

Head of Planning
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
ME15 6JQ

09 February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

**PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO RESIDENTIAL CARAVAN SITE FOR
ONE GYPSY FAMILY – ORCHARD PLACE, CHARTWAY STREET, SUTTON VALANCE**

Please find attached completed application forms and plans in respect of the above-mentioned proposal.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Use, Scale and Layout

Orchard Farm Nursery has been sub-divided, and planning permissions granted for the change of use of most of its constituent parts into gypsy caravan pitches for members of the extended Ackleton family. This application is retrospective and seeks planning for replacement of the former nursery office/shop/café building with a twin unit mobile home.

Access

Access to the proposed pitch would be via the gated entrance to Orchard Place, from Chartway Street. The site access is located on the outside of a gentle bend in Chartway Street, with good visibility for drivers entering or leaving the property.

Planning Considerations

The development plan includes the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (the LP) adopted in 2017. The Council is preparing a new local plan and, the Examining Inspector has already heard evidence of the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller

Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), published in January 2023, which estimates that an additional 604 pitches will be needed in the Borough over the period 2019 – 2039/40. The Inspector has stated that “ *clearly, there is a significant (and potentially unparalleled) housing need in Maidstone Borough for gypsies and traveller households, both nomadic and settled, who seek appropriate pitch provision*”. The Council’s strategy is to allocate land in a new Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document but, this is not due to be adopted until next year at the earliest and, in the meantime, new gypsy sites can only come forward through the development management system.

LP policy SS1 sets out a spatial strategy for the Borough which makes provision for new development principally around Maidstone and then larger villages but in countryside locations protection will be given to the local landscape of the Borough and the Kent Downs AONB will be conserved and enhanced. Policy SP17 deals with development in the countryside in more detail and requires new development to meet one of the specific other policies and not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. Policy DM15 allows for the provision of gypsy sites in the countryside as an exception to the general development restraint policies prevailing in the countryside. New gypsy sites will be permitted provided that they do not cause significant harm to the character or appearance of the rural area, and are well screened by existing landscape features; are well-related to local services; accessible to vehicles; not located in an area at risk from flooding; and take into account wildlife considerations.

In this case, the mobile home replaces an existing building and, is situated within the long-established boundaries of, what is now, an existing gypsy site. It is well-screened from Chartway Street by the existing boundary fencing but, in any case, is not at odds with the existing character or appearance of Orchard Place.

The proposed caravan pitch is located alongside Chartway Street, with good access to the primary road network. The site is located within about 2 kilometres of the community services and facilities available in Kingswood, Langley and Sutton Valance, including shops (post office and Costcutter supermarket), primary school, doctor’s surgery, church and various public houses. The site is clearly a sustainable location for a gypsy site with respect to its access to community services and facilities. The site is also located within flood zone 1 and, is not subject to any other adverse environmental effects.

The proposed development clearly satisfies all of the criteria in Policy DM15 and, therefore, planning permission should be granted without delay.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Brown'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Philip' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Brown'.

PHILIP BROWN BA (Hons) Urban and Regional Planning