



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260679

Location: Northfleet Press 6 Stonebridge Road Northfleet Gravesend

Description: Change of use of first floor commercial storage space into C3 self contained studio flat, ground floor rear extension to allow separate entrance to first floor flat following demolition of existing rear workshop and replacement with smaller workshop for storage use by the existing ground floor convenience store.

Applicant: Mr R Mathusan, Mathu Housing Ltd

Site Visit Date: 03/08/2026

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form

Drawing No: B-12-02-2026_00 Rev 00 (Location and Block Plan)

Drawing No: B-12-02-2026_01 Rev 00 (Proposed Floor Plans)

Drawing No: B-12-02-2026_01 Rev 00 (Existing Elevations)

Drawing No: B-12-02-2026_01 Rev 00 (Existing Floor Plans)

Drawing No: B-12-02-2026_01 Rev 00 (Proposed Elevations)

Supplementary Information

- Design and Access Statement

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Outcome	Decision Date
20260193	Change of Use of rear workshop to Class C3 residential use to provide 1 x studio flat; alterations to roof from flat to pitched with roof lights and alterations fenestration.	Application Refused	29.04.2026
20250870	Change of use to first floor commercial storage space to staff accommodation.	Application Refused	24.11.2025
20250455	Retrospective application for a rear partial infill single-storey extension, a partial first-floor extension, and internal alterations to the existing shop.	Permitted	01.07.2025
20230710	Prior Approval application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Change of use from Commercial, Business and Service (Use Class E) to Dwellinghouses (Use Class C3)Change of use from business to residential use.	Permitted	29.08.2023

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 - Transport
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994):

- H5 - Increasing the Housing Stock by Conversion
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- P5 – Exceptions to the Vehicle Parking Standards – Change of Use of Buildings

As set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012 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

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 (2026), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

- Section 4 -Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 5 – Meeting the challenge of climate change
- Section 6 – Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Section 14 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15 Promoting Sustainable Transport

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 - Residential Layout Guidelines (2020)
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- SPD4 - Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)

Emerging Local Plan as a Material Consideration

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) make it clear that planning applications can only be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework sets out that when considering development proposals, relevant policies may be given weight, however, this is subject 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 compliance of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the policies for plan-making in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them).

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 of the Framework, which from 17 August 2026 Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework.

The Council's emerging Local Plan has reached the Regulation 19 Consultation stage, with the consultation having ended on 18 August 2026. The emerging Local Plan does not form part of the Development Plan.

The Council is aware that third parties have raised objections to the wider emerging Local Plan and specific policies within it. Therefore, at present the Council cannot categorically state that the emerging Local Plan can be considered sound and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) [as an emerging Local Plan being brought forward under the legacy system, it would be examined under the 2024 Framework]. 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.

Housing Need

The Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2014 and is more than five years old. Local housing need is therefore calculated using the Government's Standard Method, establishing a baseline requirement of 687 dwellings per annum.

The Housing Delivery Test (HDT), published by the Government on 17 August 2026, sets out that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies within the Borough. National decision-making policy S3 of the Framework sets out that decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as follows:

- a. National decision-making policy S4 of the Framework should be applied when considering development proposals within settlements;
- b. National decision-making policy S5 of the Framework should be applied when considering development proposals outside settlements; and
- c. In all locations, development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies of the Framework are to be approved without delay.

The Council's most recent Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement, covering the period 2025-2030, identifies a deliverable supply of 2,053 dwellings against a buffered requirement of 4,056 dwellings (based on the 2025 outcome of the standard method). The Council is therefore currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. This position equates to a housing land supply of 2.53 years.

National decision-making policy HO7 sets out that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which will contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the community, taking into account evidence produced for the Council e.g. a local housing needs assessment, and the needs for different groups.

The proposed development is for a net increase of one residential unit, which would contribute towards meeting an unmet need for general market housing as identified in the Council's Local Housing Need Assessment (October 2025). Therefore, substantial weight should be afforded to meeting the needs of the housing needs of the community.

However, this has to be balanced against other requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF 2026, including as set out in National decision-making policy DP3 Para.3, compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing the design quality of proposals i.e. Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles. This and other matters will be discussed in detail in the sections below.

Local Ward Councillors

No comments received.

Environmental Protection

The ground floor is used as a retail unit/small supermarket that is open until 10pm every day. In addition, it's likely that there is plant/equipment associated with the shop such as external condenser units associated with fridges/freezers etc, but no details have been provided. This property was originally used as a family dwelling so the ceiling/floor partition between the ground floor and 1st floor is unlikely to have much in the way of sound insulation.

To place a residential flat above the shop is likely to result in noise problems/disturbance to the future residents unless the floor/ceiling partition is sufficiently robust.

With any residential premises above a commercial use such as a convenience store, a noise impact assessment is required in order to assess the impact of the commercial use on the residential above or the proposed workshop at the rear. In addition, this should include sound insulation test.

To address the above, the following conditions are advised:

External Noise:

a) *A noise impact assessment shall be carried out and submitted to the LPA for approval demonstrating that:*

1. *The internal ambient noise levels in all habitable rooms of the proposed residential dwelling shall not exceed the guideline LAeq values found in Table 4 of BS8233:2014*
2. *The maximum internal noise levels in all habitable rooms should not exceed 45dB L_{Amax} more than 10 times per night in accordance with the Professional Practice Guidance on Planning & Noise and the WHO Guidelines for Community Noise.*

The noise impact assessment must take into account traffic noise, mechanical plant and equipment associated with commercial activities, any noise associated with the commercial activity on the ground floor and noise from the proposed workshop at the rear..

Internal noise:

Prior to the first occupation of the flat, a sound insulation assessment shall be carried out, submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Assessment shall include details of the assessment methodology and the sound insulation performance of the internal wall partitions, internal floor/ceiling partitions, adjacent party wall partitions and the partition between the commercial on the ground floor and the flat above.

The sound insulation performance of partitions between the floors of the flat and any adjacent residential property shall resist the transmission of airborne sound and impact sound to demonstrate that the minimum levels stated in the Building Regulations are capable of being complied with. The assessment will also include details of any proposed works to achieve these levels.

The construction that separates the residential and commercial unit shall aim to resist the transmission of airborne sound such that the weighted standardised difference (DnT, W + Ctr) shall not be less than 53 decibels (i.e. an enhancement of the minimum levels stated in the Building Regulations of 10dB). The assessment will also include details of any proposed works to achieve these levels.

Any works identified being required in order to achieve these minimum levels shall be implemented and evidence provided (if necessary, by way of a further sound insulation assessment report) for approval by the Local Authority prior to first occupation. Overheating and ventilation must also be considered in the design of any mitigation.

Neighbouring properties

The application was advertised by way of site notice and letters to 4 surrounding properties. The consultation period expired on 28.08.2026 and no comments were received.

Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks the change of use of first floor commercial storage space into C3 self contained studio flat. It seeks to erect a rear ground floor rear extension to allow separate entrance to first floor flat following demolition of existing rear workshop and replacement with smaller workshop for storage use by the existing ground floor convenience store.

Background

There have been previous planning applications at the site which have comprised a mix of permissions and refusals. Under the 20230710 prior approval was permitted for a change of use from Use Class E to Use Class C3 so the principle of changing use is established.

A retrospective application was then granted under 20250455 for a rear ground and first floor extensions including internal alterations to the shop.

Under 20260193 an application was refused to change the use of the workshop into residential.

The 20260193 application was refused on the below grounds:

By virtue of the lack of suitable windows to serve the proposed dwelling, there would be insufficient outlook for future occupiers would be detrimental to their amenity. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a high standard of amenity for future occupiers which conflicts with the requirements of the Residential Layout Guidelines (2015), Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

By virtue of the windows in the front elevation and the proximity to the side windows of the neighbouring property, No. 5A Station Road, the development would result in harm to the living environments of future occupants of the proposed dwelling, together with a direct detrimental impact on the existing occupiers of 5A Station Road. The proposed windows would experience direct overlooking to the existing residential dwelling which would not comply with required privacy distances. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a high standard of amenity for neighbouring's sites which conflicts with the requirements of the Residential Layout Guidelines (2015), Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

It is important to establish whether the above reasons for refusal have been adequately addressed.

Character and Appearance



Policy S4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026): *Principle of development within settlements* S4(1) states that development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the Framework's decision-making policies.

Policy CS14 from the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that new residential development provides a mix of homes that meet the Borough's identified housing needs and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) seeks to promote high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places.

The application site is 6 Stonebridge Road which as existing mid terrace retail shop. The previous application for the conversion of the workshop to residential use was refused, as shown in the background section, and there was a retrospective permission granted for a ground and first floor rear extensions. This proposal relates to a further extension to the rear at ground floor level to facilitate a separate access into the dwelling and a replacement outbuilding to allow for the erection of the extension and subsequent conversion of the first floor commercial storage into a dwelling. There will be no further extensions at first floor level and the outbuilding will be erected to a smaller footprint.

The proposed development would not impact the existing property frontage, nor would it impact the main existing ground floor commercial space which is in use as a shop.

The proposal seeks to demolish the existing outbuilding which is in poor conditions and rebuild it to a slightly smaller footprint, it can be viewed from the rear access. It is accessed from an existing access with residential properties to rear of the site. The following images show the outbuilding in its context:



In terms of elevational changes, the access to the flat, which is the rear elevation on the submitted plans, would have an independent door to the staircase leading up to the flat. The rear access leading up to the site is utilised by neighbouring residential properties as a primary access to their dwellings. The ground floor extension would be finished with a flat roof and would be of a depth of 3m from the current rear elevation. The outbuilding would have just a door serving it which would be situated in the north eastern elevation, the window in the side of the existing outbuilding will be removed.

In terms of design the outbuilding and rear extension are not considered to be of inappropriate design or scale in this locality. The flat roof profile is similar to that of neighbouring dwellings.



The application site lies within the urban area where Policy S4 applies. Policy S4 establishes a presumption in favour of development proposals within settlements unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the Framework's decision-making policies.

The proposal would deliver a net increase of one dwelling within a sustainable location and therefore contribute, albeit modestly, to the Borough's housing supply at a time when the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. The proposal also makes use of an existing building within the urban area and would still retain a commercial use at ground-floor level.

The proposed development is therefore compliant with Local and National Planning Policy as it is appropriately designed and safeguards employment space whilst contributing to housing delivery in line with the requirements of CS19 and CS14 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and Section 12 and Policy S4 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The previous application submitted under 20260193 was refused owing to the below:

By virtue of the lack of suitable windows to serve the proposed dwelling, there would be insufficient outlook for future occupiers would be detrimental to their amenity. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a high standard of amenity for future occupiers which conflicts with the requirements of the Residential Layout Guidelines (2015), Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

This assessment must establish if the previous reasons for refusal have been overcome.

It should be noted that the residential living space has been relocated from the outbuilding to the main building to the first floor. No additional first-floor habitable room windows are proposed beyond the existing fenestration serving the building. It is therefore considered that the future occupiers will have adequate light, outlook and privacy.

Internal space standards

The "Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard" was published by the Department

for Communities and Local Government in March 2015. This document sets out requirements for the gross internal area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home.

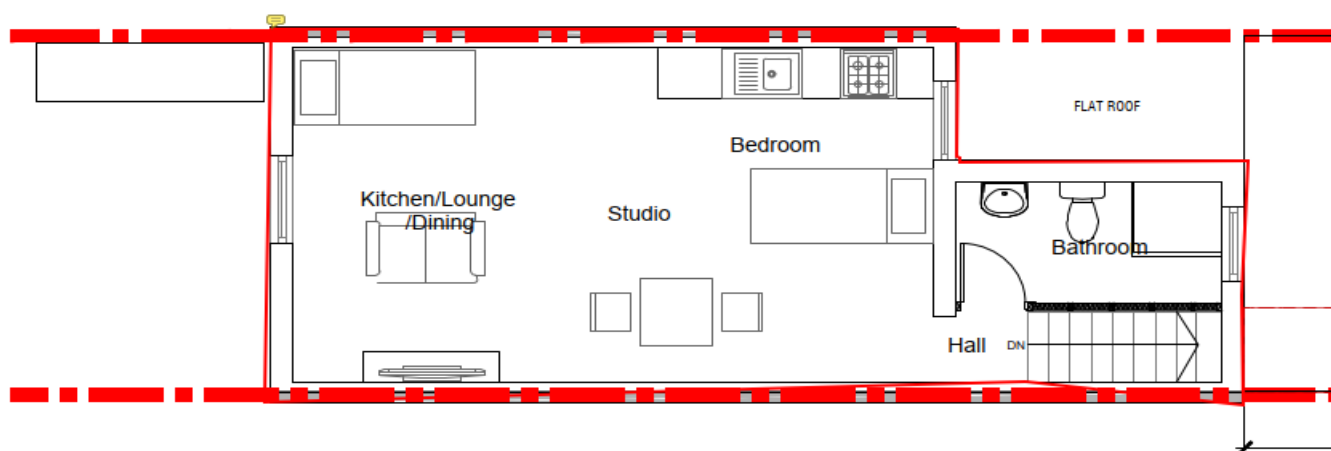
The submitted Design and Access Statement states that the proposed studio flat would provide **41.3sqm** of internal accommodation and complies with the Nationally Described Space Standard for a one-person studio dwelling. However, the submitted layout incorporates two separate single beds and is therefore capable of accommodating two occupants. In the absence of any occupancy restriction, the dwelling has been assessed as a two-person unit.

Below Extract from Design and Access Statement:

5.3 The Proposed studio flat will have a total internal floor area of 41.3 square metres, comprising a combined living, sleeping and kitchen area as well as a separate shower room. The flat is access by its own entrance with a small area left for waste management. The internal layout meets the Nationally described space standards for a one-person studio dwelling.

Accordingly, the dwelling has been assessed as a two-person unit. Notwithstanding the floor area quoted within the Design and Access Statement, measurement from the submitted plans indicates that the proposed dwelling would provide approximately **36.2sqm** of internal floorspace. This falls materially below the **50sqm** minimum gross internal area required by the Nationally Described Space Standard for a single-storey two-person dwelling. The proposal would therefore fail to provide an adequate standard of residential accommodation for future occupiers by reason of its substandard internal floorspace and over-constrained layout.

Extract of Proposed Floor Plan



Extract from the Nationally Described Space Standard

Table 1. Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
1b	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
2b	4p	70	79		2.0

Furthermore, the submitted floor plans do not demonstrate the provision of the minimum built-in storage required by the Nationally Described Space Standard. The lack of dedicated storage space would further reduce the functionality and quality of the accommodation for future occupiers and reinforces the conclusion that the dwelling would provide a poor standard of residential accommodation

The proposed dwelling, by virtue of its gross internal floor area of approximately 36.2sqm and layout demonstrating occupation by two persons, would provide substandard living accommodation that falls significantly below the 50sqm minimum requirement set out within the Nationally Described Space Standard for a single-storey two-person dwelling. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a satisfactory standard of residential amenity for future occupiers and would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, SPG2 Residential Layout Guidance 2020 and the Nationally Described Space Standard 2015.

Neighbouring Amenity

The previous application under reference 20260193 was refused owing to the below

By virtue of the windows in the front elevation and the proximity to the side windows of the neighbouring property, No. 5A Station Road, the development would result in harm to the living environments of future occupants of the proposed dwelling, together with a direct detrimental impact on the existing occupiers of 5A Station Road. The proposed windows would experience direct overlooking to the existing residential dwelling which would not comply with required privacy distances. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a high standard of amenity for neighbouring's sites which conflicts with the requirements of the Residential Layout Guidelines (2015), Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

This assessment must determine if the above reason has been overcome.

The proposal has relocated the living space from the outbuilding to the first floor. The accommodation comprises a single open-plan studio with a separate bathroom and access stair to the south western side.

From the plan, all of the habitable accommodation is contained within the existing first-floor envelope and there are no balconies, roof terraces, external seating areas, roof gardens or raised amenity spaces that would facilitate direct overlooking into neighbouring rear gardens.

The site sits within a traditional terraced frontage where overlooking between first-floor windows is already an established characteristic of the area. Future occupiers would experience typical urban intervisibility with adjoining terraced properties rather than an unusual or intensified form of overlooking. The proposal is therefore considered to safeguard neighbouring amenity in line with the requirements of SPG2 Residential

Layout Guidance 2020.

Parking and Highways

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that new development mitigates its impact on the highway and that sufficient parking is provided in accordance with adopted parking standards, reflecting the availability of public transport provision and the accessibility of local services and facilities. Saved Policy P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review requires development to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards.

The application form states that there would be no parking to serve this dwelling, however the design and access statement states:

"A recessed entrance area will provide space for refuse storage and one cycle parking space"

The submitted plans do not show any cycle spaces which contradicts the submitted Design and Access Statement.

Whilst the submitted application form does not identify any cycle parking provision and the proposed cycle storage referred to within the Design and Access Statement has not been clearly evidenced on the submitted plans, it is acknowledged that the site occupies a highly sustainable location within the urban area of Northfleet.

The site benefits from good access to local services and facilities and is within walking distance of both Northfleet Railway Station and Ebbsfleet International Station, together with local bus services operating along Stonebridge Road. In these circumstances, whilst the lack of clearly demonstrated cycle storage is disappointing, it is not considered that the shortcoming would, in itself, give rise to sufficient planning harm to warrant refusal of the application on transport or sustainability grounds

On balance it is considered that the proposal would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Saved Policies P3 and P5 of the Local Plan 1994.

Noise

Whilst Stonebridge Road is a relatively busy road and no Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of the application, any permission granted could reasonably secure the submission and approval of such details through appropriately worded planning conditions.

The site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and the proposed dwelling would benefit from openable windows and doors to provide natural ventilation. Future occupiers would retain control over their internal environment, including the ability to close windows where necessary to minimise noise intrusion.

Whilst Environmental Protection have raised concerns regarding noise transmission and the relationship between the proposed dwelling and the commercial use below, it is considered that these matters could be addressed as above through an appropriately worded planning condition.

Refuse

The site is an existing commercial unit and the proposed plan shows an area for 'bins' to the front. It would be necessary to have separate residential and commercial bin storage to serve the existing shop and the proposed residential unit. If planning permission were forthcoming, further details of this could be secure through planning conditions.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Ecology and Biodiversity (Bird Mitigation)

The application site lies within the zone of influence of the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar Site, where additional residential development has the potential to give rise to increased recreational disturbance. The proposed development would ordinarily require consideration under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and, if acceptable in all other respects, would be expected to make an appropriate Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) contribution in accordance with Policy CS12 (Green Infrastructure) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.

However, as the application is recommended for refusal for the reasons set out elsewhere in this report, it has not been necessary to undertake a detailed Habitats Regulations Assessment or seek the completion of a legal agreement to secure SAMMS mitigation. Accordingly, no conclusion is reached in respect of the effect of the proposal upon the integrity of the designated habitats

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The proposal is considered exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements by virtue of the de minimis exemption set out in Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The development would not impact any priority habitat and would affect less than 25 square metres of on-site habitat and less than 5 metres of linear habitat. Accordingly, the biodiversity gain condition would not apply and a Biodiversity Gain Plan is not required

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal is recommended for refusal owing to the below reason:

The proposed dwelling, by virtue of its internal floorspace of approximately 36.2sqm and layout demonstrating accommodation for two occupants, would provide substandard living accommodation that falls significantly below the 50sqm minimum gross internal area required by the Nationally Described Space Standard for a single-storey two-person dwelling. The proposal would therefore fail to provide a satisfactory standard of residential amenity for future occupiers and would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020) and the Nationally Described Space Standard (2015).

(For detailed reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Sharon Sahota	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	15/09/2026	Dated:	16th September 2026