

Platt. Development in this area is primarily detached dwellings on a variety of shaped and sized plots, albeit most being of a generous size. The Platt Primary School currently lies to the north, with modern residential terraces in Pine View to the northeast. A shared residential vehicle access to Sandy Lodge and Birch House runs east adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. Grange Cottage lies immediately opposite the site, the dwelling being sited close to the Platt Common frontage.

- 3.2 The land slopes markedly down to the east (rear). It currently accommodates a two storey dwelling named 'Rudge', a relatively modest dual pitched gable ended dwelling with face brick at ground floor level and render to the first floor. The dwelling faces Platt Common but at an angle and is set back about 10m from this frontage. Vehicle access to the site is at the northern side of the frontage. Trees are situated within both front corners of the site, which are covered by Group Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). A very high hedge aligns the southern side boundary.
- 3.3 Platt Common is an un-adopted road that provides access to some 30 or so dwellings. The road was previously un-made and in a general state of disrepair but has recently been surfaced with bitumen. The road is similar to a traditional rural lane. The road is also used, as pedestrians, by parents and children going to and from school as well as by the children at the school to access a public right of way en route to the playing fields at Stonehouse Field, which are being used temporarily by the school.

4. Planning History:

TM/02/03308/FL

Refuse

10 December 2002

Demolition of existing house and construction of two detached houses with integral garages

5. Consultees:

- 5.1 PC: We would present strong objections to this application. Whilst we would accept that this is in a rural settlement confine, we do not accept that another large dwelling is required in Platt, especially in this location. The mix of dwellings in our village is slowly changing to large units or extended units that normally end up for sale or rent, with no benefit to our community. This area has a nice established mix of independent dwellings of differing sizes that creates its own "village" atmosphere and another large dwelling would slowly, if allowed and as a precedent, alter its character. Our other major concern would be increased traffic movements. As you are aware, there have been previous applications for new dwellings that were refused on traffic grounds, one of which was upheld at an appeal. We do not feel that things have altered on Platt Common since those decisions, hence they still apply. Contrary to the Transport Statement enclosed

with this application, there are no passing places on the access road and residents are continually having problems with delivery wagons, builder's trucks, etc. As with our general concern about speeding in our village, we will not accept the fact that as "only two incidents have occurred", there is no reason to say it will not happen in the future. Platt Common cannot cope with its existing traffic at peak times now so we do not accept that it "is considered to be adequate". We urge you to refuse this application

5.2 KCC (Highways): It is noted that there have been various refusals to planning applications in Platt Common and that appeals have also been dismissed. Changes to the way visibility standards are assessed and recent changes to Government policy namely the National Planning Policy Framework, as described in the applicants Transport Assessment, are also noted. From the speed count undertaken and knowing the numbers of lorries that access the nearby Platt industrial estate and the gradient of the A25 between this estate and the school, I have undertaken a worst case inter-visibility calculation for HGVs on a wet road and downhill gradient of 5%. This analysis for an 85th percentile speed of 36mph indicates that a visibility of 67m is acceptable. This falls within the visibility that is available and reflects the low crash record at this junction. I have also checked the crash record over longer periods of time and there have been no injury crashes at this junction for at least 10 years. The additional dwelling proposed represents less than 3% of the total numbers of residences that are accessed via this private road. In view of the above I confirm that on behalf of the Highway Authority I would not wish to raise objection to the proposal with respect to highway matters.

5.3 EA: No comment to make.

5.4 Private Reps (11/0X/11R/0S): Eleven objections have been received plus one objection petition. Concerns raised include:

- The development would be out of keeping with the surroundings
- The design of the dwelling is not in keeping with other house styles in the lane
- The proposal would be detrimental to the semi-rural character of Platt Common
- The removal of trees would destroy natural habitats
- The development will increase traffic volumes and the possibility of accidents at the junction with the A25
- The proposal is an overdevelopment of the site
- Parking would be insufficient, resulting in vehicles over-spilling into the lane, causing obstruction and congestion in the lane and making access difficult for emergency vehicles

- Access into and out of the lane would be compromised
- The development would exacerbate safety concerns for pedestrians and children who use the lane to walk to and from the school
- The lane is not suitable to sustain any increase in traffic due to its restricted width and hazardous junction with the A25
- The development would cause overlooking and reduce neighbouring privacy

6. Determining Issues:

- 6.1 The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the appearance and character of the area, on neighbouring amenity and on highway safety, both within the Platt Common lane and at the junction between Platt Common and the A25.
- 6.2 The application site is within the settlement confines of Platt where policy CP13 of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy permits minor development appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement. Policy CP 24 also requires development to be of a high quality and be well designed to respect the site and its surroundings in terms of its scale, layout, siting, character and appearance. Policy SQ1 of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document requires development to respect the residential amenities of neighbouring properties and to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the area. New development to result in a high quality sustainable environment (Policy CP1).
- 6.3 The application site at Rudge has previously been the subject of a planning application for 2 dwellings in 2002 (TM/02/03308/FL), which was refused due to the substandard nature of the Platt Common/A25 road junction and the impact that the additional traffic generated by the extra dwelling would have had on the free flow of traffic and on road safety on a classified road. The removal of a number of visually important trees that are protected under a TPO was also considered to be unacceptable. No appeal was lodged against that decision.
- 6.4 The proposed development provides a similar division of the site which, in principle, I am satisfied would not be harmful to the pattern of development in the area. The created plots, although not as large as many within Platt Common, would be of a generous size that would not be out of character with the adjacent residences of Pinehurst, Grange Cottages, The Moorings and Windy Ridge.
- 6.5 The new dwelling has been designed to reflect the double fronted width and general form and appearance of the existing dwelling of Rudge. The external materials and finishes to be used are also consistent with those widely used in the area. Notwithstanding this complementary appearance to Rudge, I am of the opinion that the dwelling does not appropriately respond to its setting with the

existing dwelling, appearing somewhat bulky in its front elevation and contrived within the space allocated. This feeling of overdevelopment is further compounded by the additional 1m ridge height above that of Rudge and the large square form the new building takes, due to the twin rear facing gable elements extending straight off the side flank alignments to the rear. Therefore, even accounting for the 15m setback of the dwelling from the frontage of the site, I am of the opinion that the specific form of the proposed dwelling would appear overly prominent within the street-scene and result in a feeling of overdevelopment of the site. Accordingly, in my view, the development would not be minor development that is appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement and therefore would be contrary to policies CP1, CP13 and CP24 of the TMBCS and SQ1 of the MDEDPD.

- 6.6 The relocation of the access (to be shared) to the centre of the site is considered to be acceptable in that it will lie between the two groups of TPO trees. Two parallel parking spaces are provided for each dwelling within the front garden of the site. These relate well to the dwellings and, with appropriate landscaping, impact on visual amenity can be minimised. The Kent Design Guide Review: Interim Guidance Note 3 – residential parking standards require two independently accessible spaces for houses with 4 bedrooms or more. The development satisfies this standard.
- 6.7 A sustainability statement has been submitted in respect to the provisions of policy CC1 of the MDE DPD. Renewable energy options proposed include roof mounted solar photovoltaic panels or ground or air source heat pumps. However, no specific information has been submitted that justifies that 10% of energy consumption will be provided from low or zero carbon technologies. A condition would be necessary to require this. The statement also outlines that code level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes is to be achieved. Although level 4 is encouraged by policy CC1 it is not mandatory and in this case I consider the submitted details to be sufficient in this case.
- 6.8 I am satisfied that the development would not harm neighbouring residential amenities. The new dwelling is sited a generous distance away from the adjacent dwellings, with trees and substantial hedging intervening. The rear facing windows are some 17m from the rear boundary, with the side flank of Sandy Lodge a further 8m away. The only first floor side flank windows are to the ensuite bathrooms and these are small and obscured. Policies CP1 and CP24 are complied with in respect of residential amenities.
- 6.9 Two group TPOs are present on the site within both front corners. An arboricultural report has been submitted that looks at the effect of the development, especially the siting of the new dwelling and the new access and parking hardstanding. It is noted that the new building is located outside of the indicated “root protection zone” but areas of the car parking and driveway encroach within this area. Notwithstanding this, I am of the opinion that all

elements of the development can be provided without damaging tree roots, which can be secured by a condition requiring the approval of details of the type of surfacing and measures to protect the tree roots.

- 6.10 The main Environmental Protection issue raised in this application is drainage. There is a presumption that connection to the Public Sewer should be the first considered method of sewage disposal. There are Southern Water main sewers approximately 12m to the southeast and approximately 18m to the southwest of the site. If the proposal is not to be connected to the main sewer, the applicant would need to demonstrate why this is not practicable in this specific case and full details be submitted for approval.
- 6.11 Historic plans show an old sand pit located immediately to the north of the site, so a condition requiring a site investigation prior to commencement of the development should be imposed if planning permission were to be granted.
- 6.12 I consider the remaining determining issues with this proposal to be the adequacy of the Platt Common/A25 junction and the condition of the Platt Common roadway to carry further traffic.
- 6.13 Planning application TM/95/51510/OA for an additional dwelling to Grange Cottage opposite the current application site was refused and appealed. The appeal decision provides a clear position on this matter at the time. In this decision, the Inspector, with reference to the standards set out in the annex to Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13), stated that the Platt Common/A25 junction did not provide adequate sightlines and as such was substandard and potentially dangerous. It was stated that in allowing another dwelling, the cumulative increase in traffic would worsen the road safety conditions. The Inspector went further by stating that the substandard width of Platt Common exacerbated the hazardous conditions.
- 6.14 Another relevant appeal was for Cedar Lodge (TM/04/01413/FL) which was allowed in 2005 because the extra accommodation was an annexe and not a separate dwelling. However, the Inspector did state *"I understand and support the Council's restriction on new dwellings of Platt Common because of the increase in movements at the junction and the potential for an increased risk of accidents in conflict with Structure Plan Policy T19"*.
- 6.15 However, there does need to be an examination of what has changed in highway planning policy terms since the 1996 and 2005 appeal decisions were made. The Government introduced the NPPF in March 2012, which has superseded the relevant editions of PPG13: Transport (and annex) which provided the standards used in both 1996 and 2005.

- 6.16 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF says that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. Paragraph 35 of the NPPF requires safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians. Paragraph 69 requires safe and accessible developments.
- 6.17 Local plan policy CP24 of the TMBCS requires proposals to enhance safety, and policy SQ8 of the MDE DPD states that development proposals should not significantly harm highway safety. Also, there have been changes in the way visibility standards are now assessed. Guidance is now provided in the Kent Design Guide Review: Interim Guidance Note 2: Visibility (2008)(IGN2). Also of importance is the speed limit along the A25 past the junction is now 30mph from 40 mph. Kent Highways has therefore reviewed the proposal under the current guidelines and circumstances. It has confirmed that the available sightlines at the junction fall within the limitations prescribed in the IGN2 standards. It has also been acknowledged that there is a low crash record at this junction, with no injury crashes at the junction for at least 10 years. Kent Highways has therefore not raised an objection to the development. As a result, Members may agree that refusal of the application on this issue of safety on the adopted public highway network cannot be sustained.
- 6.18 However, there is also the matter of the nature and capacity of Platt Common and whether the additional traffic generated by the development could be accommodated by Platt Common without harming safety. Policies CP24 and SQ8 apply. The layout of the development shows that vehicles will be able to enter and exit the site in a forward direction. It must be recognised that Platt Common is used by parents and children in the mornings and afternoon as a pedestrian route to the school and is also used on occasions by large groups of school children during school times to access a public right of way from the road that runs west en route to the playing fields being used temporarily at Stonehouse Fields. This route was chosen as the safest way for the pupils to access their playing field facilities. As there are no footpaths, pedestrians need to share the roadway with cars, delivery vehicles and the like, which is not ideal, especially as much of the road is single track.
- 6.19 I am aware that the road has recently been resurfaced with bitumen, providing a substantial upgrade by smoothing the surface and removing the potholes. However, it should be noted that there is no evidence that the surfacing has been carried out to any particular standard and thus may not have particular longevity. Whilst this new surface currently provides a more visible road environment for both vehicles and pedestrians, it is likely to result in higher vehicle speeds within Platt Common, which could compromise pedestrian and vehicle safety within the lane.

- 6.20 Members may recall that an application for a new dwelling was refused under ref TM/11/00032/FL at Blacksole Lane in Wrotham. Blacksole Lane is also unadopted, narrow and near a Primary School. In this case the Inspector stated *“although the County Council are unconcerned about the traffic implications of the proposal.....the Lane is a narrow dead end....providing a side access to the primary school....little room for pedestrians...none of this suggests to me that the lane is suitable for an increase in traffic use.”*
- 6.21 On balance, I am of the view that the additional traffic would have an additional cumulative effect on movement *within* a lane where there is significant unprotected pedestrian and schoolchildren use and that this would significantly harm safety within Platt Common. I note the views of the KCCHT that one extra dwelling could be viewed in itself as marginal. However, KCCHT are referring to the safety of the public highway whereas the planning policy context for assessing sustainable environments includes general safety as a material planning consideration.
- 6.22 I note the comments made by the Parish Council, occupiers of neighbouring properties and by the Platt Common Residents Association. In respect to the size and appearance of the dwelling, the NPPF is explicit in stating that decisions should not impose architectural styles or particular tastes, but at the same time should seek to reinforce local distinctiveness. As outlined above, I do not consider that the dwelling has been sufficiently well designed to respond appropriately to its setting and as such would result in an overly large dwelling that would appear as contrived and cramped development of the site. I am of the view that there would be no detrimental impact on neighbouring amenities and that the development could be accommodated without damage to the TPO trees and their root systems. The concerns expressed in relation to additional traffic and its impact on highway safety both within Platt Common and at the Platt Common/A25 junction have been dealt with in some detail above.
- 6.23 In conclusion, notwithstanding the positive aspects of this scheme, I consider that these are outweighed by the overly bulky and contrived appearance of the dwelling within the site setting and the cumulative detriment that the development would have on general safety within Platt Common. As a consequence, I recommend that planning permission for the development be refused.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 Refuse Planning Permission for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed development, by reason of the siting, size, scale and design of the dwelling responding poorly to its setting, would have a detrimental and harmful impact on the character and visual amenity of Platt Common. The proposal would be contrary to policies CP1, CP13 and CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy, SQ1 of the Tonbridge and Malling Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document and paragraphs 17, 56, 57, 60, 61 and 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

- 2 The proposed development, by reason of the cumulative impact that the development will have on the traffic along Platt Common, would be detrimentally harmful to safety within Platt Common, contrary to Policy CP24 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Core Strategy 2007 and Policy SQ8 of the Tonbridge and Malling Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document 2010.

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