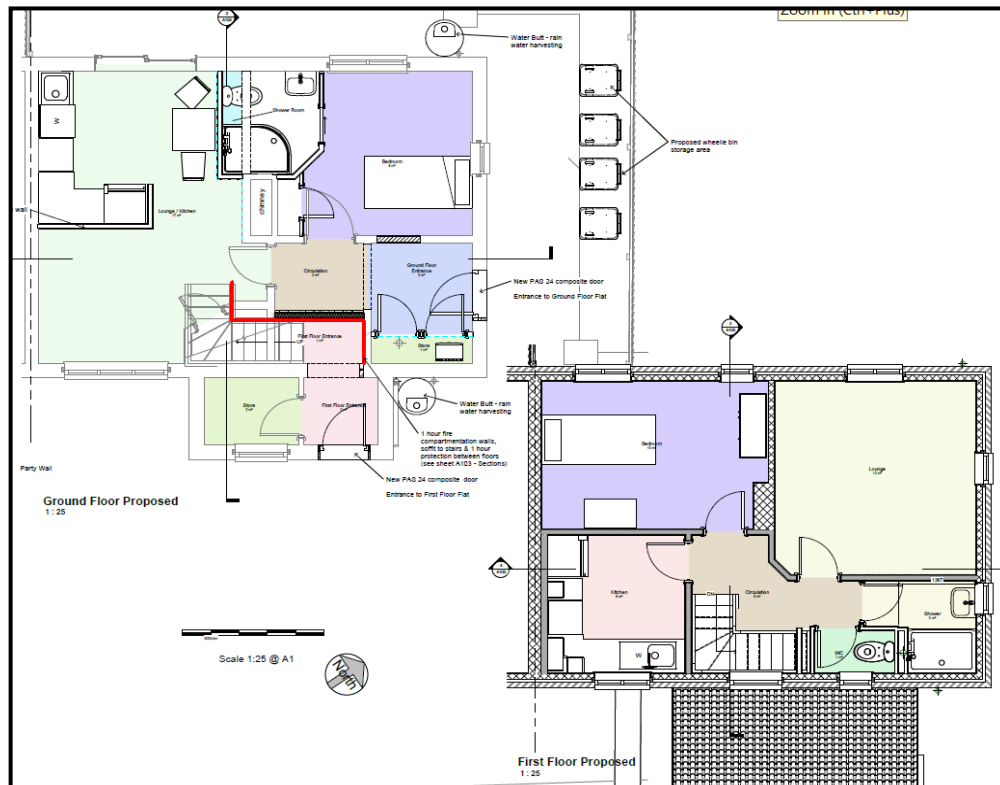


Figure 4 - Proposed Floor Plans

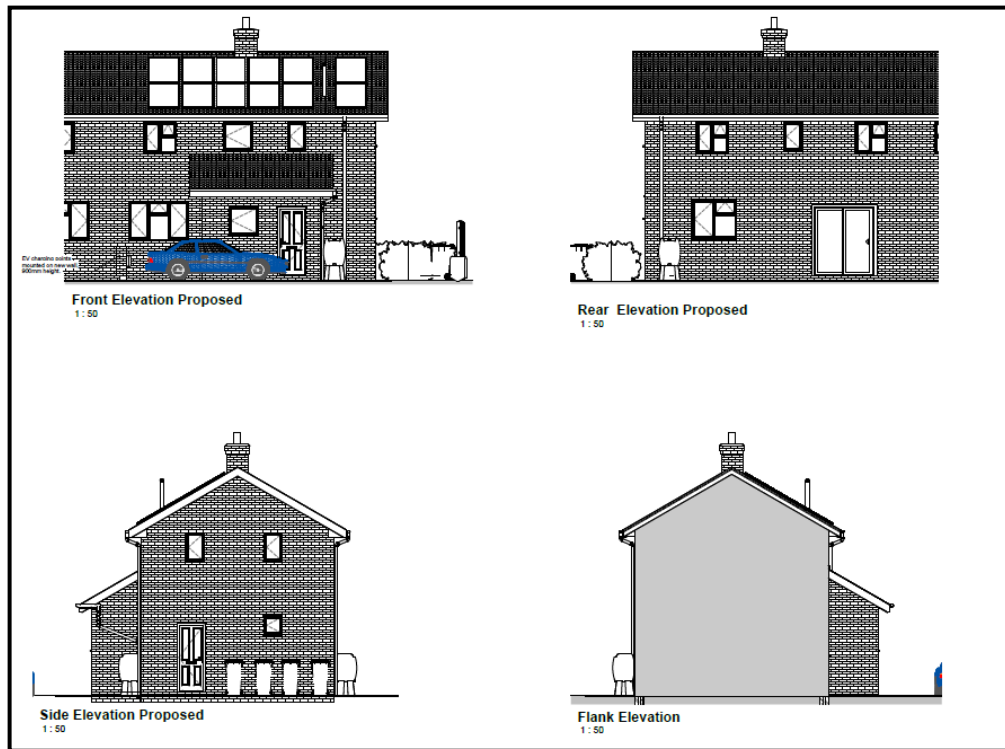


Figure 5 – Proposed Elevations

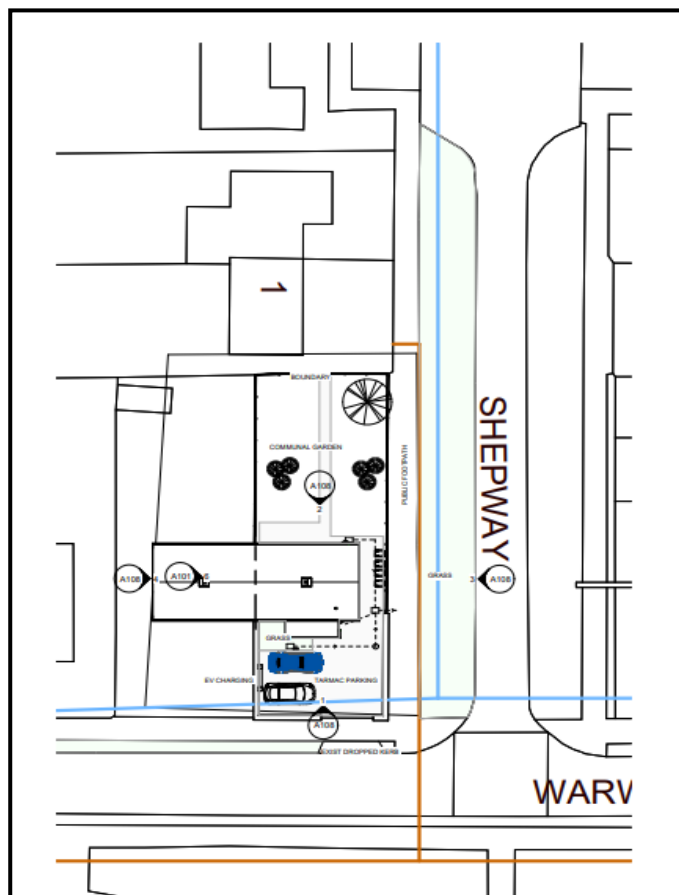


Figure 6 - Proposed Site Plan

Planning History

9. There is no recent relevant planning history for the site.

Consultations

10. The application has been subject to formal statutory and non statutory consultation.
11. **Kennington Community Council** – No response received.
12. **Natural England** – Comments awaited (*at time of writing*).
13. **Environmental Protection** – They note that the sound insulation for the floors/ceilings and stairs will be improved to current standards. The first floor living room will be located above a ground floor bedroom. They advise that this is not ideal and has the potential to cause a noise disturbance for the ground floor property. If possible bedrooms should be positioned over bedrooms, however it is possible the structure of the building does not permit this. They suggest that the applicant may wish to stipulate that floors are carpeted with underlay in living rooms, bedrooms, stairs and hallways. They suggest that informatives relating to hours of construction, the burning of waste and dust emission controls are imposed on any consent.
14. **Neighbours** – notification letters were sent to the occupiers of 5 properties in the vicinity of the application site and no representations have been received.

Planning Policy

15. The Development Plan for Ashford borough comprises the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019), along with the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan (2013), the Wye Neighbourhood Plan (2016), the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (2017), the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan (2019), the Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan (2021), the Egerton Neighbourhood Plan (2022) and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2016) as well as the Kent Minerals and Waste Early Partial Review (2020).
16. For clarification, the Local Plan 2030 supersedes the saved policies in the Ashford Local Plan (2000), Ashford Core Strategy (2008), Ashford Town Centre Action Area Plan (2010), the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD (2010) and the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD (2012).

17. The relevant policies from the Development Plan relating to this application are as follows:-

SP1 – Strategic Objectives
SP2 – The Strategic Approach to Housing Delivery
SP6 – Promoting High Quality Design
ENV1 - Biodiversity
HOU3a – Residential Windfall Development Within Settlements
HOU12- Residential Space Standards Internal
HOU15 - Private External Open Space
TRA3a - Parking Standards for Residential Development
TRA6 - Provision for Cycling
TRA7 – The Road Network and Development

18. The following are also material considerations to the determination of this application.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Sustainable Drainage SPD 2010
Residential Parking & Design SPD 2010
Residential Space & Layout (External space standards) 2011
Landscape Character SPD 2011
Climate Change Guidance for Development Management

Informal Design Guidance

Informal Design Guidance Note 1 (2014): Residential layouts & wheeled bins
Informal Design Guidance Note 2 (2014): Screening containers at home
Informal Design Guidance Note 3 (2014): Moving wheeled-bins through covered parking facilities to the collection point

Government Advice

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

The NPPF reflects the statutory provision at section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 that mandates the determination of all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 47). The NPPF was published on 27 March 2012 but has been amended on several occasions, with the most recent in July 2021. Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following headings and content of the NPPF are relevant to the consideration of the current proposals:

4. Decision-making

5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
11. Making effective use of land
12. Achieving well-designed places

Planning Policy Guidance: In March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched its planning practice guidance web-based resource. This was accompanied by a Written Ministerial Statement which includes a list of the previous planning policy guidance documents cancelled when the NPPF was launched. PPG contains a range of subject areas, with each area containing several subtopics. Those of particular relevance to the determination of this planning application comprise:

- Design
- Determining a planning application

Technical housing standards – nationally described space standards

Assessment

19. The main issues for consideration are:
 - Principle of Development
 - Design, Character and Appearance
 - Residential Amenity and Standards
 - Parking Provision and Highway Safety
 - Other Matters

Principle of Development

20. There is no specific policy objection to the conversion of larger dwellings into smaller units in the adopted Local Plan. Neither are there compelling housing needs that support the retention of large homes. In the circumstances, there are no reasons why this proposal should not be given a favourable consideration if it complies with the relevant Development Plan policies and standards.

Design, Character and Appearance

21. Local Plan policies SP1 and SP6 require good design and state that all development should seek to create a distinct character, with a strong sense of place and identity. These policies are broadly consistent with the NPPF which attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and seeks to safeguard heritage assets.

22. The proposed external alterations are very minimal and only involve some small fenestration alterations and the installation of solar panels on the front roof slope, water butts and electric vehicle charging points. These are very minor works which neither detract from the appearance of the building nor are they detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Residential Amenity and Standards

23. Section 12 of the NPPF refers to design and the standard of amenity. Paragraph 127 states, amongst other things, that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

“Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.”

24. The proposal raises no amenity impact issues. The proposed residential use conforms with the surrounding uses and the proposed external alterations would not have any adverse impact on the living conditions of the neighbours.
25. In accordance with policy HOU12 and the provisions in the national guidance, the internal layout and floorspace disposition of the proposed dwellings meet the set standards. Nonetheless, the plans show that the first floor living room / kitchen of the first floor unit will be above the ground floor bedroom of the ground floor unit. However, each flat has 60 minutes fire separation and the section drawing indicates a sound insulation system will be introduced to the flooring and underside to the ceiling that will reduce sound transmission. Sound proofing to the party wall to the first floor kitchen is also shown with the sound proofing to meet regulations. Environmental Health have also suggested underlay to the carpeting to help the situation. However, this is not something which can be conditioned. Overall, it is considered that the relationship between the 2 flats would be acceptable and would not lead to impact on any residential amenity for future occupiers.
26. The property benefits from a 15m deep rear garden which will be shared between the two units. While in this supported tenancy, the housing support team have advised that the tenants will have joint responsibility for keeping the garden in good order, mowing the grass etc. and encouraged to behave in a tenant like manor, taking responsibility for taking care of the property and putting out the rubbish/bins. In order to ensure that the rear facing habitable rooms of the ground floor flat would be afforded with appropriate levels of privacy, it is considered that defensible spaces (immediately outside of the rear facing ground floor flat bedroom window and lounge / kitchen sliding doors) should be provided by suitable landscaping which could be secured by way of a condition. The residual external amenity space suffices for the 2 non-

family units which are for single persons and are therefore satisfactory and in accordance with policy HOU15.

Parking Provision and Highway Safety

27. Policy TRA3a of the Local Plan requires one off-street car space for 1-bedroom dwellings. The front curtilage of the site currently provides one off road car space but the proposed plans show that realistically two spaces could be achieved in order to be policy compliant by replacing a portion of the front grass with tarmac.
28. As with other such schemes in the Borough (such as the previously mentioned application at Beaver Road), it is important to realise that off-street parking provision is not considered a necessity for the proposed flats which is intended to cater for former rough sleepers who have very few possessions and highly unlikely to have a car. However, it is considered appropriate to condition the retention of the shown car parking spaces to ensure that the flats would be provided with acceptable car parking provision in accordance with policy requirements, if such parking provision is required for the flats in the future.

Other Matters

29. The site is located within the Stour catchment. The Council received advice from Natural England (NE) in respect of the nationally and internationally designated protected sites at Stodmarsh lakes, east of Canterbury. This relates to an increased level of nitrates and phosphates within the protected sites which is adversely affecting the integrity of the habitat of the lakes.
30. The development proposes to convert the existing dwelling into new accommodation. The existing dwelling is a 3-bedroom house, which in accordance with the Natural England methodology, is assumed to have an existing occupancy of 2.4 persons.
31. The proposed development would result in the creation of two single occupancy flats. Given that the proposed flats are intended for single occupancy, it is considered that the standard occupancy value of 2.4 persons per dwelling is not appropriate for the type of accommodation proposed and that assuming an occupancy value of 1 person per flat would be more appropriate. Again, this is the approach taken with the similar application at 240 Beaver Road (22/00569/AS).
32. The proposed development would convert an existing dwelling into 2 self-contained flats for single occupancy. Subject to the imposition of a condition restricting the occupancy of the units to one person per flat, the scheme does not result in any increase in net population within the Stour catchment. Consequently there would be no net increase in nutrients generated from the proposed use. Additionally, there is no land use change associated with this

application, given that the site is an existing residential site. Consequently, there would be no net nutrients generated from the surface water/land use change.

33. With the imposition of a single occupancy (per flat) condition, the Council has prepared an Appropriate Assessment which has been sent to Natural England to await their consultation response. At the time of this report being written, no response had been received from Natural England. However, any response from Natural England will be included within the update report. If members are minded to grant permission then a decision would only be issued with a suitable Appropriate Assessment being agreed.

Human Rights Issues

34. I have also taken into account the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the “Assessment” section above and the Recommendation below represent an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy their land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties).

Conclusion

35. As mentioned above, there is no specific policy objection to the conversion of larger dwellings into smaller units in the adopted Local Plan. Neither are there compelling housing needs that support the retention of large homes in this part of the Borough. Nonetheless, the proposal complies with the relevant Local Plan policies in relation to design, residential standards, parking / highway safety and amenity impact. For the reasons set out above, the proposed development is satisfactory and therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation

Permit

- A** Subject to the applicant submitting information to enable an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations to be adopted by the Assistant Director for Planning and Development which identifies suitable mitigation proposals such that, in their view, having consulted the Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer, and Natural England, the proposal would not have a

significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar Site; and with delegated authority to the Development Management Manager or the Strategic Development and Delivery Manager to add, amend or remove planning conditions as they see fit to secure the required mitigation and any associated issues relating thereto; and,

B Subject to planning conditions and notes, including those dealing with the subject matters identified below, (but not limited to that list) and those necessary to take forward stakeholder representations, with wordings and triggers revised as appropriate and with any 'pre-commencement' based planning conditions to have been the subject of the agreement process provisions effective 01/10/2018.

1. 3-year standard condition
2. Approved Plans
3. Single person occupancy condition
4. Materials in accordance with the submitted details
5. Retention of parking spaces
6. Landscaping details of the rear amenity space
7. Available for inspection

Notes to Applicant

- Working with the Applicant
- List of plans/documents approved
- Construction practices (including hours of construction, avoiding burning of controlled waste, and minimising dust emissions)

Background Papers

All papers referred to in this report are currently published on the Ashford Borough Council web site (www.ashford.gov.uk). Those papers relating specifically to this application may be found on the [View applications on line](#) pages under planning application reference PA/2023/0218)

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