

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260434

Location: 4 St Columbas Close Gravesend Kent DA12 4AH

Description: Part retrospective application for raised concrete bases at side and rear. Erection of porch at side and pergola with solid roof at rear. Installation of dropped kerb and formation of driveway at front.

Applicant: Mr Irmantas Vaidotas

Site Visit Date: 22 July 2026

Submitted Documents/Plans

Householder Planning Application form;
Drawing no. 01 Rev. A Existing elevations, layouts and section;
Drawing no. 01 Rev. A Proposed elevations, layouts and section;
Drawing no. 01 Rev. A Existing and proposed block plans; and
Red line site boundary plan.

Relevant Planning History

None.

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core

Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Gravesham Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)

Other Relevant Guidance

- Kent County Council Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025)
- Gravesham Driveway Dropped Kerb Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)
- Gravesham Front Driveway Design Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)

Emerging Local Plan as a Material Consideration

Paragraph 48 of the Framework makes it clear that planning applications can only be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An emerging Local Plan, does not form part of the Development. The Framework, at Paragraph 49 allows local planning authorities to give weight to relevant policies in emerging Local Plans, according to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the Framework, the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to those policies.

West Oxfordshire District Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government & Rosconn Strategic Land Ltd [2018] EWHC 3065 (Admin) is a High Court judgement that deals with the weight to be given to a Regulation 19 Local Plan. In this judgement the Court found that the weight to be given to an emerging Local Plan, was a matter of planning judgement, which had to be reached having fully considered the relevant part (Paragraph 49) of the Framework.

The Council's emerging Local Plan, is in the process of being consulted upon (it has reached Regulation 19 stage), the Council is not yet aware of whether third parties will support or object to specific policies within the Plan, or whether they will consider the policies with the emerging Local Plan to be broadly sound and consistent with the NPPF (2024). Taking this into consideration, one can only conclude that at this stage of the process, **limited (i.e. minimal) weight should be afforded to the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan**. This position would only change once the emerging Local Plan has progressed towards submission and examination, with the Council being fully aware of policies that are subject to unresolved objections and with knowledge of policies that have had their soundness and conformity against the Framework challenged.

This approach accords with the approach taken in a separate High Court case, Gladman Developments Ltd v SSHCLG & Corby Borough Council; & Uttlesford DC [2020] EWHC 518 (Admin) and Court of Appeal [2021] EWCA Civ 104, which was also the subject of a Court of Appeal Ruling [2021] EWCA Civ 104.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

KCC Highways & Transportation

This development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. If there are any material highway safety concerns that you consider should be brought to the attention of the HA, then please contact us again with your specific concerns for our consideration.

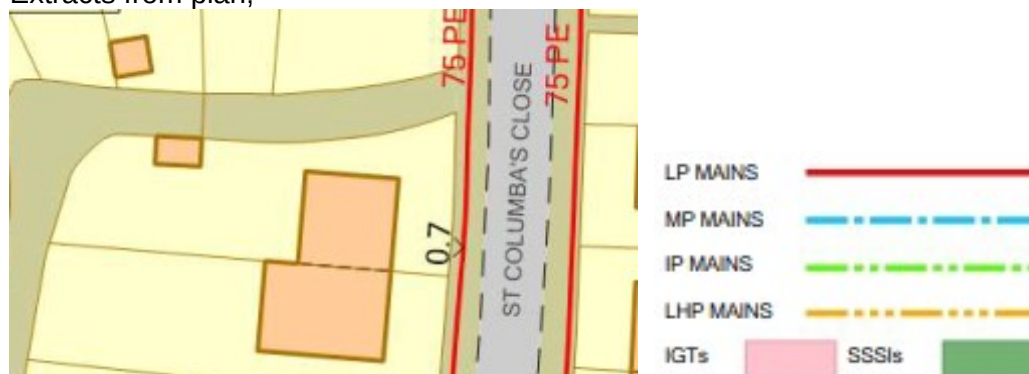
Southern Gas Networks

Although SGN has a high pressure gas pipeline in the vicinity, the safety and integrity of our high pressure assets will not be affected by the proposal based on the information submitted.

I would like to draw your attention to the original letter you would have received from our Scotland based plant location team with particular reference to the paragraphs detailing the potential of low / medium / intermediate pressure mains as well as other gas transporter assets being in the vicinity of your works.

For your records I enclose a copy of a plan showing the route of the High Pressure pipeline and a copy of SGNs safe working in the vicinity of pipelines and associated installations (SGN/WI/SW2). Should your proposal change please contact us immediately and we will review accordingly.

Extracts from plan;



Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to 12 neighbouring properties by letter. No representations have been received.

Officer's Analysis

Design, Character and Appearance

Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF 2024) sets out various design requirements and includes the need for the development to add to the overall quality of an area; be visually attractive; and be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 139 of the NPPF 2024 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 sets out that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the built environment and take account of the scale, height, building lines and other architectural features of buildings. Account should also be taken of strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place.



In relation to frontage parking, relevant considerations in the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023 are that;

- Hardstanding should be proportionate to the size of the dwelling and the relevant car parking standards and avoid paving over a significant amount of the forecourt.
- Soft landscaped planted border along all boundaries should be provided in all spaces not specifically defined as parking or turning spaces.
- Allow sufficient space between the car and the dwelling to allow access to the front door and side of the property.
- Must be designed to avoid cars overhanging the pavement.
- Should not include gates
- Avoid removing any existing trees or established hedges and introduce new planting wherever possible.
- Introduce permeable paving to new areas of hardstanding to minimise rainwater run-off issues.
- There should be no water run-off from the forecourt onto the public highway.
- Pedestrian and vehicle visibility splays should be provided.

In relation to side extensions, the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) sets out that care is needed when considering the relationship between the proposal and the boundary with the neighbouring property, as the separation between properties can provide access routes to the rear of the property and in some locations be part of the character of the area. In addition, side extensions should appear subservient to the original building; be no greater than half the width of the original building; incorporate roof designs to reflect the main roof; and window designs and proportions to reflect those existing and local character.

In relation to single storey rear extensions, the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) sets out that they should not dominate the original property in terms of depth (extensions to extensions will not generally be supported); they should not rise above the window cill level of any first floor windows; they should not be excessive in height, especially where they are greater than three metres in depth; or excessive in width (no greater than the original building). Flats roofs can be acceptable where they are not widely visible and pitched roof designs should reflect the main roof.

The application site comprises of a semi-detached dwelling, which is set below the level of the adjoining roadway by some 1.1 metres. The front garden includes a stepped pathway and land laid to grass. As the following images illustrate, until relatively recently, the property benefitted from a mature front hedge that matched with others in the surrounding area. The removal of this hedge has been detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene.



Google Street View November 2022



Case officer photograph 22 July 2026

In the vicinity of the application site, the character of St Columbas Close is made up of mainly semi-detached dwellings with low front boundary walls and verdant front gardens.

The proposed parking area would result in the loss of part of the grassed front garden at the application site and its replacement with a significant extent of hardstanding, which would stretch across the full width of site frontage, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the street scene. Following the recent loss of the mature hedge, the proposal would further urbanise the site frontage and reduce its verdant nature, which would detract from the character of the surrounding area.

According to KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025) document, parking spaces located parallel to the roadway should be a minimum of 6 metres (width) by 3 (depth). Although a minimum of 4.2 metres depth would be required if the proposed space is located in front of an access door or garage.

Due to the narrow depth of the proposed parking area (between 2 and 2.4 metres), insufficient space would be available on the site frontage to accommodate vehicles, which would result in cars overhanging the pavement, to the detriment of pedestrian safety and with adverse visual impacts. This is a negative design feature and is contrary to the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023.

Whilst it is noted that pavement parking already occurs in this location, such parking causes an obstruction to the pavement, which although is not illegal, can be subject to a police fine or penalty notice, where a car blocks the footpath and forces pedestrians, wheelchair users, or pushchairs into the road. Therefore, existing inappropriate pavement parking would not provide a justification for the proposed development.

The proposed parking area would have a width of 11.4 metres, which would be significantly greater than the 6 metre requirement set out in the KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025) document. As such, the width of the proposed parking area would be excessive and would result in the loss of a greater area of planted garden than is necessary. This is a negative design feature and is contrary to the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023.

It is acknowledged that the proposal would retain some of the existing boundary wall, provide access to the front door/side of the property, not include gates and would provide adequate visibility, all of which align with the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023.

It is also acknowledged that no. 14 St Columbas Close has a raised parking area on the site frontage. However, no planning permission has been granted for this development and it has a greater depth than the parking space proposed at the application site. As such, it is not directly comparable to the development proposed and would not provide a justification for it.

It is noted that no soft landscaping details or details of the materials for the surfacing of, or drainage to, the proposed hardstanding have been provided. In terms of visual amenity and surface water run off, these would be important considerations. However, due to inward slope of the site, surface water would be unlikely to drain onto the highway and appropriate materials and landscaping could be incorporated into the design so as to soften the development and to match with the surroundings. As such, should planning permission be granted, then the submission and approval of such details could be subject to conditions.

Overall, it is considered that the positive aspects of the design of the proposed parking area would not overcome the negative features. The proposal would undermine the verdant nature of the site frontage, to the detriment of visual amenity. As such, the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application property, to the visual amenities of the surrounding street scene and be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), to paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024, to the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and to the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023.

The proposed porch would be a side extension, set back behind the front building line, set down on lower ground than the front of the application property and the proposed bricks would match existing. Whilst the flat roof would not match existing, it would reduce the bulk of the extension and would not be significantly out of character with the surroundings. The proposed porch would be subservient to and less than half the width of the existing building and would not preclude external access to the rear garden.

The proposed pergola would have a relatively large footprint but as a single storey, flat roofed construction, with an open design, it would appear subservient to the existing building and due to the rear location, it would have little visual impact on the surrounding area.

Overall, the proposed porch and pergola would be appropriate in terms of design and would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area. Therefore, these aspects of the proposal would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide SPD (2021).

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2024 sets out that developments should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and to avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution.

At some 88 square metres, the residual rear garden area would exceed the minimum requirement of the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (60 square metres). Therefore, the proposed development would not adversely affect the private amenity space for the application property. As such, the proposed porch and pergola would improve the living conditions for future occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Due to the close proximity to the lounge window at the application property and to the raised nature of the proposed site frontage, the proposed parking area would lead to vehicles being parked at a raised height, very close to the front window of the property, causing adverse overbearing, overshadowing and, at night, adverse light pollution (from headlights/rear lights) to the future occupiers.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed parking area, by virtue of its raised level and proximity to the lounge window, would be likely to be severely oppressive and overbearing, curtailing outlook and light for the occupants of the application property and leading to adverse light pollution impacts, to the detriment of their residential amenity. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2024.

Neighbouring Amenity

Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2024 sets out that developments should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of neighbouring occupiers and to avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution.

The closest residential properties to the application site are nos. 2 and 6 St Columbas Close (located to the north and south respectively). Nos. 4, 6 and 8 St Aidens Way are located to the north. Nos. 2 St Aidens Way and nos. 153, 155 and 157 Valley Drive are located to the west and nos. Nos. 17, 19 and 21 St Columbas Close are located to the east, across the roadway.

In relation to the proposed porch and pergola, due to their design, to the screening provided by existing boundary treatments and to the layout and orientation of surrounding dwellings, there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts to any of the surrounding occupiers.

Due to the close proximity to the boundary with no. 6 St Columbas Close and to the raised nature of the proposed site frontage, the proposed parking area would lead to vehicles being parked at a raised height, very close to the front window of that property, leading to a detrimental level of overlooking and an unacceptable loss of privacy, and, at night, adverse light pollution (from headlights/rear lights), to the residential occupiers of that property. However, due to the orientation of the properties, there would be no significant adverse overshadowing impacts.

Due to the design of the proposed parking area and to the layout and orientation of nos. 2, 17, 19 and 21 St Columbas Close, there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing or light pollution impacts to the occupiers of these dwellings.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed parking area, by virtue of its raised level and proximity to the boundary with no. 6 St Columbas Close, would be likely to lead to a detrimental level of overlooking and an unacceptable loss of privacy and to adverse light pollution impacts, to its occupiers. The proposal would therefore be detrimental to their residential amenity and contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2024.

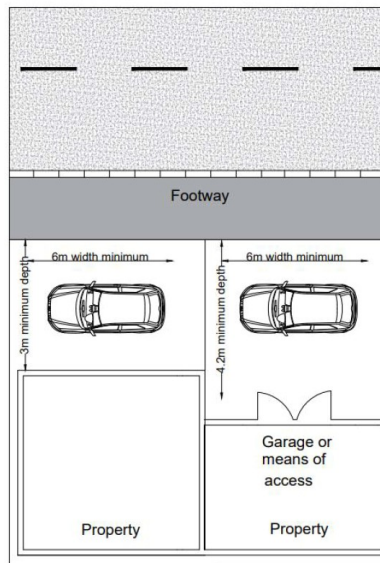
Parking and Highways

Paragraph 115(b) of the NPPF 2024 requires new development to ensure that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users and paragraph 116 sets out that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) require new development to mitigate its impact on the highway and public transport networks and to provide sufficient parking in accordance with adopted parking standards.

Saved Policy T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) requires new accesses to be in an acceptable location and to an acceptable standard and to not give rise to danger.

According to the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards, a three bedroom dwelling should have two vehicle parking spaces and according to the KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025) document, parking spaces located parallel to the roadway should be a minimum of 6 metres (width) by 3 (depth). Although a minimum of 4.2 metres depth would be required if the proposed space is located in front of an access door or garage. As illustrated below;



KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025)

The application property has three bedrooms and no on-site parking is currently available. At present, the applicant parks immediately outside the dwelling on the pavement, which is a common feature of the surrounding street scene but which causes an obstruction to pedestrian access.

Whilst the proposed development would provide one off road parking space, which would be a positive addition to the application site in principle, it is important that the design of the proposed parking space ensures safe access both onto and off from the space. This approach is in line with the NPPF 2024, Saved Policy T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and the Kent County Council Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025). Part of this design approach requires appropriate dimensions and visibility to be provided and also seeks to ensure that safe parking manoeuvres can be undertaken.

The depth of the proposed space (2.4 metres) would be well below the KCC minimum standard of 3 to 4.2 metres. As such, the proposal would lead to vehicles being parked partially on the pavement, to the detriment of pedestrian access and safety.

The following images illustrate that the existing front garden has not been depicted accurately in the submitted details;



Case officer photograph 22 July 2026



Extract from submitted drawing

Due to the steeply sloping nature of the site frontage, it is unlikely that the proposed parking area could be formed as illustrated in the submitted details. Instead, there would be a significant difference in levels between the parking area and the residual front garden behind. As such, for safety reasons, a rear wall/boundary treatment would be required for the parking area, which would further reduce the space

available for parking and increase the amount that parked vehicles would overhang the pavement. In the absence of such a rear barrier, the parking area would also be dangerous to use.

The application site is located on an unclassified road, with a 30 mile per hour speed limit and there are no parking restrictions. On-street parking is very common and spaces are in high demand. It is noted that due to the narrow width of the roadway, parking can only occur on one side of the road without causing an obstruction to access. This leads to the parking of vehicles on the pavement in the vicinity of the application site. Due to the high likelihood of parked vehicles being located close to the proposed driveway, either on the roadway or on the pavement, visibility for users emerging from the proposed driveway would be compromised, to the further detriment of highway safety.

Whilst it is noted that no objection has been received from KCC Highways & Transportation, this does not imply that they consider the proposal appropriate in highways terms. Rather, their consultation response simply states that the development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority, in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. It should be noted that due to the clear guidance set out in the KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025) document, no further response to this proposal has been sought KCC Highways & Transportation.

Overall, by virtue of the substandard depth, lack of a rear safety barrier and compromised pedestrian visibility, the proposed parking area would present dangers to future users and passing pedestrians. As such, the proposed development fails to demonstrate that there would be no adverse highway safety impacts and would be contrary to Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), Saved Policy T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and paragraph 114(b) of the NPPF 2024.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a mandatory requirement for all new development and proposals must deliver a BNG of at least 10% unless they are exempt. In this instance, the proposed development is a householder proposal and therefore is exempt from BNG.

Notwithstanding the BNG exemption, biodiversity is an important consideration in all new development. Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) states that there will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough and that opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought, in particular within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and within new development.

The proposal would result in the removal of a significant part of the existing grassed area on the site frontage and no new planting is proposed. A condition can be attached to any planning permission granted to require the submission and approval of a landscaping scheme, which includes native and pollinator friendly planting.

The existing grassed area would not be particularly biodiverse and provided that a suitably worded landscaping condition is imposed, there would be no significant adverse biodiversity impacts and the proposal would be in line with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located within an area of some palaeolithic potential and multi-period background archaeological potential and Groundwater Source Protection Zone 2. However, as the proposed development is within the confines of an existing residential garden and only a relatively small amount of groundworks would occur, then it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to groundwater or archaeology. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

The application site is located in close proximity to a gas pipeline (along the site frontage). However, Southern Gas Networks have not raised an objection to the proposal and as such, it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to gas infrastructure. The advice given by Southern Gas Networks can be brought to the attention of the applicant via an informative attached to any planning permission granted.

Conclusion

The proposed porch and pergola would be appropriate in terms of design and would not have any adverse impacts on the residential amenity of existing or future occupiers, groundwater or archaeology.

The proposed parking area would have no adverse biodiversity, surface water run off, groundwater or archaeological impacts. However, the proposal would be out of character with the application property and its surroundings and would be detrimental to visual amenity, residential amenity and highway safety.

Overall, it is considered that the adverse impacts of the proposed development attract significant weight and would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Therefore, following a thorough assessment of the application and all material planning considerations, it is considered that the proposed development cannot be supported.

Recommendation

That planning permission should be refused on the following grounds;

- (1) The proposed parking area would undermine the verdant nature of the site frontage, to the detriment of visual amenity. As such, the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application property, to the visual amenities of the surrounding street scene and be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), to paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, to the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and to the GBC Front Driveway Guidance 2023.
- (2) By virtue of the substandard depth, lack of a rear safety barrier and compromised pedestrian visibility, the proposed parking area would present dangers to future users and passing pedestrians. As such, the proposal fails to demonstrate that there would be no adverse highway safety impacts and would be contrary to Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), Saved Policy T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and paragraph 115(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
- (3) The proposed parking area, by virtue of its raised level and proximity to the boundary with no. 6 St Columbas Close, would be likely to lead to a detrimental level of overlooking and an unacceptable loss of privacy and to adverse light pollution impacts, to its occupiers. The proposal would therefore be detrimental to residential amenity and be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
- (4) The proposed parking area, by virtue of its raised level and proximity to the lounge window, would be likely to be severely oppressive, overbearing and overshadowing, curtailing outlook and light for the occupants of the application property and leading to adverse light pollution impacts, to the detriment of their residential amenity. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

(For detailed informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	28th July 2026	Dated:	28 th July 2026

--	--	--	--