

MC/26/0625

Date Received: 31 March 2026
Location: 415 Canterbury, Street, Gillingham, Medway ME7 5LL
Proposal: Change of use from dwellinghouse (Class C3) to a 6-bedroom house in multiple occupation (Class C4) together with construction of a dormer window to rear and installation of roof lights to front to provide additional living accommodation within roof space with associated external alterations and a detached shed and cycle storage to rear.

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Ward: Gillingham South
Case Officer: Arron Nicholls
Contact Number: 01634 333184

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on the 3 June 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 31 March 2026
Proposed floor plans (HD00268-PL03)
Proposed elevations and sections (HD00268-PL04)
Existing and proposed block plan and location plan (HD00268-PL05)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 All materials used externally shall match those of the existing building.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 The house of multiple occupation hereby approved shall be occupied by a maximum of six people.

Reason: To regulate and control the number of occupants of the property in the interests of the amenities of neighbouring properties and of occupants of the site itself which has limited communal facilities, in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 No part of the development shall be occupied until details of cycle storage facility has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle storage facilities shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of the property as a HMO and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability with regard to Policy T4 and BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 Prior to the first occupation as a six-bedroom Use Class C4 HMO herein approved details of the refuse storage arrangements, including provision for the storage of recyclable materials, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Use Class C4 HMO shall not be occupied until the approved refuse storage arrangements are in place and all approved storage arrangements shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice the amenities of future occupants in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 7 Prior to first use of the property as a Sui Generis six-bedroom HMO herein approved, a Parking Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Parking Management Plan shall contain details of how the parking is to be managed for residents and their visitors, The Parking Management Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation as a Sui Generis HMO and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability and residential amenity in accordance with Policy T13 and BNE2 of the Medway Local plan 2003.

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

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of the existing, Use Class C3, dwelling into a C4 six-bedroom house of multiple occupation (HMO).

The accommodation would provide the following:

- Ground Floor - 2 bedrooms with ensuite, communal kitchen/Dining room and communal living room;
- First Floor - 3 bedrooms with ensuites;
- Second Floor – 1 bedroom with ensuite.

Externally there is a communal garden area with a communal co working space, refuse and cycle parking.

Relevant Planning History

MC/25/2251	Change of use from a 4 bedroom house in multiple occupation (Class C4) to an 8 bedroom house in multiple occupation (Sui Generis) together with construction of an L-shaped dormer window to rear and installation of roof lights to front to provide additional living accommodation within roof space with associated external alterations and a detached shed and bicycle store to rear. Decision: Withdrawn Decided: 06.01.2026
MC/25/1263	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate (Proposed) For the change of use from Class (C3) Dwelling House to Class (C4) up to 6 person HMO along with the construction of a single storey infill extension to side/rear. Decision: Approval with conditions Decided: 11.07.2025

Representations

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

Cllr Louwella Prenter requested additional information in relation to the proposed schemes HMO management plan and the scheme impact on parking in the surrounding area.

Kent Police commented on the application requesting they are consulted as Designing out Crime Officers (DOCO's) to address Crime Prevention Through

Environmental Design (CPTED) and incorporate Secured by Design (SBD) as appropriate.

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 (NPPF) and are generally considered to conform. Where non-conformity exists, this is addressed in the Planning Appraisal section below.

The Emerging Local Plan has been submitted to the Inspectorate for examination. The policies within this version of the emerging plan have weight in the determination of planning (and associated) applications.

Planning Appraisal

Background

The application site falls within Gillingham South, one of the seven Wards that have been covered by an Article 4 Direction restricting the permitted development rights for the change of use from Class C3 (Dwellinghouse) to a Class C4 (Small HMO).

The Direction came into effect on the 22 January 2026 and was confirmed on 5 May 2026.

The Article 4 Direction for those wards removes the permitted development rights to convert a C3 dwelling house to a C4 small house in multiple occupation. It does not make the conversion unacceptable but just brings the change of use into planning control so that the proposed conversion can be assessed against Development Plan policies and the NPPF.

A Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) for the proposed change of use from C3 to C4 (up to 6 persons), together with the construction of rear single storey extension, was granted permission under (MC/25/1263) on 11 July 2025. However, the use was not implemented prior to the Article 4 Direction coming into force on the 22 January 2026. As the LDC has not been acted upon, the permitted development right it certified no longer applies, and full planning permission is being sought.

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.

The NPPF seeks to pursue sustainable development, in a positive and proactive manner through paragraph 11 of the NPPF stating that applications should be considered in favour for a presumption in favour of sustainable development, unless the Policy provides a clear reason for refusal, or that any adverse impacts of granting

permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Furthermore, paragraph 61 of the NPPF seeks to boost the supply of housing by bringing forward a variety of land to meet specific housing requirements.

Policy H7 of the Local Plan supports permitting HMO's subject to the following criteria:

- (i) the property is in an area with a predominantly mixed-use or commercial character;
- (ii) and the property is located where increased traffic, and activity would not be detrimental to local amenity; and
- (iii) either the property is detached, and the proposal would not adversely affect the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties;
- (iv) or where the property is not detached, relevant nearby or adjoining properties are in multiple occupation or a non-residential use; and
- (v) for changes of use, the property is too large to reasonably expect its occupation by a single household.

The immediate locality is predominantly formed of single households, albeit it is recognised the site is located in close proximity to Gillingham High Street and there are some sporadic alternative uses such as small HMOs, subdivided flats within the area alongside a small parade of shops located on the opposite of Canterbury Street. While it is recognised that there are mixed-use elements within the wider vicinity the immediate location of the site would not be characterised as 'predominantly mixed-use or commercial character'. The property is not considered to be of too larger size to reasonably expect its occupation by a single household.

Policy H7 pre-dates the introduction of Class L of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015; where the change of use from a Class C3 dwellinghouse to a Class C4 small HMO was established as permitted development irrespective of location. In this respect, Class L of the GDPO effectively represented a shift in national policy thinking and a recognition that small HMOs were a legitimate and mainstream form of accommodation.

This thinking has also been reflected in recent years by Inspectors and Court decisions, finding HMOs to form an important part of housing mix in an area and not intrinsically harmful without any adverse impacts having been clearly and robustly evidenced.

Policy T8 of the emerging Local Plan seeks to avoid detrimental clusters of HMOs and to ensure that they provide a suitable quality of accommodation. The supporting text to the policy acknowledges that HMOs have a role to play in sustainable and inclusive communities providing accommodation for single people on low incomes and can also be accommodation of choice for young professionals moving to an area. The supporting text does though acknowledge harm where there are high concentrations of HMOs and/or poor management of properties. Accordingly, Policy T8 supports planning applications for HMOs where they:

- Do not adversely affect the character and amenity of the area;
- Do not contribute to an over provision of HMOs in an area;

- Do not lead to the loss of suitable units for family accommodation, particularly in areas of high concentration of HMOs;
- Do not generate excessive parking demands;
- Provide a suitable level of amenity complying with national internal space standards and at least one reception room and kitchen or equivalent space;
- Make provision for waste and cycles;
- Do not adversely affect health of residents – new and existing.

Considering the remaining criteria of Policy H7 of the Local Plan and Policy T8 of the emerging plan, there is a limited number of registered HMOs (eight) within 200m of the site and there appears to be a limited number of dwellings subdivided into flats. Consequently, there is no concern with respect to the potential clustering of such uses, proliferation and the associated detrimental impacts upon adjoining residential amenity. In view of the above no objection is raised in principle to the conversion of the property to a six bed HMO.

Design

Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan states that the design of development should be appropriate in relation to the character, appearance and functioning of the built and natural environment and satisfactory in terms of scale, mass, proportion, details, and materials. Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design and Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan states that development should be satisfactory in terms of scale and mass and should respect the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

The previously granted building works as part of the lawful development certificate included a single storey extension and have not been undertaken. The proposal seeks to insert two roof lights in the front elevation alongside a gable window dormer in the rear elevation. It is considered that these works could be undertaken under permitted development and as a result no objection is raised in relation to these works. No objection is, therefore, raised in regard to Policies BNE1 of the Local Plan and paragraph 131 and 135 of the NPPF.

Amenity

There are two main amenity considerations, firstly the impact of the proposed dwelling on neighbours and secondly the living conditions which would be created for potential occupants of the development itself. Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 135f of the NPPF relates to the protection of these amenities. This is supported by Policies H7 of the Local Plan and T8 of the emerging Plan.

Neighbouring Residential Amenity

The use of a property as an HMO can have a distinctly different relationship with the residential character of an area, and neighbouring living conditions, as the occupants within an HMO are likely to have individual lifestyles resulting in comings and goings at different times of the day and night. Such activity can, therefore, increase the potential for noise and disturbance and be detrimental to the residential character of an area, particularly if this occurs early in the morning or late at night.

The proposal seeks to convert the property into a six-bedroom HMO. As such, there is a potential for increased comings and goings and likelihood of noise and disturbance.

The existing property is relatively large with two double bedrooms and two single bedrooms that when assessed against the National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPG) standards could be occupied by a total of six adults with consequent comings and goings. It is noted that bedroom 3 measures below the minimum bedroom size of the national described space standards but could still be occupied as a bedroom.

When considering the proposal seeks to occupy the property six individuals and the limited number of HMOs within 200m of the site, it is not considered that the number of occupants would cause such a demonstrable increased harm through disturbance to justify a refusal of planning consent. Such a view is substantiated by recent appeal decisions against similar HMOs elsewhere in the borough.

Future Occupants

The proposed bedrooms have been considered against the Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard 2015 with the requirement for the provision of a single bedroom to measure a minimum of 2.15m in width and support a floor area of 7.5m². All of the proposed bedrooms would exceed these requirements and, in some cases, would significantly exceed the space standards set out by the NPPG.

All bedrooms would be served with an adequate degree of natural light and afforded suitable outlook. The remaining communal space comprises of a 14.5m² kitchen/dining room and an 8.8m² communal living room both on the ground-floor and a 12.53m² Co working space in the rear garden. These would be shared amongst a total of six individuals. The kitchen area is considered suitable as a general functional space for cooking and washing of clothes, whilst the living room is considered of a suitable size for the proposed number of residents. The proposed Co-working space in the rear garden is considered to provide further amenity space for residents providing a separate working space, reducing an overreliance upon the main communal areas or occupant's bedrooms.

Moreover, the oversized bedrooms, relative to the requirements set out by the NPPG standards, grant occupants private leisure space and secure sufficient room for household recreation. Reducing an overreliance upon the main communal area for these daily activities.

In order to ensure that the internal amenity standards of future occupants are not compromised, or that the dwelling becomes overly camped, a condition requiring that the occupancy of the property does not exceed more than a total of six residents at any one time is recommended.

Subject to this condition, no objections would, therefore, be raised in regard to Policies BNE2 and H7 of the Local Plan, Policy T8 of the emerging plan and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking

Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to the impact on new development on the highway network. Policy T13 of the Local Plan is related to parking standards. Both policies H7 of the Local Plan and T8 of the emerging plan include criteria in relation to impact on parking and amenity. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF seeks development located in sustainable locations, limiting the need to travel and offering choice of transport modes to reduce congestion and emission and improve air quality and public health. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there is an unacceptable impact on highways safety.

While it is understood that the application site would not be able to meet its parking need off-street, nor does the current use as a single occupancy dwellinghouse. Likewise, the Medway Residential Parking Standards state: "Reductions of the standard will be considered if the development is within an urban area that has good links to sustainable transport and where day-to-day facilities are within easy walking distance". Given the property falls within the urban area of Gillingham, with amenities such as shops, Gillingham Park, public transport links and schools/colleges within approx. walking distance, alongside its proximity to Gillingham High Street, the site is considered to meet these parameters.

While it is acknowledged that there are some existing pressures on car parking within the area, this is mitigated through the requirement of parking permits while the site is in a highly sustainable location and the nature of the HMO occupancy more typically presents itself to occupants who do not own cars.

Subject to conditions for the submission of a Parking Management Plan outlining how occupants of the HMO will be deterred from obtaining a parking permit and the submission of further details in relation to the provision of secure cycle storage, no objections would be raised in regard to Policies H7, T1 and T13 of the Local Plan, T8 of the emerging Plan or paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF.

Waste and Refuse Storage

A refuse area is proposed as part of the scheme, whilst this is considered acceptable, a condition is included for the submission of further details in relation to refuse via the submission of a refuse strategy. This strategy will include details such as the type of refuse collection vehicle used, the frequency of refuse collection and finalising the location of the refuse collection points amongst other matters.

Subject to the abovementioned condition the proposal would not result in any significantly detrimental impact on either neighbour or future occupiers' amenity and is considered to be acceptable in terms of Policies H4 and BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

As of 2 April 2024, all sites were subject to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as per the conditions of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

In this instance, no onsite habitat is impacted by the proposal and, therefore, no objection is raised to this with regard to paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

Bird Mitigation

As the application site is within 6km of the North Kent Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites, the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination, on the coastal North Kent Special Protection Areas (SPAs)/Ramsar sites from recreational disturbance on the over-wintering bird interest. Natural England has advised that an appropriate tariff of £350.18 per dwelling (excluding legal and monitoring officer's costs, which separately total £550) should be collected to fund strategic measures across the Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries. This tariff should be collected for new dwellings, either as new builds or conversions (which includes HMOs and student accommodation).

These strategic SAMMS mitigation measures are being delivered through Bird Wise North Kent, which is the brand name of the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) Board, and the mitigation measures have been informed by the Category A measures identified in the Thames, Medway & Swale Estuaries Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMM) produced by Footprint Ecology in July 2014. Further information regarding the work being undertaken is available at The Bird Wise website which can be found at <https://northkent.birdwise.org.uk/about/>.

The SAMMS Mitigation Contribution Agreement and payment have been paid on the previous application under MC/25/2251 and, therefore, no objection is, therefore, raised under Policies S6 and BNE35 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 194 and 195 of the NPPF.

A decision from the Court of Justice of the European Union detailed that mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a full 'appropriate assessment' is needed under the Habitats Directive. Given the need for the application to contribute to the North Kent SAMMS, there is a need for an appropriate assessment to be carried out as part of this application. This is included as a separate assessment form.

Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation for Approval

It is considered that there is no over concentration of HMOs in the area and the proposal has been designed to provide a good level of amenity for prospective occupiers without harming the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.

The proposal complies with the provisions set out in paragraphs 11, 60, 115, 116, 131, 135, 135(f), 194 and 195 of the NPPF, Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE35, H7, S1, S6, T1 and T13 of the Local Plan and Policy T8 of the emerging Plan. The application is, therefore, recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Planning Committee at the request of Cabinet members when they adopted the Article 4 Direction.

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 in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>