

Planning & Heritage Statement

Coopers Cottage, 50 High Street,
Westerham, TN16 1RQ

“Householder Application for conversion and external alterations to existing garage to provide home gym and office ancillary to dwellinghouse.”

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Planning Property Services

Adam Wilkinson BSc MRTPI
info@planningpropertyservices.co.uk
0203 535 6173 / 07786805977



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for the conversion and associated alterations to an existing vacant triple garage to provide a home office and gym at Coopers Cottage, 50 High Street, Westerham, TN16 1RG.
- 1.2 This statement proceeds to provide further details of the proposed development and includes an assessment of the application site and surrounding area. It assesses the proposals against all relevant standards, demonstrating their compliance and so why planning permission should be granted.
- 1.3 The sites inclusion within the Westerham Conservation Area is noted and the proposals impact upon the significance of this heritage asset has been addressed by this statement. Overall, the proposals are considered to make the most effective use of the property by re purposing the existing redundant building to better meet modern day family needs. They will enhance the appearance of the existing garage which will be of benefit to Coopers Cottage and the surrounding area. They comply with all adopted policies and we respectfully ask that planning permission be granted accordingly.

2 Application Site and Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a triple garage to the rear of Coopers Cottage, 50 High Street, Westerham, TN16 1RG.

2.2 Coopers Cottage is a two storey semi-detached dwelling with gable end roof. It is located to the rear of No 48 and 46 High Street and is accessed via a side road leading from the high street. A Site Plan is provided below for reference, with the application site outlined in Red.

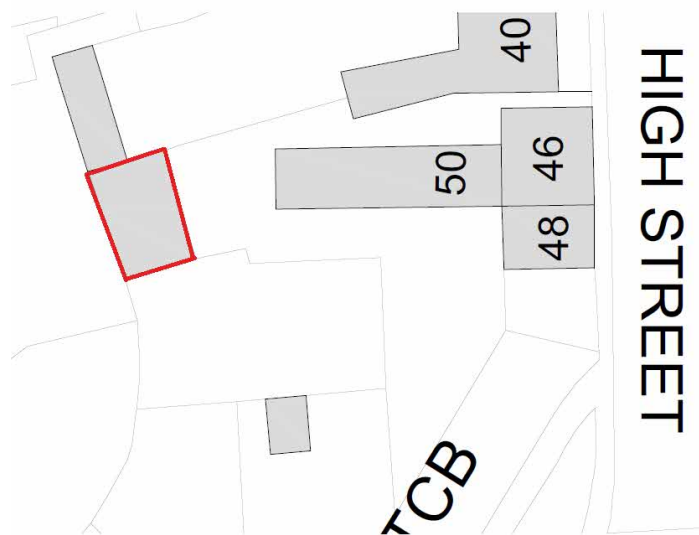


Figure 1 - Site Location Plan

2.3 The property benefits from a relatively large garden and to the rear is an existing 3 bay detached garage building. The garage building is single storey with a mono pitch roof and is of primarily brick construction. The roof appears to have been replaced with composite sheet tiles and the doors are sheet metal. The garage abuts the rear (west) boundary wall of the plot which rises up above the building due to the difference in levels between the application site and the neighbouring flatted developments.



Figure 2 - Side elevation of Coopers Cottage



Figure 3 - Front and side elevation of existing garage

2.4 There is a neighbouring converted garage building to the rear garden of No 40 High Street and this is directly adjacent to the garage at No 50 which is the subject of this planning application. The proposals are highly comparable to this neighbouring development.



Figure 4 - view from Coopers Cottage at 1st floor level showing relationship with outbuilding to rear of No 40 High Street

- 2.5 The application site is located at the very edge of the Westerham Conservation Area, with the rear boundary wall of the property forming the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area. Coopers Cottage is not a Listed Building, and the proposals are not considered to be within the setting of any Listed Buildings – the nearest being The Brewery Cottages to the south. The site is also not a locally listed building and again does not fall within the setting of any.
- 2.6 The site is within Flood Risk Zone 1 and does not appear to be at risk of flooding of any form. The site is in a highly sustainable location, located just off Westerham High Street and within a 5 minute walk of a wide range of local services and amenities.
- 2.7 The existing garage subject to this application is vacant, and we understand that it has not been used for the storing of vehicles for many years. This is primarily due to its age and relatively small dimensions when compared to modern day cars and it is therefore not fit for purpose. The applicant instead parks their vehicle in the driveway and they intend to do so for the foreseeable future.

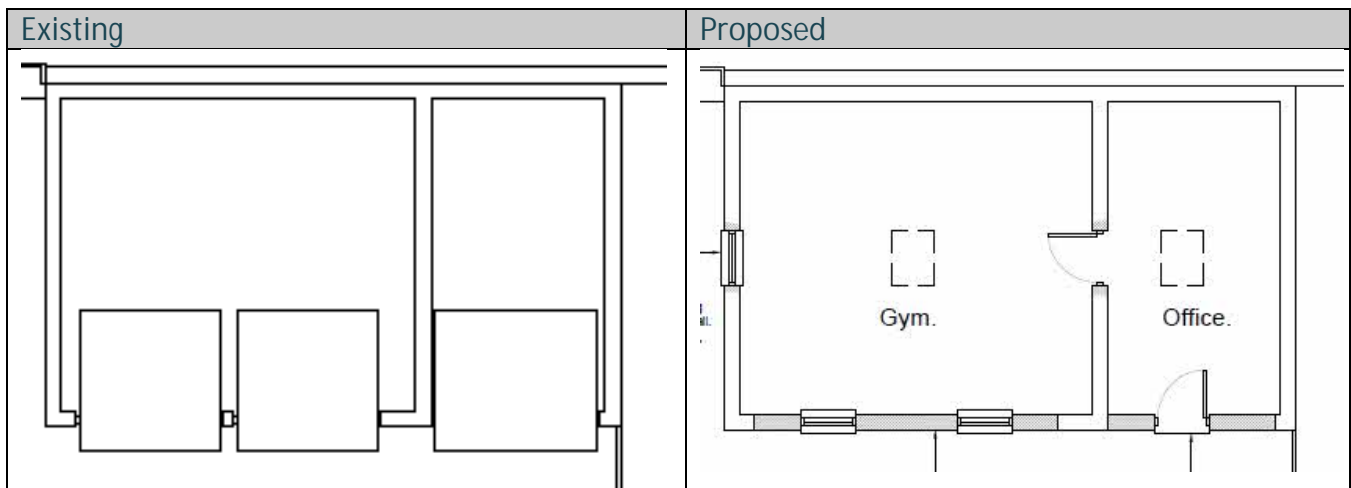
3 Planning History

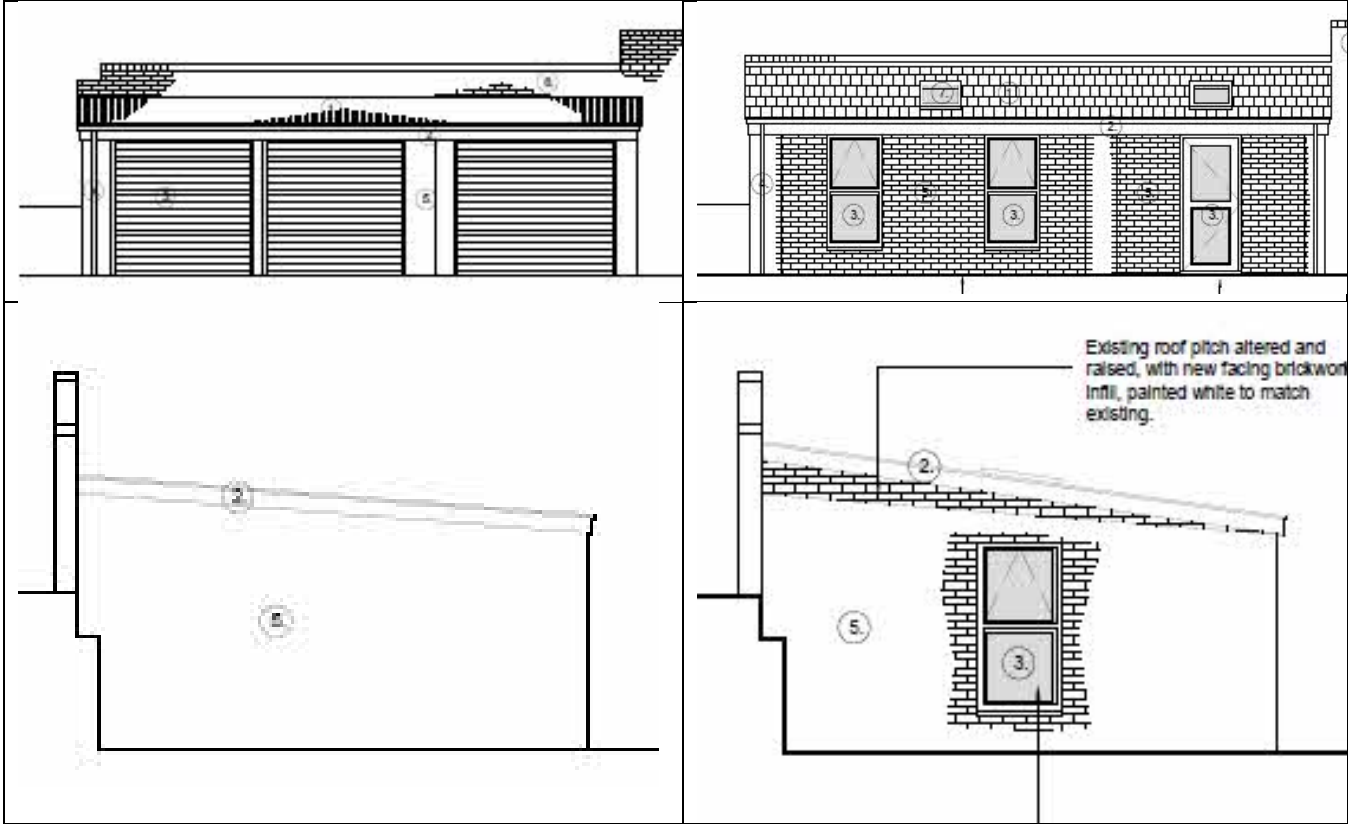
3.1 The application site has no relevant planning history. Of note is the approved application for the outbuilding in the rear garden of No 40 High Street, referred to in section 2 of this statement, which is noted below:

Ref	Address	Description	Status
23/00560/FULL	40 High Street Westerham	Detached summerhouse to rear garden.	Granted 14 th October 2005

4 The Proposals

- 4.1 The application proposes to convert and alter the existing vacant garage to provide ancillary accommodation to the main dwellinghouse. This includes the provision of a home office and gym.
- 4.2 The existing garage is considered to have no architectural or historical value and is in a relatively poor state of repair largely owing to its inability to function as a garage due to its size limitations. It would appear to have been subject to unsympathetic repairs to the roof with poor quality modern materials, and the doors are unoriginal sheet metal. It is seldom used with the exception of providing an area of informal storage for the owner.
- 4.3 The existing garage door openings are to be infilled with brickwork which will be painted white to match the existing brick walls and support columns. In place of the doors 2 new windows and 1 door is to be inserted. These windows and door are made of timber, with their design and proportions matching the main house. A further window is proposed centrally within the flank elevation overlooking the garden of the property.
- 4.4 The pitch of the existing roof is to be slightly altered and steepened, allowing a modest height increase to the existing ridge which will improve the quality of internal space provided. The replacement roof is to be made of roofing tiles to match those of the existing building, and will include the insertion of two modest roof lights. The footprint of the building is unaltered by the proposals. A selection of images taken from the proposed drawings is provided below for reference:





5 Planning Policy Context

5.1 The UK Planning System has a plan-led approach. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

5.2 The adopted Development Plan for Sevenoaks District Council comprises:

The Core Strategy Development Plan 2011

The Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015

Adopted Policies Map

Core Strategy

5.3 The following policies of the Core Strategy are considered to be of most relevance to this application:

LO1 – Distribution of Development

SP1 – Design of New Development and Conservation

SP2 – Sustainable Development

Allocations and Development Management Plan

5.4 The following policies of the Allocations and Development Management Plan are considered to be of relevance:

SC1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

EN1 – Design Principles

EN2 – Amenity Protection

EN4 – Heritage Assets

EN5 - Landscape

5.5 The Council has adopted several supplementary policy documents and guidance statements. The following are considered to be of most relevance to the application:

Westerham Conservation Area SPG1 – General Design Principles

Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

Residential Extensions SPD

5.6 The application site noted as having the following designations as shown on the adopted Proposals Map.

Westerham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
Archaeological Notification Area
Airfield Safeguarding Zone
Area of Special Control for Adverts
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other guidance

- 5.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the principal planning document, for which all development in England must have regard to. A revised version of the NPPF was published by the government in September 2023, superseding previous versions published in 2012, 2019 and 2021.
- 5.8 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans, and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.9 Section 4 of the NPPF is titled ‘Decision-making’, and paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.
- 5.10 Section 11 of the NPPF relates to Making effective use of land.
- 5.11 Section 12 of the NPPF, ‘Achieving well-designed places’ states in paragraph 126 that, “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”
- 5.12 Section 16 of the NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Para 194 requires applicants to describe the significance of any assets affected by proposals and the contribution made by their setting.

6 Planning Assessment

6.1 This section proceeds to assess the proposals against the relevant policies of the Sevenoaks Local Development Plan, Supplementary Guidance and the NPPF as relevant. It starts with the principle of development followed by more detailed considerations.

Principle of Development

6.2 The proposals seek to re-use a vacant garage to provide the homeowners with additional ancillary space. The conversion also includes modest changes to the external fabric of the building which will significantly improve its appearance and also its functionality. Repurposing this building to meet modern day family needs, as opposed to its demolition and/or the building of an entirely new structure is clearly a sustainable approach. This strongly resonates with Development Management Plan Policy SC1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.3 Policy EN1 – Design Principles further adds that proposals which “would create high quality design and meet the following criteria” will be permitted, and this clearly demonstrates a support for the principle of development subject to various criteria. We note permission has been previously granted by the Council for a comparable development at the adjacent property No 40 High Street, as set out in section 3 of this report.

6.4 The principle of development is therefore supported by policy subject to its design, impact upon neighbouring amenity and the character of the Westerham Conservation Area and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These matters and others as relevant are addressed in turn by this report.

Design

6.5 Policy EN1 – Design Principles provides 8 criteria for the assessment of development proposals, with parts a), b) and c) considered as being most relevant to these proposals. In the supporting text it advises that the Council’s residential extensions design guide provides detailed design guidance for development of this type.

6.6 Para 3.22 provides guidance on garages and other outbuildings within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It advises that “outbuildings should not impact detrimentally on the space surrounding buildings. They must be limited in scale and clearly ancillary to the property.” It adds that “Garages and outbuildings for domestic purposes should not normally need to exceed a single storey in height or have excessive volume.”

- 6.7 This guidance provides detail to the more general requirement of part a) of Policy EN1 which states that “the form of the proposed development responds to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the area.”
- 6.8 The proposed development fully responds to these policy requirements. In terms of scale and height, the proposals retain the existing footprint and only modestly extend the ridge height of the building by 0.5m, raising the ridge height to 3.2m from its existing 2.7m. The existing eaves height is retained. Whilst the ridge height of the building is modestly increased, it will still remain below the height of the existing boundary wall, and so will not be visible from any viewpoint behind this feature.
- 6.9 The proposed form of the outbuilding will match that of the adjacent outbuilding at No 40 granted permission by the Council, which can be clearly seen in the photograph provided in section 2 to extend above the height of the existing garage. The converted outbuilding will be clearly subservient to the main dwelling house which is 2.5 storeys tall.
- 6.10 The proposed materials are of a significantly higher quality than those currently forming the existing garage. The introduction of brickwork and roofing tiles to match both the existing garage and the host dwelling will be entirely in keeping with the surrounding context and will improve the appearance of both. The proposals thereby fully comply with Part a) b) and c) of Policy EN1. The proposals design thereby complies with the relevant design guidance of these policy documents.

Heritage and Impact upon the Conservation Area

- 6.11 The sites inclusion within the Westerham Conservation Area raises additional albeit heavily interlinked, heritage considerations to the design matters already addressed. It is accepted that Conservation Areas are designated Heritage Assets as per the NPPF. Policy EN4 – Heritage Assets advises that proposals that effect a Heritage Asset will be permitted where the development conserves or enhances the character, appearance and setting of the asset.
- 6.12 The adopted Westerham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides clear guidance on this issue and has been fully consulted. The document does not make any specific reference to Coopers Cottage. Maps 3 and 4 of the document identify buildings contributing to the character of the Conservation Area and important views and glimpses within it respectively.
- 6.13 On Map 3 the application site, and indeed Coopers Cottage, are not noted as being buildings or structures contributing to the character of the Conservation Area. On Map 4, no views or glimpses facing toward to the application site are noted as being of particular note or interest. We therefore conclude that the application site is not of particular or special interest.

- 6.14 Notwithstanding, care and attention has still been paid to the guidance provided regarding new works within the Conservation Area provided by the Management Plan in section 5 of the document. Under 5.2.2 the guide comments on alterations. Whilst limited information is provided, the key principles applied are for works to understand and reflect the surrounding context. UPVC windows are for example noted as potentially not meeting this test.
- 6.15 As already set out in the proceeding section, the proposals involve the provision of high quality materials which are superior to those of the existing building. The modest scale of works proposed, and the quality of these will enhance the appearance and character of the Conservation Area. As such the proposals meet the tests of Policy EN4, as well as the requirements of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act 1990.

Impact upon Amenity

- 6.16 Policy EN2 Amenity Protection states that proposals will be permitted where they would provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers and would safeguard the amenities of neighbours.
- 6.17 The standard of accommodation provided by the development for future users will be high, with good levels of outlook and access to natural sunlight and daylight. In terms of neighbouring amenity, the proposals will remain below the height of the existing boundary wall, and as such will have no impact upon neighbours to the north of the site.
- 6.18 The nearest neighbour to the development is No 40 High Street which shares a boundary with the property to the east. The modest scale of the proposals and their separation from neighbouring dwellings are considered to ensure that they have a negligible impact upon outlook, overshadowing and any potential sense of enclosure.
- 6.19 All of the proposed windows face into the rear garden and curtilage of the host dwelling, and so do not cause any overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring residents. The proposed use as a home office and gym is entirely in keeping with the prevailing character of the area and is not considered to cause any disturbance or loss of amenity in this regard.
- 6.20 The proposals thereby fully accord with the requirements of Policy EN2 and fully preserve neighbouring amenity.

Impact upon the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 6.21 Policy EN5 Landscape makes reference to proposals within the AONB, advising that proposals that conserve the character of the landscape will be permitted. Core Strategy LO8 Countryside and the Rural Economy notes that proposals will need to conserve and enhance the character of these

areas. Policy SP1 Design of New Development and Conservation adds to this, requiring development to be of a high quality which responds to the character of this area.

6.22 For the reasons already set out in this statement the proposals are considered to fully respect, preserve and enhance the character and setting of the existing building and surrounding area. They therefore fully comply with the requirements of these policies and will have no tangible impact upon the AONB.

Parking Provision

6.23 The proposals do not involve the loss of parking facilities as the garages are vacant and no longer fit for purpose. The application site retains space for the parking of at least 2 vehicles on the existing driveway, and this is considered ample given its sustainable location within Westerham High Street.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 This householder application seeks to convert and alter a vacant garage building to provide additional living space that meets modern day family needs. The repurposing of the building and proposed works will significantly improve its appearance, and with this they will be of clear benefit to the character and appearance of the application site and surrounding area.
- 7.2 The site is noted as being within the Westerham Conservation Area as well as the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The impact of the development proposals upon both designations has been fully considered by this submission. It is concluded that the proposals will have negligible impact upon the AONB, and that they will modestly enhance the character and appearance of the Westerham Conservation Area.
- 7.3 The modest scale of the proposals ensures that it raises no concerns regarding neighbouring amenity, and the development does not result in the loss of any off street parking as the existing building has been vacant for many years and is unsuitable for modern cars. Two off street parking spaces remain at the property, and this is considered ample given its sustainable location.
- 7.4 In conclusion the proposals are shown to comply with all relevant guidance and policies provided by the Core Strategy, Allocations and Development Management Local Plan, the Westerham Conservation Area Management Plan and the Residential Extensions SPD. We respectfully ask that planning permission is granted accordingly.