

MC/26/0094

Date Received: 21 January 2026
Location: 54 Woodlands Road, Gillingham, Medway ME7 2DS
Proposal: Change of use of existing dwellinghouse (Class C3) to care home together with construction of a two storey side extension and dormer window to rear to provide additional living accommodation within roof space with associated external alterations.

Applicant Let Us Lett Limited / Own Life
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Ward: Watling
Case Officer: Chantelle Farrant-Smith
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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 8 April 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 22 January 2026:

A.100.25 - Proposed Elevations

P.100.01 - Location Plan

P.100.22 - Proposed First Floor Plans

P.100.23 - Proposed Loft Plans

Received 2 March 2026:

P.100.02 REV B - Site and Block Plans

P.100.21 REV D - Ground Floor Plan

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 children 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 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

- 4 Within 3 months of the date of this decision, details of secure private cycle parking provision in the form of individual lockers shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details 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 The use shall be operated in accordance with the 'Ownlife' Statement of Purpose received 22 January 2026.

Reason: In the interests of amenity protection in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

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

Proposal

The application site is a semi-detached two-storey property located on a prominent cross-junction where Woodlands Road meets Canadian Avenue and Cornwallis Avenue. The dwelling currently comprises three bedrooms with off-street parking to the front and a private garden to the rear. The surrounding streetscene contains a mix of residential, commercial and community uses, including Woodlands Primary School and a convenience store, with buildings generally up to two storeys in height and displaying a variety of architectural styles.

The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of an existing C3 dwelling house to a C2 care home, together with the construction of a two-storey side extension and the installation of a side/rear dormer window.

The submitted floor plans show the following arrangement:

- Ground Floor: Hallway, support workers office, open plan kitchen/lounge area with a secondary lounge space to the rear. There is also a W/C located under the stairwell;
- First Floor: 3 Bedrooms (2 served by ensembles), and a bathroom;
- Second Floor: 1 Bedroom with ensuite.

The proposed care home would be operated by OwnLife and provide accommodation for up to four children or young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The submitted Statement of Purpose confirms that the home would be staffed by a team of 11–12 personnel, including a Registered Manager,

Deputy Manager, senior practitioners and residential practitioners, with 2–3 staff present per shift as part of a 24-hour staffing model comprising day shifts beginning at 08:00 or 15:00 and a night shift from 22:00. The operational approach includes a keyworker system, personalised care plans, and support for education, hobbies, faith needs and the development of independent living skills.

Relevant Planning History

MC/25/1036	Conversion of existing dwelling to three managed apartments for foster children together with construction of a two storey side extension and dormer window to rear to provide additional living accommodation within roof space with associated external alterations. Decision: Withdrawn
MC/25/0249	Change of Use Residential C3 single Dwelling to Residential Care Institution C2. (Children Leaving Foster Care). Decision: Refusal Decided: 2 May 2025
MC/24/1169	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate (proposed) for construction of a dormer window to side/rear to provide additional living accommodation within roof space together with installation of new patio doors with Juliette balcony and new window at first floor level to rear. Decision: Approval Decided: 25 July 2024
MC/24/0944	Construction of a first floor side extension with undercroft parking area together with enlargement of existing side access and associated external works and landscaping. Decision: Approval with conditions Decided: 24 July 2024

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. This included an initial 21-day consultation period, followed by a further 14-day re-consultation upon receipt of additional information. Kent Police and Southern Water have also been consulted.

13 letters of representation from **7** different addresses have been received objecting to the application for the following reasons;

- Lack of appropriate consultation;
- The credible operational requirements for a second lounge;

- Parking and Highway Safety;
- Contradictions in respect to the supporting material and what is actually proposed;
- Noise, disturbance and ASB;
- Powers to decline to determine under Section 70A.

Councillor Nestorov has written objecting to the application. The Councillor highlights the planning history of the site, noting multiple previous applications of a similar nature that have been refused or withdrawn, with the view that the current proposal remains materially similar to those earlier schemes. Concerns are also raised regarding the consultation process, with reports from residents that notification letters were received late and that full plans were not immediately available online.

Councillor Coombs has written objecting to the application. The concerns raised relate to the repeated submission of applications of a similar nature at the site, citing previous proposals involving two-storey or first-floor side extensions, rear dormers, roof alterations, changes to access and parking, and intensified residential use through flats, supported accommodation or care provision. Reference is made to several earlier applications that have been refused or withdrawn, and it is argued that the current proposal is not materially different from those previously determined.

Kent Police have welcomed further discussions with the applicant about site specific designing out crime approaches and have provided general advice with respect to lighting, boundary treatments, natural surveillance, general security and other approaches that could be implemented within the development to reduce crime, fear of crime, ASB and nuisance.

Southern Water have advised that the existing gravity sewer running through the site requires a clearance of 3 metres on either side in order to safeguard the infrastructure from construction works and to ensure future maintenance access. Accordingly, no development or tree planting should take place within 3 metres of the external edge of the sewer without prior consent from Southern Water. *An informative has been added to the recommendation advising the applicant to contact Southern Water directly for further guidance.*

Development Plan

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

In addition, the Final draft (Regulation 22) Local Plan - Medway Local Plan 2041 was submitted to the Inspectorate for examination in December 2025. The policies within this version of the Final draft plan have weight in the determination of planning (and associated) applications where relevant.

Planning Appraisal

Background

As set out in the relevant planning history section of this report, the site has been subject to several previous applications of direct relevance to the current proposal.

Firstly, in respect of external alterations, a lawful development certificate was granted for the construction of a dormer window (ref. MC/24/1169) as the proposal represented permitted development.

A second relevant application (ref. MC/24/0944) approved the construction of a first-floor side extension with undercroft parking, together with enlargement of the existing side access and associated external works and landscaping.

A site visit has confirmed that while the dormer structure has been erected, it remains incomplete, and the approved side extension has not been implemented. It was also evident that the side extension could not be constructed as approved under MC/24/1169, because the ridge of the extension would project from the hipped roof slope, creating a conflict with the approved dormer.

As a result, application (ref. MC/25/0249) was submitted to regularise this discrepancy by amending the roof design of the previously approved extension to demonstrate how both elements could be delivered together. This application also sought permission for the change of use from a C3 single dwelling to a C2 residential care institution. The application was refused for four reasons:

- (1) failure to demonstrate that the change of use would deliver an acceptable standard of residential amenity, including amenity space, parking and appropriate occupation;
- (2) failure to demonstrate that the external alterations were acceptable in design terms;
- (3) insufficient information to show that impacts on neighbouring amenity would be acceptable or that adequate amenity would be provided for future occupiers; and
- (4) failure to demonstrate that adequate car parking provision could be achieved to support the proposed use.

A subsequent application (ref. MC/25/1036) was later withdrawn due to insufficient supporting information.

Following this, the applicant sought post-refusal advice to understand the Council's concerns and the steps necessary to address them. The current application has been submitted with the intention of addressing the issues previously identified through the provision of additional supporting information.

Principle

In addition to the associated external alterations the proposed development seeks permission for the change of use of the existing C3 dwellinghouse to a C2 residential care home.

Under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order;

Use Class C3 is defined as:

Dwellinghouses Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by:

- a. a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;*
- b. not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents; or*
- c. not more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within Class C4).*

Use Class C2 covers residential institutions providing accommodation and care for people in need of care, including children's homes, nursing homes, and residential schools or training centres.

Policy H8 allows for residential institutions where:

- (i) the proposal would not adversely affect residential amenity;
- (ii) the property is close to public transport and services;
- (iii) adequate amenity space is provided;
- (iv) parking is adequate for staff, visitors and residents and
- (v) for conversions the property is considered too large for single-household occupation. While the policy does not define what constitutes "too large", elsewhere in the Local Plan a threshold of 120sqm is identified as the point at which a dwelling may be suitable for conversion.

Policy T4 of the emerging Local Plan specifically relates to supported housing, including looked after children and states that proposals will be supported where:

- (i) there is a proven need for that type of accommodation;
- (ii) is well designed to meet the needs of the residents;
- (iii) is easily accessible to public transport and services;
- (iv) does not adversely affect the character and amenity of the area and existing and prospective residents and
- (v) meets nationally prescribed space standards with communal space.

Section 5 of the NPPF refers to delivering a sufficient supply of houses and paragraph 63 specifically refers to meeting the needs of looked after children.

The proposal is for supported housing for looked after children and is in a location close to public transport, a primary school, a convenience store, a doctor's surgery and public open space. In principle the proposal, including its location, is acceptable and the determining issues are, therefore, matters of detail as assessed below.

In principle the proposal accords with policy H8 of the Local Plan, Policy T4 of the emerging Plan and paragraph 63 of the NPPF.

Design

Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan requires development to be satisfactory in terms of scale and mass and to respect the visual amenity and character of the surrounding area. This policy position is reinforced by paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF, which emphasise the importance of high-quality, well-designed places.

As outlined in the background section of this report, the proposal seeks to convert the existing dwelling while incorporating both the previously approved dormer and the previously approved side extension. However, due to the location and form of the dormer structure, it is not possible to construct the side extension in accordance with the plans approved under permission MC/24/0944, as the ridge of the extension would conflict with the hipped roof slope below the dormer.

The current application, therefore, seeks to provide a revised combined scheme comprising a rear and side dormer and a two-storey side extension incorporating a ground-floor car port. As noted above, both elements have already been approved in principle under separate permissions, meaning that the overall scale, bulk and massing of the works have previously been judged acceptable. The alterations now proposed do not materially increase the visual impact of the development beyond what has already been permitted, and it is not considered that the revised configuration would result in any significant additional harm to the character or appearance of the streetscene.

Accordingly, no objection is raised in respect of design, and the development is considered to comply with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan and paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF.

Amenity

Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan requires all development to secure an acceptable level of amenity for future occupiers while protecting the amenities of neighbouring properties. This includes consideration of privacy, daylight and sunlight, noise, vibration, light, heat, smells, airborne emissions, activity levels and traffic generation. Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF reinforces this, stating that achieving well-designed places should ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Policy H8 of the Local Plan and Policy T4 of the emerging Plan further require that residential institutions will only be permitted where the proposal would not adversely affect neighbouring residential amenity and where the level of internal and external amenity for residents is acceptable and meets standards.

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

Neighbouring Residential Amenity

The dormer window currently on the property has been implemented in accordance with permitted development rights. In relation to the two-storey side extension, application MC/24/0944 previously concluded that the extension would not amount to a level of harm to neighbouring residential amenity that would warrant refusal. The extension now proposed would occupy the same siting and footprint as that approved under MC/24/0944, with amendments only to the roof design to ensure compatibility with the existing dormer structure on site. It is, therefore, not considered that these changes would result in any additional loss of light or overshadowing beyond that already accepted.

With respect to the proposed change of use, the previously approved extension would have enabled the property to accommodate four first-floor bedrooms, equating to a potential occupancy of up to seven persons within a Class C3 residential use. The proposed C2 use would accommodate four children, supported by up to three members of staff on shift during both daytime and night-time periods, also resulting in seven occupants on site at any one time. While some comings and goings associated with staffing, visitors and support services are expected, these are not considered to exceed levels typically associated with a larger family dwelling in C3 use. Furthermore, as staff will be present on site at all times, any disturbances that may arise can be promptly managed and dealt with, providing an additional layer of oversight and mitigation.

In summary, given that the dwelling could lawfully be occupied by up to seven people under its existing C3 use with the approved extension, it is not considered that the proposed care use, comprising four children and three carers, would give rise to levels of noise or disturbance that would justify refusal on amenity grounds. However, it would be appropriate to impose a condition to ensure that the operational requirements of the care home align with the details set out in the Statement of Purpose submitted alongside the application.

Future Occupier Amenity

All bedrooms proposed for occupancy meet or exceed the minimum space standards set out within the Technical Housing Standards, ensuring an acceptable level of internal living space for future residents. Occupants would also have access to appropriate shared facilities, including an open-plan kitchen/lounge area, a separate lounge, and a private rear garden of adequate size, providing sufficient outdoor amenity space.

It is noted that the number of occupants will be controlled by planning condition, ensuring that the intensity of use remains appropriate for the site and that the amenity of both future and neighbouring occupiers is safeguarded.

Subject to the recommended condition, no objection is raised in respect of occupant amenity. The proposal is, therefore, considered to comply with Policies BNE2 and H8 of the Local Plan, Policy T4 of the emerging Plan and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF.

Highways

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the residual cumulative impacts of development on the road network would be severe. This aligns with the objectives of Policy T1 of the Medway Local Plan, which seeks to ensure that development does not prejudice highway safety or the functioning of the local highway network.

Policy H8 of the Local Plan refers to the need to provide adequate parking for staff, residents and visitors, while both Policy H8 and Policy T4 of the emerging Local Plan refer to the need to be close to public transport and services/facilities.

The proposal provides two off-street parking spaces within the undercroft to the side of the property, accessed via an existing dropped kerb previously serving the C3 dwelling. The site is located within a sustainable urban area of Gillingham where residents and staff have access to a range of transport options, and, therefore, a modest reduction in parking provision is considered acceptable. The submitted information confirms that a maximum of three staff would be present during daytime hours, with reduced staffing levels overnight, and the supporting statement encourages staff to utilise public transportation rather than private car use. The property is also close to services/facilities such as a primary school, a convenience store, a doctor's surgery and public open space

Furthermore, given that the proposed residents will be children under the age of 18, it is highly unlikely that they will own or operate private vehicles, meaning their presence would not contribute to additional parking demand either on-site or on-street. As a result, the level of parking provision is considered proportionate to the operational requirements of the use.

Taking the above into account, the proposal is not considered to result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the efficient operation of the local road network. The development is, therefore, considered to comply with Policies T1, T2, T13 and H8 of the Local Plan and Policy T4 of the emerging Plan.

Conclusions and reasons for Recommendation

It is considered that the proposal would provide accommodation delivering much-needed care for young people within an appropriate, family-style residential setting. The development would not detract from the character or appearance of the residential streetscene, nor would it result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity, highway safety or the functioning of the local road network. The proposal is, therefore, considered to accord with Policies BNE1, BNE2, H8, T1, T2 and T13 of the Local Plan, T4 of the emerging Plan as well as paragraphs 63, 116, 131, 135, and 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred for Committee determination due to the number of representations received expressing a view contrary to officer's recommendation for Approval and at the request of Councillors Nestorov and Coombs.

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/>