

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 8 April 2026

7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)

Cllr Narinderjit Singh Thandi (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Deborah Croxton
 Aaron Elliott
 Baljit Hayre
 Lyn Milner
 Frank Wardle

Note: Councillors: Helen Ashenden, Leslie Pearton and Tony Rana were also in attendance

Shazad Ghani	Head of Planning
Faye Walsh	Team Leader (Development Management)
Richard Hart	Team Leader (Development Management)
Lisa Fisher	Senior Planner
Alison Webster	Senior Planner
Laura Caiels	Assistant Head of Legal Services
Karen Gingles	Committee Service Officer (Minutes)

45. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leslie Pearton, Gurdip Bungar and Peter Scollard. Councillors Derek Ashenden, Deborah Croxton and Baljit Hayre attended as their substitutes. An apology for absence was also received from Cllr Samir Jassal.

46. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 4 February 2026 were signed by the Chair.

47. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Planning applications for determination by the Committee

48.1 20250995 - Flat 1 and Flat 2, 19 Edwin Street, Gravesend, Kent

The Committee were presented with application 20250995 - Flat 1 and Flat 2, 19 Edwin Street, Gravesend, Kent. The application was for a Proposed Lawful Development Certificate for the change of use of Flat 1 (Class C3) at basement & ground floors, to a 5 person House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) and the change of use of Flat 2 (Class C3) at first & second floors, to a 4 person HMO (Class C4).

The Team Leader informed Members that a Lawful Development Certificate was a legal document issued by a Local Planning Authority, which confirmed that a specific use, operation or activity on a piece of land was lawful. As such under the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), a permitted development right existed to move between the classes specified, without planning permission being required.

Members were informed that Gravesham Private Sector Housing department enforced HMO standards with a mandatory licence. As such aspects such as room sizes, communal kitchen facilities, personal washing spaces and WC facilities were covered under this.

The Officer recommendation was that the development was lawful and therefore a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development should be granted.

The Chair asked for clarification from the Legal Officer of what the Committee were to determine. The Legal Officer advised that the Committee were only able to consider the GDPO and the requirements of this. If it was deemed that the requirements were met then there was a legal requirement to issue the Lawful Development Certificate.

The Chair invited Member questions for clarification:

- Members queried why the application was being presented to the Committee if it was considered by officers, that all the requirements of a GDPO had been met. It was explained that under the Council's Constitution, that a Member was permitted to call in an application without being named or giving a reason for doing so.

The Committee heard the views of a speaker in favour of the application and had their questions answered:

- Members noted that the plans did not indicate fire exits. The speaker advised that consideration of fire exits would be a matter under the HMO licensing agreement and not a planning consideration in this case.

RESOLVED that that a Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development should be **GRANTED**

Note: Matt Driscoll (External Planner on behalf of the applicant) spoke in favour of the application.

48.2 20251255 - 50 Whitehill Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5PG

The Committee considered application 20251255 – 50 Whitehill Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5PG. The application was for the Change of use from a small house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Use Class C4) to an 8-bedroom, 8-person, large HMO (sui generis) and provision of bicycle and bin stores to the rear.

The Senior Planner updated on key areas of the report:

- There were proposed changes to layout to accommodate the additional bedrooms. It was proposed to replace the existing utility/lounge area on the ground floor to a single ensuite bedroom for a single occupant. The room use on the first floor would remain the same. On the second floor it was proposed to convert the study to a bedroom for a single occupant.
- It was highlighted that the property had previously received a Lawful Development Certificate for a single-story rear extension and loft conversion with rear side dormer and change of use from a C3 dwelling house to C4 small HMO class.
- As the application proposed the increase of bedrooms of the HMO from 6 to 8, the HMO would now be considered a large HMO (sui generis use class) and therefore required permission for this amendment.
- The location of the site was considered sustainable in close proximity of shops and public transport.
- Policy H5 (i) stated that buildings should be in an appropriate area for conversion to flats, maisonettes, bedsits and multiple occupancy. It was also noted that unless there were special or overriding circumstances, conversion would not normally be permitted in an area comprised for the most part of single-family dwellings rooms.

The location of the site was in an area of predominantly single-family dwellings and no special or overriding circumstances were evident.

- Gravesham's guidance to HMO amenity standards had been referred to in considering the application, along with comments received from the GBC Private Sector Housing team. From this it was noted that communal living space was required at a minimum of 18 square metres, alongside a shared kitchen and dining space. However, the proposal would replace the communal areas with bedrooms. As a result of the lack of communal living area, the bedrooms were required to comply with minimum space standards of a combined bedroom and living space. This was a minimum of 10 square metres for a single occupancy room. Multiple bedrooms shown in the plan fell below this minimum space requirement.
- It was noted that bedroom 3 was accessible via the kitchen with no escape route in the event of an emergency.
- The proposal was considered an intensification of use. It was also not considered that 8 adults living independently to each other would operate in the same manner as families in an area of a high proportion of single-family dwellings. As such it was considered that this use would have a considerable impact on neighbouring residents.

The Chair invite member questions for clarification:

- Members expressed concern that there was no indication in the report of a fire escape. The Senior Planner advised that although escape routes and fire exits for

HMOs were dealt with by Private Housing under the license requirements, reference of this had been included as a reason for refusal.

The Committee heard the views of a speaker against the application.

The Committee heard the views of a Ward Councillor for Whitehill and Windmill Hill Cllr Tony Rana.

RESOLVED that the application be delegated to the Head of Planning to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION**

Note: Daniel Williams (local resident) spoke against the application.

48.3 20250889 - Buckland Farm, Chalk Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent

The Committee considered application 20250889 - Buckland Farm, Chalk Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent. The application was an outline planning application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection up to 40 residential dwellings, public open space and associated works. Approval was sought for the principal means of vehicular access from Chalk Road and all other matters were reserved.

The Senior Planner updated on key areas of the report:

- The reserved matters such as layout, scale, appearance and landscaping were not bring considered as part of the application presented. These would be considered at a later date if the outline permission was granted.
- The site was located in Grey Belt land to the north west of Lower Higham and south west of the North Kent railway line and disused Kent and Medway Canal.
- The site was currently accessed via Chalk Road. The site was currently of mixed use, with building in B1, B8 and agricultural use with some animal grazing to the north of the site. Beyond the site to the west was a single dwelling, to the east and south were residential properties. Beyond the site to the north and west was Grade 1 agricultural land, which was in agricultural use.
- Lower Higham was characterised by a mix of dwelling types, designs, boundary treatments and street layouts. Such variation contributed to the character of the area.
- Members attention was drawn to the parameter plan set out in page 45 of the report. This highlighted the proposed area for residential development use, the indicative area of land required for access within the residential development use and the proposed public open space.
- Members were referred to the flood map on page 56 of the report, which showed the potential for flooding. It was noted that the proposed open space fell within the undefended flood zones 2 and 3. However the Environment Agency had considered the flood risk assessment and had raised no objection.
- KCC Highways and Highways England had raised no objections to the proposal subject to conditions and mitigation secured such as highway improvements, secure cycle parking facilities, improvement to cycle parking provision at Higham Railway Station as well as highway safety measures.