

MC/25/2068

Date Received: 17 October 2025
Location: 50 Wallace Road Rochester Medway ME1 2TB
Proposal: Change of use of residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to a therapeutic children's home (Use Class C2 Residential Institution) for up to four young people aged between 7 and 17 years.
Applicant Amberley Children's services Ltd
Gillian Panesar
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Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 11 February 2026.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Received 17 October 2025
DKM/5538/01 - Location Plan
Block Plan
Received 11 November 2025
006 - Proposed Floor Plans

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
- 3 The number of residents cared for and residing on the premises shall not exceed 4 at any one time.

Reason: To ensure that the development would not prejudice the amenities of the residents nearby in accordance Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

- 4 The children's home shall not be occupied until details of secure private cycle parking provision in the form of a secure cycle shed/storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the children's home is first occupied and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To ensure the provision and permanent retention of bicycle spaces in accordance with Policy T4 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting these Orders with or without modification the use hereby permitted shall be restricted to use for a therapeutic children's home and for no other purpose within Class C2.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control such development in the interests of amenity and highway safety, in accordance with Policies BNE2, T1 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for Approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This application is for the change of use of residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to a therapeutic children's home (Use Class C2 Residential Institution) for up to 4 young people aged between 7 and 17 years.

The application property is an extended semi-detached property on the corner of Wallace Road and Wilson Avenue. Currently the property comprises 2 bedrooms, a lounge and conservatory, a kitchen/diner, a wc and a utility room on the ground floor, with 3 bedrooms (1 of which has an ensuite) and a bathroom on the first floor and 2 bedrooms on the second floor.

The proposal is for the property to be used as a home for 4 young people aged between 7 and 17. Staff will operate 12 hour shifts with a minimum of 2 staff present at any one time depending on the needs of the placed children. There will be no alterations to the property internally or externally although one of the ground floor bedrooms will be used for combination of office and staff sleep in room.

There are 2 off road parking spaces within the front garden and 1 off road parking space to the rear accessed from Wilson Ave. The rear garden comprises a well enclosed private garden amenity area. The intention is to provide the children with a home that replicates a normal family environment.

Relevant Planning History

MC/00/0670	Construction of a single storey rear and two storey side extension. Decision: Approved with Conditions
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Decided: 15.08.2000

MC/23/2716

Construction of a part two storey part first floor extension, dormer windows to front, installation of a roof light to rear and new canopy to front with associated external alterations to facilitate conversion of existing garage to annexe.

Decision: Withdrawn

Decided: 25.01.2024

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners/occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Twenty-eight Letters of objection have been received raising the following concerns:

- Unsuitable location
- Concerns in relation to crime
- Antisocial behaviour
- New company running the business.
- Impact on the area
- Noise impact and disturbance
- Increased traffic
- Parking
- Change in character of the area
- Impact on character and amenity
- Community safety
- Lack on operation details
- Increase levels of residents.
- Dangerous roads
- Impact on local residents/ mental health
- Previous use as HMO

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 and are considered to conform.

The Emerging Local Plan has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate under regulation 22. The policies within this version of the emerging plan have weight in the determination of planning (and associated) applications. However, due to the nature of this proposal, the stage of the emerging Local Plan, the existence of relevant adopted Policies in the Medway Local Plan (2003) and guidance in the NPPF it is considered that the proposal falls to be mainly considered with regard to the adopted policies and guidance in the NPPF.

Planning Appraisal

Principle

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations. Paragraphs 61 and 63 of the NPPF are also relevant and seek to significantly boost the supply of homes and support the provision of housing for different groups including looked after children. A children's care home falls within the housing need for the Council and the emerging evidence of the Local Plan suggests that there is a need in coming years for more specific care needs within Medway.

The written ministerial statement on 23 May 2023 - planning for looked after children – states that planning should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society.

Policy H2 of the Local Plan relates to the retention of housing and states that the loss of existing residential accommodation will not be permitted unless the proposal would provide facilities of significant benefit to the immediate local community.

Policy H8 sets out that residential institutions and hostels will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- (i) the proposal would not adversely affect nearby residential amenity; and
- (ii) in appropriate cases, where the occupants have a degree of mobility and independence, the property is within reasonable walking distance of shops, public transport, and other facilities; and
- (iii) adequate amenity space is provided for residents. and
- (iv) parking is adequate for staff, visitors, and service vehicles, considering the accessibility of public transport; and
- (v) for changes of use, the property is too large to reasonably expect its occupation by a single household.

Policy T4 of the regulation 22 emerging Local Plan is for supported housing, nursing homes, and older persons accommodation. The policy sets out a support for specialist residential accommodation including meeting the needs of looked after children subject to:

- There is a proven need.
- It is well designed to meet the particular requirement of residents.
- It is easily accessible to public transport, shops, local services, community facilities and social networks for residents and carers and visitors.
- Does not adversely affect the character and amenity of the area or health and well being of residents (new and existing)

- Rooms comply with nationally described space standards with the provision of suitable communal space.

The reasoned justification to the policy states that the provision of appropriate housing for looked after children is crucial in maintaining safe and independent lives and that there is a growing demand for such accommodation.

Policy H2 of the Local Plan states that the removal of family housing will not be supported. Policy H8 of the Local Plan sets out that residential institutions would only be supported where they are too large to reasonably expect occupation by a single household. The reasoned justification to the policy states that a dwelling of more than 120sqm is large enough for conversion.

In this case, the property is a 7-bedroom over 3 floors property covering 206 Sqm and is very close to a one stop shop, schools, and open space. The property also has good public transport facilities and is within reasonable distance from the centre of Rochester and Horsted Retail Park that include leisure facilities etc.

There is a significant need for small care homes which facilitate children being supported in an environment as close to that of a “normal” family and this would facilitate that. The principle of conversion is considered acceptable.

Design

There are no external changes to the dwelling and therefore there are no visual or design concerns regarding Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Residential Amenity

Paragraph 135f of the NPPF states that achieving well-designed places should include creating a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan expects all development to secure the amenities of its future occupants and protect those amenities enjoyed by neighbouring properties. The design of the development should have regard to privacy, daylight and sunlight, noise, vibration, light, heat, smell and airborne emissions and activity levels and traffic generation.

There are two main amenity considerations, firstly the impact of the proposed use on neighbouring amenity and secondly the living conditions which would be created for the potential occupants of the development itself.

Neighbouring Amenity

The proposal and accompanying submission make it clear that the use would make provisions for four children/young persons. The number of staff members would vary depending on the specific needs of the children but there would be a minimum of four staff members working in the care home over a 24-hour period. This could result in eight people (4 children and 4 staff) on site at shift changeover times. In addition, other visitors would visit the home including OFSTED, local social services and family and friends.

Two of the carers will operate a 24-hour staffing rota designed to balance supervision with consistency. Day shifts run from 08:00–20:00 with a minimum of two staff on duty, while night shifts run from 20:00–08:00 with one awake staff and one sleep-in. To ensure safe transitions, there will be a brief period of overlap during handovers when up to three staff may be present. This system minimises disruption, avoids gaps in supervision, and ensures that staff are consistently available. Staff will be encouraged to car-share or use public transport where possible, minimising the parking impact on local residents.

The resident children are also likely to be travelling to/from school/college. Most of these movements will be during the normal day time. The existing dwelling could accommodate nine residents and movements would not necessarily be within the set daytime periods and therefore the existing use could potentially cause more disturbance during evenings and nighttime.

By virtue of the level of occupation of the care home and there being no external alterations, there would be no detrimental impact on neighbouring amenities regarding sunlight, daylight, outlook, or privacy.

Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in regard to neighbouring amenity and in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135f of the NPPF.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The proposed bedrooms have been considered against the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standard dated March 2015 (the national standard). The gross internal floor area (GIFA) for the property has been measured from the submitted floor plans and totals 206sqm. The internal layout details 7 bedrooms which exceeds the minimum GIFA of 123sqm for a 6-bedroom, 7-person, 3 storey dwelling. All habitable rooms have been provided with adequate outlook. All the bedrooms exceed the minimum requirements for floor area when compared to the National Standard minimum as shown below.

Minimum internal bedroom space		
	Width	Floor area
Standards		
One person bed space	2.55m	7.5m ²

Two-person bed space	2.75m	11.5m ²
Proposed room sizes		
GF – bed 1	2.7m	8.4m ²
GF - bed 2	3.6m	11.5m ²
FF- Bed 1	2.6m	12.7m ²
FF - Bed 2	3m	9.7m ²
FF – Bed 3	3.25	10.2m ²
SF – bed 1	3.9m	16.3m ²
SF - bed 2	2.7m	13m ²

The layout of the care home would provide the children with a large kitchen area and dining room, lounge, and conservatory on the ground floor. Additionally, there is a well enclosed outdoor garden with a garden room that the children can use. For the staff, a meeting/training room, office space and two sleeping rooms would be provided. Overall, the premises is considered to offer a generous amount of space with provision to allow the children to live as one household, eat together and socialise together, as well as, offering the staff office and sleeping space.

As such, it is considered that the premises would offer a high level of occupier amenity in accordance with Policies H8 and BNE2 of the Local Plan, Policy T4 of the emerging Local Plan and paragraph 135f of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking

Policy H8 states that residential institutions should provide adequate parking for staff, visitor and service vehicles considering the accessibility of public transport. Whilst Policy T13 relates to vehicle parking standards and states proposals will be expected to make vehicle parking provision in accordance with the adopted standard.

Medway Council parking standards for a C3 dwelling of this size is two parking spaces. The proposed care home has three dedicated parking space two located at the front of the property and one to the rear.

The proposal will operate a 24-hour staffing rota designed to balance supervision with consistency. Day shifts run from 08:00–20:00 with a minimum of two staff on duty, while night shifts run from 20:00–08:00 with one awake staff and one sleep-in. As a single dwelling, with 7 bedrooms, there could potentially be in excess of 7 adults all with their own vehicles which would have a far greater impact on the on-street parking in the area than the proposed children's home.

The Cycle Parking Standards state that there should be 1 cycle parking space per five children. The site does not meet this threshold and, considering the vehicle parking situation and the sustainable location of the site, some cycle parking is expected from the development. A condition is recommended to ensure that cycle parking is provided.

Therefore, in relation to highway considerations, it is considered that the proposal is considered acceptable on highways grounds in accordance with the provisions of Policies T1 and T13 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

There is no alteration to the footprint and therefore the development does not impact a priority habitat and therefore falls under the de-minimis exemption in this instance.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposal for a change of use from residential (Class C3) to children's care home (Class C2) is considered acceptable in regard to the principle, design, residential and future occupier amenity, and highways and in accordance with policies H2 and H8 of the Local Plan, Policy T4 of the emerging Local Plan and paragraphs 61 and 63 of the NPPF. Accordingly, the application is acceptable and recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Committee for decision based on the number of representations received expressing a view contrary to the recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection on Medway Council's Website <https://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>