

Application Number	PA/2023/1328
Location	23 Barnett Field, Ashford, TN23 4RG
Parish Council	Central Ashford
Ward	Beaver
Application Description	Conversion of existing dwelling to two self-contained 1-bedroom flats
Applicant	Mrs Sharon Williams, Ashford Borough Council
Agent	Agent ABC - Housing Development and Regeneration
Site Area	0.043ha

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 end of terrace property sited on the eastern side of Barnett Field and located within South Ashford.
3. The property currently benefits from 3 bedrooms all on the first floor with a lounge, kitchen and utility room on the ground floor. There is currently parking for two vehicles on the driveway. It is also worth noting that there are no parking restrictions in the surrounding streets.
4. The prevailing character of the street scene is one of properties of a similar style/design with a mix of terraced and some semi-detached dwellings, in either render or facing brickwork. There is a fair degree of landscaping in the vicinity with trees, amenity areas, low hedgerows and some picket fencing.

by the Council specifically for this project. The applicant has confirmed that this property will be for single person occupancy of each unit only.

7. It is of note that 23 Barnett Field 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. Similar applications have been heard by the Planning Committee in November and December 2022 under application reference 22/00569/AS for 240 Beaver Road, Ashford, and in August 2023 under application reference PA/2023/0218 for 15 Warwick Road, Kennington, and lastly in September 2023 under application reference PA/2023/0225 for 36 Hurst Road, Kennington.
8. 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 concentration of provision for management without being excessive.
9. 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 Elevations

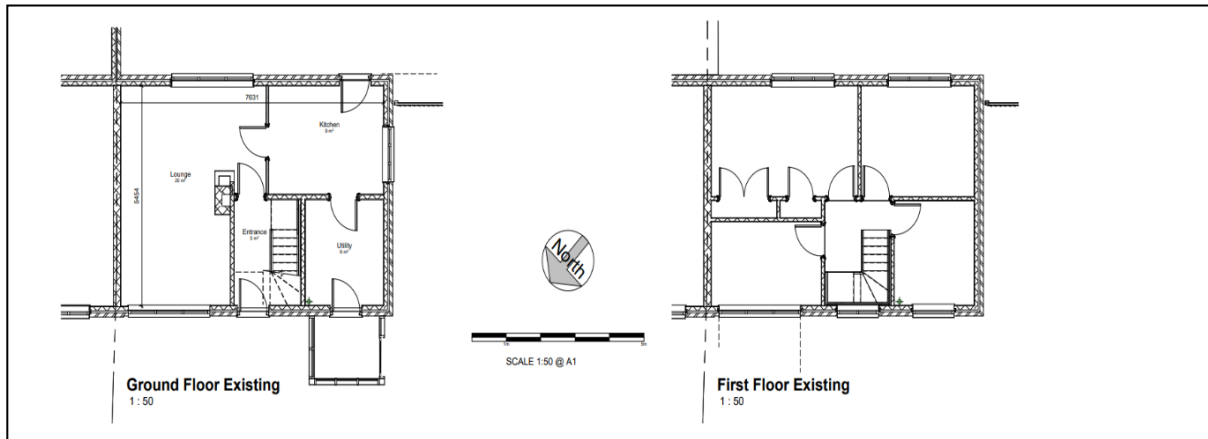


Figure 4: Existing Floorplans

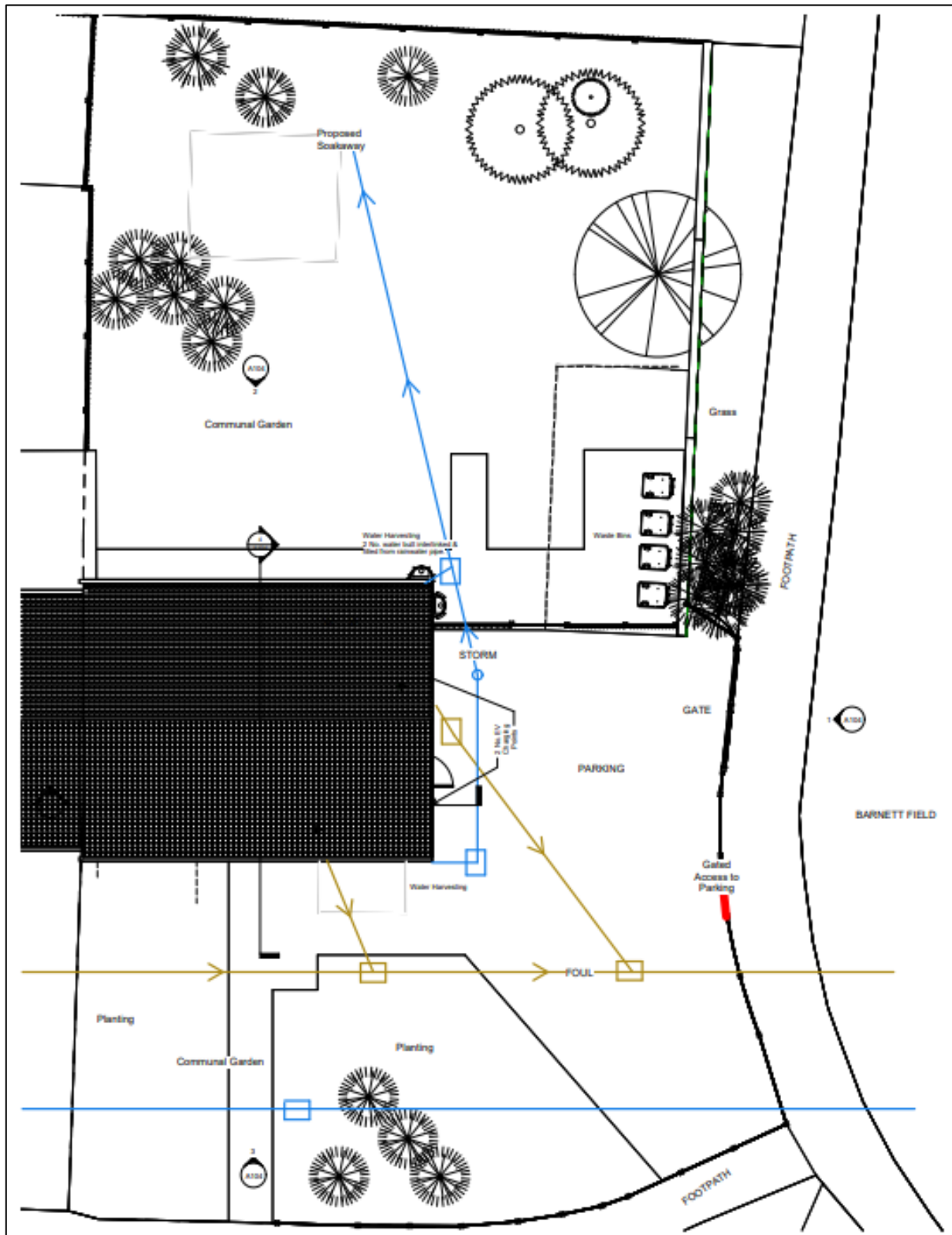


Figure 7: Site Plan

Planning History

10. There is no relevant planning history for the site.

Consultations

11. The application has been subject to formal statutory and non -statutory consultation.
12. **Ward Member:** No comments received from either Cllr Suddards or Cllr Leavey.
13. **Neighbours: 9** neighbours were consulted **1** letter of objection received stating the following:
- There is a huge shortage of 3 bedroom properties for families.
 - There are families that are stuck in flats, with young children with special needs who would greatly benefit from a garden.
 - This is a property that many families need. Where is the justification for converting a much needed house into 2 x 1 bedroom flats?

Planning Policy

14. The Development Plan for Ashford Borough comprises;-
- (i) the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019),
 - (ii) the Chilmington Green AAP (adopted July 2013),
 - (iii) the Wye Neighbourhood Plan (adopted March 2016),
 - (iv) the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (adopted April 2017),
 - (v) the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan (adopted December 2019),
 - (vi) the Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan (adopted October 2021)
 - (vii) the Egerton Neighbourhood Plan (adopted March 2022)
 - (viii) the Charing Neighbourhood Plan (adopted July 2023)
 - (ix) the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2016) & the Kent Minerals and Waste Early Partial Review (2020).
15. Although not yet part of the Development Plan, the following emerging Neighbourhood Plans are a material consideration:
- (i) Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan currently at Examination.

- (ii) Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan Review currently at Examination.
- (iii) Aldington & Bonnington Neighbourhood Plan currently at Regulation 16 stage in the plan making process.

16. 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

17. 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) 2023

18. Members should note that the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A significant material consideration is the NPPF. The NPPF states that less weight should be given to the policies above if they are in conflict with the NPPF. The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to this application:-

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

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

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. The proposed external alterations; which include the demolition of the existing porch, small fenestration alterations, installation of solar panels on the rear elevation, provision water butts and electric vehicle charging points; are minor works which would not undermine the appearance of the building or, be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area.

Residential Amenity and Standards

22. 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.”

23. The proposal raises no amenity impact issues. The proposed residential use conforms to the surrounding uses and the proposed external alterations would not have any adverse impact on the living conditions of the neighbours.
24. In accordance with policy HOU12 and national guidance, the internal layout and floorspace disposition of the proposed dwellings meet the set standards. The stacking arrangement between the proposed flats would also be acceptable, with the first floor flat layout being similar to the ground floor flat layout. Furthermore, 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. 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.
25. The property benefits from a 13.5m deep rear garden and small front garden area 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 front and 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 front facing bedroom window and rear facing lounge and kitchen windows of the ground floor flat) 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

26. Policy TRA3a of the Local Plan requires one off-street car space for 1- bedroom dwellings. The site currently provides two off road spaces. No changes are proposed to the existing historic parking and access arrangement and as such the proposal would be policy compliant.
27. As with other such schemes in the Borough (such as the previously mentioned applications at Beaver Road, Warwick Road and Hurst Road), it is important to realise that off-street parking provision is not considered a necessity for the

proposed flats which are 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

28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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 applications at 240 Beaver Road (22/00569/AS), 15 Warwick Road (PA/2023/0218) and 36 Hurst Road (PA/2023/0225).
31. 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.
32. Under the Council's Constitution, the Assistant Director of Planning & Development, in his capacity as Competent Authority has delegated authority to exercise all functions of the Council under the Habitats Regulations. This includes preparing or considering a draft Appropriate Assessment (AA), consulting Natural England (NE) upon it, and amending and/or adopting it after taking into account NE's views.

33. Although an AA has not been agreed by the LPA at this stage, this proposal is considered to be otherwise acceptable in planning terms (subject to planning conditions including, the single occupancy condition). The fact that this current application would not lead to an increase in population and nutrients at the site is similar to other approved schemes within the Borough which have had AA's agreed. It is recommended that a resolution to grant planning permission should be subject to the adoption by the Assistant Director - Planning and Development (having consulted NE) of a suitable Appropriate Assessment to address the Habitats Regulations, to the effect that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of the Stodmarsh Lakes (by achieving nutrient neutrality), and to secure any necessary additional obligation(s) and/or planning conditions that are necessary in order to reach that Assessment and ensure that at the time of occupancy any necessary mitigation is in place.

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).

Working with the applicant

35. In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and creative manner as explained in the note to the applicant included in the recommendation below.

Conclusion

36. 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 an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations being adopted by the Assistant Director - Planning and Development which identifies suitable mitigation proposals such that, in their view, having consulted the Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer where appropriate 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 Planning Applications and Building Control Manager or the Strategic Development and Delivery Manager to add, amend or remove planning obligations and/or 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. EV charging points
7. Landscaping details of the front and rear amenity spaces
8. Boundary treatment and fencing / wall details

Notes to Applicant

1. Working with the Applicant
2. List of plans/documents approved
3. 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 website (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/20231328

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