

Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250971

Location: Bluebells Willow Walk Meopham Gravesend

Description: Retention, remodelling and extension of the existing property to create two self build single dwellinghouses.

Applicant: Mr and Mrs M. Cantwell

Site Visit Date: 06.10.25

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form
 Cover Letter
 1000 C Location Plan
 1001 E Block Plan – Existing
 1009 Foundation Plan – Existing
 1009S – Foundation Plan (Services) – Existing
 1010 E Ground Floor Plan – Existing
 1013 D Roof Plan – Existing
 1020 D Sections AA and BB – Existing
 1021 Section CC - Existing
 1030 C North and South Elevations – Existing
 1032 C East and West Elevations – Existing
 1101 F Site Block Plan – Proposed
 1109 Foundation Plan – Proposed
 1109S Foundations Plan (Services) – Proposed
 1110 E Ground Floor Plan – Proposed
 1113 E Roof Plan – Proposed
 1120 E Sections AA and BB – Proposed
 1121 E Section CC – Proposed
 1130 E North and South Elevations – Proposed
 1131 E North and South Elevations – Proposed
 1132 E East and West Elevations – Proposed
 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 Potential Bat Roost Assessment
 BNG Self Build Form

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20250509	Retention, remodelling and extension of the existing property to create two self- build single dwellinghouses.	Permitted	03.09.2025
20240772	Demolition, remodelling and extension of the existing property to create two self- build single dwellinghouses	Refused	21.01.2025

20240291	Demolition of conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension. Changes to front fenestration.	Permitted	20.05.2024
20020569	Demolition of rear conservatory and erection of a front porch	Permitted	28.08.2002
19970581	Erection of a first- floor side extension incorporating conversion of roof space to form bedroom and storeroom	Permitted	25.09.1997
19881210	Outline application for the erection of a single storey dwelling	Permitted	19.05.1989
19820755	Erection of single storey dwelling	Approval of details	29.11.1982
19820660	Continued use of land for the stationing of a residential caravan for one year	Permitted	29.11.1982

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS16 – Affordable Housing
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

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

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 First Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 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 Standards (2015)
- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Design for Gravesend – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesend Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Other Relevant Guidance

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

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

No response received.

Ward Councillors

No responses received.

Southern Water

Received on 09.06.2025 (from the previous application)

Southern Water requires a formal application for a connection to the public sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.

We request that should this planning application receive planning approval, the following informative is attached to the consent; “Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul sewerage and surface water disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with Southern Water”.

Proposed Soakaways

The Council’s Building Control officers or technical staff should be asked to comment on the adequacy of soakaways to dispose of surface water from the proposed development. No new soakaways should be located within 5 metres of a public sewer or adoptable gravity sewer, rising main or water main.

No soakaways should be connected to the public surface water sewer.

Tree planting

We have restrictions on the proposed tree planting adjacent to Southern Water sewers, rising mains or water mains. Reference should be made to Southern Water’s publication “A Guide to Tree Planting Near Water Mains and Sewers” and the Sewerage Sector Guidance with regards to any landscaping proposals and our restrictions and maintenance of the tree planting adjacent to sewers, rising mains and waters mains.

Condition: In order to protect public apparatus, Southern Water requests that if consent is granted, the following pre- commencement condition is attached to the planning permission: “The developer must advise the Local Authority (in consultation with Southern Water) of the landscaping proposals in proximity of public apparatus in order to protect it in accordance with Southern Water’s guidance, prior to the commencement of development”.

Proposed works involving demolition

In order to protect and safeguard the existing water supply apparatus, Southern Water requests formal notification of any proposed demolition works prior to such works being undertaken.

KCC Ecological Advice Service

Received on 23.10.2025

We have reviewed the information submitted and advise that sufficient ecological and biodiversity net gain information has been provided for determination. Recommended condition/ informative wording is provided below.

The site has an ancient woodland to the rear and the required 15m ancient woodland buffer is within the residential garden and goes up to the building boundary. This will require precautionary measures for the protection of ancient woodland and the associated buffer. We highlight that that changes to drainage may

have occurred with the ancient woodland buffer zone for this application and this is not our area of expertise.

The applicant has stated they are exempt from BNG as these two proposed dwellings are self and custom build. The LPA need to be satisfied that this application meets that exemption.

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woodland covers 2.4% of England's land mass and is a rare and irreplaceable habitat.

The proposed development is adjacent to an area of designated ancient woodland. As such, we highlight paragraph 193 of the NPPF which states that "development resulting the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists".

The site has an existing structure on the site which will be converted into two dwellings. The 15m ancient woodland buffer zone is located with the rear garden of the existing property and has been illustrated on the submitted plans. This buffer zone is shown to be adjacent to existing structures and hardstanding.

The Natural England/ Forestry Commission standing advice states there should be a minimum 15m buffer zone between development and ancient woodland. A larger buffer zone may be needed to account for any direct or indirect adverse effects associated with proposals, as well as to preserve the root protection area of trees within the woodland. Larger buffer zones are more likely to be needed if the surrounding area is less densely wooded, close to residential areas and steeply sloped.

The buffer zone needs to include buffering the development from gardens (so the woodland should be at least 15m from the gardens). The guidance also requires consideration of the potential for additional impacts from proposals even when there is an existing development within this minimum buffer.

Further, the existing condition of the affected ancient woodland is not relevant. Standing advice states;

"Where a proposal involves the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland or ancient or veteran trees, you should not take account of the existing condition of the ancient woodland or ancient or veteran tree when you assess the merits of the development proposal. Its existing condition is not a reason to give permission for development. A woodland or tree in poor condition can be improved with good management".

Standing advice states that the following mitigation measures should be considered in any application in or adjacent to woodland;

- putting up screening barriers to protect ancient woodland or ancient or veteran trees from dust and pollution
- measures to reduce noise or light
- design open spaces to protect ancient or veteran trees; and
- creating buffer zones (typically 15m from the boundary of the woodland).

We highlight that it is not best practice to have an ancient woodland buffer zone within a garden, but as this is an existing garden, we accept that there could be no change in this case, if measures are in place for the protection of the ancient woodland and associated buffer zone, including the soils. No construction or storage of construction materials should be conducted in this zone, and we require a precautionary mitigation strategy for the ancient woodland and buffer zone to be included within the CEMP, to protect it from impacts from the proposed development.

Protected Species

A preliminary ecological appraisal and preliminary roost assessment for bats has been completed. The follow up survey for bats has found this site is negligible for the presence of bats within the building, but as the site backs onto ancient woodland a sensitive lighting strategy will be required as bats will likely be foraging and commuting within the area.

Vegetation within the site has been identified as suitable breeding bird habitat and some may be impacted. We recommend that any work to vegetation is conducted outside the bird breeding season (1st March to 31st August) to avoid risk of impacts or if within the breeding season, a survey by a suitably qualified person needs to be conducted to confirm absence, prior to commencing works. This should be included in the environmental plan (CEMP) outlined further below.

Other protected species, such as badgers, dormice, reptiles and amphibians have been considered for this site and their presence is consider unlikely. Hedgehogs may be sheltering or commuting within the area and precautionary mitigation is suggested. This can be included in the CEMP.

We are satisfied that sufficient ecological surveys have been completed, and no further surveys are required.

Lighting

Nocturnal animals (including bats) are likely to be using the site and surrounding area for foraging and commuting and any lighting associated with the proposal may have a negative impact, especially any light spill to hedgerow boundaries and ancient woodland and the buffer zone adjacent to the site. We advise that a condition will be required for the external lighting and will follow the recommendations within Bat Conservation Trust/ Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night'.

Suggested condition wording is below:

Prior to first occupation of the dwellings, a lighting design plan(s) for biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan(s) shall include the following;

- the identification of areas/ features on- site where disturbance could occur to biodiversity features such as ancient woodland plus buffer zone and bat roosting sites and/ or foraging/ commuting routes;
- the provision of appropriate, scaled plans(s) to show how and where external lighting shall be installed;
- the provision of technical specifications for the external lighting; and
- the provision of lighting contour plans to show expected lux levels on both the horizontal and vertical planes, so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit shall not disturb the activity or relevant ecological receptors.

All external lighting shall be installed prior to first occupation of the dwellings in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the plan(s), and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the plan(s).

Construction Environmental Management Plan

We suggest that the below wording is included as a condition for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP – biodiversity), if planning permission is granted. This will mitigate for impacts to biodiversity, protect the ancient woodland and associated buffer zone and help ensure compliance with relevant legislation. The plan will include mitigation as outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Calumma Ecological Services, Oct 24. Suggested wording is below;

Prior to commencement of works, including site clearance, a construction environmental management plan (CEMP) will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP will be based on the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Calumma Ecological Services Oct 24 and include the following:

- a) purpose and objectives for proposed mitigation works during construction;
- b) the identification of biodiversity protection zones and the use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs;
- c) a detailed method statement to protect the ancient woodland (AW), 15m AW buffer zone and retained trees from pollution and adverse impacts;

- d) the extent and location of proposed mitigation works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans, with reference to: pollution avoidance measures (noise, dust, lighting and run-off), protection of retained trees and hedgerows;
- e) practical mitigation measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during clearance and construction for bats, hedgerows and breeding birds (may be provided as a set of species or habitat specific methods statements);
- f) the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features;
- g) the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works;
- h) responsible persons and lines of communication.

The approved CEMP will be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period in accordance with the approved details”.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications for development (unless exempt), must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. Significant on- site gains, and all off- site gain, will need to be secured for at least 30 years.

The applicant has stated that they are exempt from BNG as these two proposed dwellings are self and custom build. The LPA need to be satisfied that this application meets that exemption.

Ecological Enhancements

Under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) and paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF 2024, biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. As such, if planning permission is granted, we advise that a condition is included requiring an ecological enhancement plan to be submitted. We note that some enhancements have been outlined in the PEA and detailed on the proposed site block plan. A condition wording is suggested below;

“Within three months of work’s commencement, a detailed plan(s) showing how the development will enhance biodiversity, will be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This will include a detailed landscaping plan with planting plans and management measures, using native species only within the ancient woodland buffer zone, with hedgehog highways and integrated wildlife features, including durable bat and bird boxes aimed at species of conservation concern. The approved measures will be implemented and retained thereafter”.

Neighbouring properties

6no. surrounding properties were consulted and a site notice was displayed on 06/10/2025. The expiry date for consultations was 27/10/2025. No comments have been received.

Officer’s Analysis

Site Description

Bluebells is a detached bungalow located in a large plot on the northern side of the road.



The principal considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Housing Need
- Location
- Density of Development
- Affordable Housing
- Design and Impact on Listed Buildings
- Amenity of Future Occupiers
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Parking and Highways
- Ecology and Biodiversity

This application differs from the previous, approved one, in the following ways;

- Removal of first floor accommodation and amended roof forms to both dwellings
- Addition of a single storey rear extension and rear terrace to the dwelling on plot B
- Reduction in the depth of the single storey rear extension and addition of a rear terrace to the dwelling on plot A

Housing Need

In *Hopkins Homes Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2017] 1 W.L.R. 1865*, Lord Carnwath re-emphasised that the National Planning Policy Framework is only a material consideration in planning decisions and that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan. Paragraph 12 of the NPPF expressly states the starting point for decision-making is the development plan. Lord Carnwath, as part of the Supreme Court decision, stated,

"It is important, however, in assessing the effect of the Framework, not to overstate the scope of this policy-making role. The Framework itself makes clear that as respects the determination of planning applications (by contrast with plan-making in which it has a statutory recognition), it is no more than "guidance" and as such, a "material consideration" for the purposes of section 70(2) of the 1990 Act. It cannot, and does not purport to, displace the primacy given by the statute and policy to the statutory development plan. It must be exercised consistently with, and not so as to displace or distort, the statutory scheme".

It is a matter of law that all planning applications need to be considered in accordance with the legislation and relevant policy that applies at the point a decision is taken. The Council published a revised 5 year housing land supply statement in March 2023. It demonstrates that based on data up to the period 2022-2027, the Council can only demonstrate a land supply of 2.9 years.

Given the Council's current inability to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, and as the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) that required by the Housing Delivery Test, the housing delivery element of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014), Policy CS02 must be regarded as being out of date, as required by paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). This requires that in regard to housing development, planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

In the context of Gravesham, the policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(i) above are those set out in the NPPF at footnote 7 (rather than those in the development plan), relating to any of the following;

- Habitats Sites (and those listed in NPPF paragraph 189)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Green Belt
- Local Green Space
- National Landscape
- Irreplaceable habitats
- Designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest, see NPPF footnote 75)
- Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change

In determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will therefore apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, having regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals when evaluated against development plan policy, the need to make efficient use of land (paragraph 130(c)) in context, the relative contribution the proposal makes towards the alleviation of any shortfall in housing delivery at that time and any other considerations material to the proposed development.

The proposed development for a net increase of one residential unit would offer a minimal contribution towards meeting this local need and, accordingly, officers consider this should be accorded appropriate weight in support of the application, particularly as there is an extant permission on the site for a similar development. However, this has to be balanced against other requirements of the development plan and the NPPF (2024) which requires new development to contribute positively to the overall quality of the area,

be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and create a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

Location

The application is located inside the Rural Settlement inset from the Green Belt. Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development) identifies that in such areas, development will be supported. As a Third Tier Settlement, Culverstone Green is on the mid- tier of sustainable locations in the borough.

4.2.4 The Council has carried out an assessment of the facilities and services available in the Borough's settlements to identify which are more sustainable. The results are reflected in the settlement hierarchy below.

Table 2: Settlement Hierarchy

First Tier Settlements:	Gravesend/Northfleet/Ebbsfleet, i.e. the urban area
Second Tier Settlements:	Istead Rise, Hook Green, Meopham, Higham
Third Tier Settlements:	Culverstone Green, Meopham Green, Vigo
Fourth Tier Settlements:	Cobham, Shorne, Sole Street
Other Settlements:	Harvel, Lower Higham, Luddesdown, Lower Shorne, Shorne Ridgeway, Three Crutches

Source: Settlement Hierarchy Technical Paper December 2009

The Council's Settlement Strategy

It is considered on balance that the location of the proposed development is sustainable in principle, particularly given the neighbouring residential development previously undertaken and the presence of the extant permission on the site. Locationally, the development would be acceptable in principle. However, all other matters also need to be considered.

Density of Development

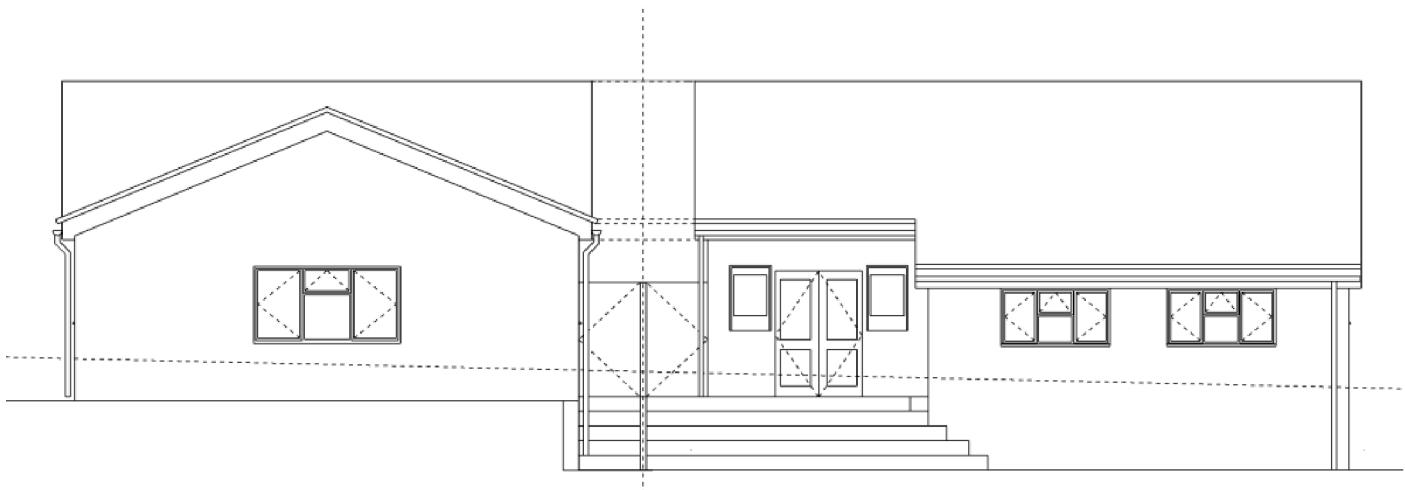
Development on the site should meet the requirements of Policy CS14 (LPCS), where the Council expects new housing development to provide a range of development types and sizes, taking into account the existing character of the area. Policy CS15 (LPCS) requires that all new housing will be developed at a density which is consistent with achieving good design and does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated. These policies will be considered and assessed against the proposal later in this report.

In the Rural Area, Policy CS15 (LPCS) requires that housing provide a minimum density of 30 dwellinghouses per hectare (dph). The site has an area of 1,227sqm: the provision of two houses on it would be at a density of 16.3 dph (against a current density of 8.15 dph). This is below the minimum density required. However, it would be in keeping with density of the dwellings along Willow Walk, would maintain the line of dwellings along the road and would be acceptable in this regard too. Therefore, the proposed development would be acceptable, in accordance with Policies CS14 and CS15 of the LPCS (2014).

Design, Character and Appearance

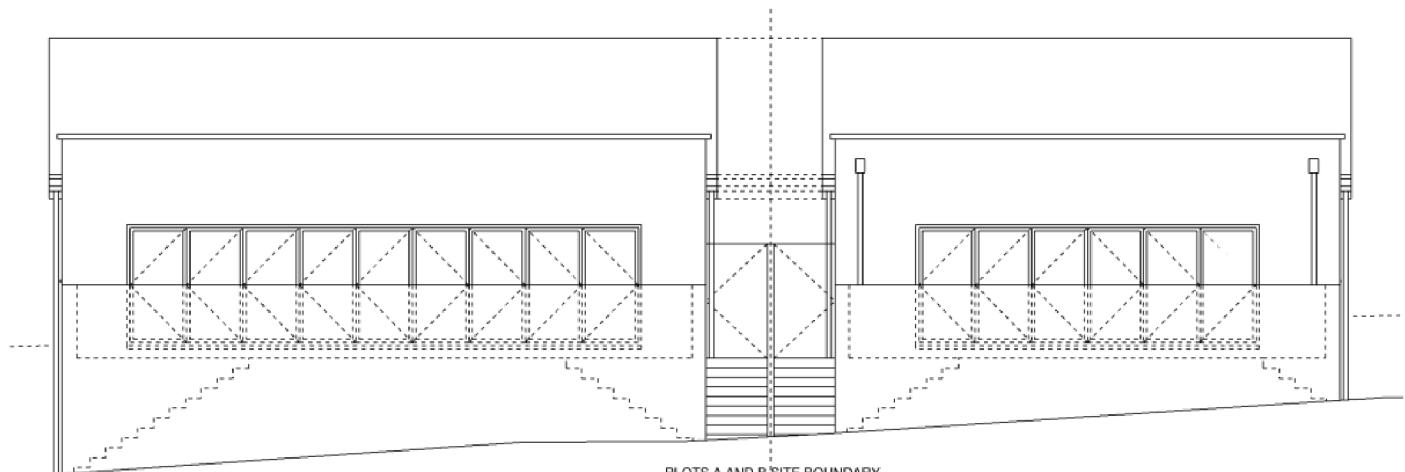
The application site comprises a single bungalow. Such buildings are often evident in rural locations as is the case along Willow Walk, although not exclusively. There are a large number of bungalows along the road, including chalet bungalows. The proposed development would not have a significant impact upon the character and appearance of the building from the street scene as a result of the limited alterations proposed to its front elevation. The increase in built form of the roof is no longer proposed, creating a lesser scheme is a lesser impact.

The front elevations of the proposed dwellings are shown below for information;



The proposed development would result in two dwellinghouses on the site instead of one. The proposed dwellings would be of slightly greater bulk and massing than the existing bungalow and but would be sited the same distances from the flank boundaries of the plot. However, the development's bulk and scale would be broken up to a degree as it would comprise two detached dwellings with staggered front elevations. The increase in the built form on the site would not be particularly evident when approaching the site from the south- east or the north- west (along Willow Walk). They would have an acceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the site and the street scene. The visual impact of the proposed development would be acceptable, in accordance with the requirements of the Design for Gravesham – Design Guide (2024), Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), in terms of design, character and appearance.

The internal configuration of the properties in being amended as part of this application, given the roof alterations are no longer provided and all living accommodation will be on the ground floor. The approved rear extension of plot B is being reduced, with a new rear extension proposed for plot A, to match Plot B. A modest raised platform is also proposed. This is modest in nature to facilitate access to the garden, which is a slightly lower level;



The extensions are designed with flat roof and are not excessive in size.

While the submitted plans indicate a large expanse of hardstanding to each plot, there would nevertheless be the opportunity for some landscaping. This would help assimilate the development into the street scene and may be conditioned.

The proposed level of hardstanding would not be dissimilar to that exhibited at some of the nearby dwellings (including those on the opposite side of the road). It would not be harmful to the street scene.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The NPPF (2024) states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users of a site. The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria in Policy CS19 (LPCS), which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, privacy, sunlight and daylight of its occupants and those of the neighbouring properties and land. The impact upon neighbours will be assessed in the next section of this report.

The following table compares the internal spaces proposed against the minimum space standards contained in the Council's Residential Layout Guidance SPD (2020).

Room Type	Proposed Internal Floor Plot A	Area (sqm) Plot B	Minimum Space Standard (sqm)
Kitchen/ living/ dining room	39.5	51.5	
Bathroom and WC	4.6	4.75	3.6
Double Bedrooms	4 bedrooms all above 11.2 sqm	3 bedrooms all above 11.2 sqm (the other bedroom is a single)	11.2

It should be noted that the kitchen/ living and dining areas for the dwellings are combined at 39.5 sqm and 51.5 sqm, which is equal to or above the minimum space required for the rooms combined

The following table compares the external spaces proposed against the minimum space standards contained in the Council's Residential Layout Guidance SPD (2020).

Garden Measurement	Proposed Internal Floor Plot A	Area (sqm) Plot B	Minimum Space Standard (sqm)
Area	141.5	151.5	100
Depth	22.4	18.4	10

The above tables demonstrate that the proposed dwellings would comply with the minimum space standards contained in the Council's Residential Layout Guidance (2020).

Neighbouring Amenity

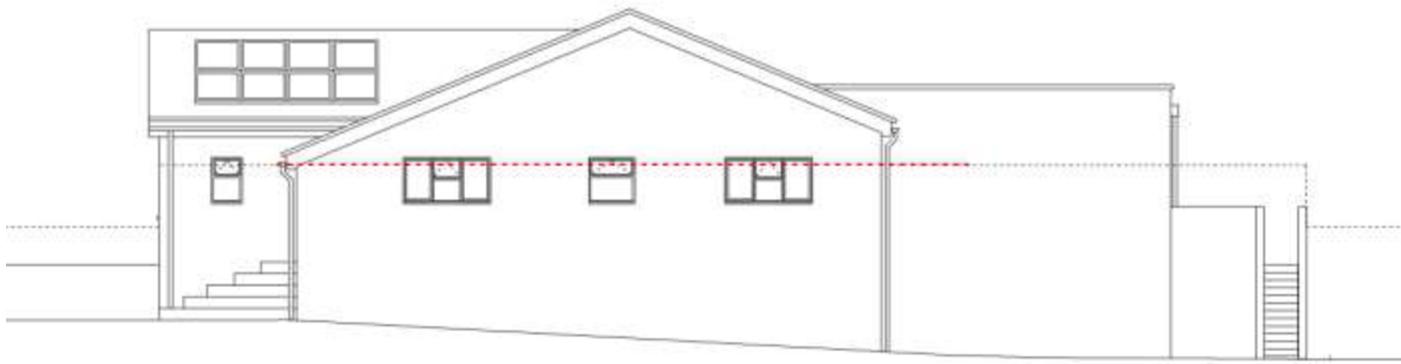
It is important that any new development safeguards the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers. Despite several objections being received about the previous application, none have been received for this amended application.

The neighbouring properties most likely to be affected are those either side of the application site, no. 41 Willow Walk (Land East of Willow Wood House; to the north- west of the site) and no. 45 (Woodview Cottage; to the south- east of the site).

Plot A (adjacent to 41 Willow Walk) would have three ground floor windows (all primary, serving bedrooms) facing 41. There are two windows at first floor level in the flank elevation of the dwelling at 41 facing the application site (and none at ground floor level). While it is not known which rooms these windows serve, there would be a 1.8m high close board fence between the dwellings, and the proposed rear- facing first floor windows would not overlook the area immediately to rear of the dwelling at 41 Willow Walk, the proposed development would not result in a harmful level of overlooking or loss of privacy for this dwelling.

Plot B (adjacent to 45 Willow Walk) would have four ground floor windows (one primary, serving a bedroom; one secondary serving a bedroom and one serving an en- suite bathroom). There are four windows in the flank elevation of 45 facing the application site – two at ground floor level, two at first floor level (it is not known which rooms these windows serve). The presence of a 1.8m high close boarded fence

on the boundary between the properties is considered sufficient to prevent an undue degree of overlooking of 45, as indicated by the red line on the plan below;



ALL PROPOSED MATERIALS INCL. HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING, ROOFS, EXTERNAL WALLS, WINDOWS, DOORS, AND RAINWATER AND SANITARY GOODS TO MATCH EXISTING
SOUTH ELEVATION

The proposed rear-facing windows would not overlook the area immediately to the rear of the dwelling at 45 due to the relationship between the properties; the proposed development would not result in a harmful level of overlooking or loss of privacy for this dwelling, therefore.

The windows in the inside-facing elevations of the two proposed dwellings would serve a bathroom and a hall on Plot A, and a lobby, shower, en-suite and a bedroom on Plot B. All these windows could be obscure glazed and fixed shut and 1.7m above finished floor level (by condition). Loss of amenity would not arise in this regard. While an obscure glazed and fixed shut to 1.7m window for a bedroom is not ideal, it is not considered sufficient bad to warrant a refusal of the application.

The front door of the dwelling on Plot A would be in its flank elevation, looking across the front of the dwelling on Plot B. This would not be harmful to amenity due to the relationship between the dwellings.

It is not considered that the proposal would result in an undue level of enclosure or shading for the neighbouring dwellings due to the depths of the proposed dwellings and their relationship and orientation to the neighbouring dwellings.

None of the other nearby or surrounding dwellings would be unduly affected by the proposed development due to the distances involved.

The proposed dwellings would have level rear elevations and the dwelling on Plot A would extend forward of that on Plot B by around 2m. This forward projection would not have an adverse impact upon the outlook or amenity of the occupiers of Plot B due to the relatively limited degree of projection. While a little overshadowing across the front elevation of the dwelling on Plot B would result due to the orientation of the dwellings, this would be limited and would not be harmful to amenity, particularly as the nearest element of the ground floor of that dwelling is the front door and the pitched roof of the dwelling on Plot A. A little overshadowing of the neighbouring dwelling at 45 Willow Walk would also result, though it is not considered that this would be harmful to amenity either.

Each property is proposed to have a raised platform, in order to access the garden area below, which is of a lower level. The raised platforms are modest, with the largest area located to the centre, away from the boundary with neighbour properties. It is considered that no adverse overlooking will result from the raised platforms.

Parking and Highways

The proposal is for two four bed dwellings. The Kent County Council Parking Standards stipulate that each of the dwellinghouses have three parking space to comply with the standards. The proposed block plan indicates three parking spaces for each of the dwellinghouses would be provided, though with three cars

parked in the front gardens, there would likely be insufficient space for the cars to be able to turn and leave the properties in forwards gear. However, as the part of Willow Walk along which the site is located is a cul-de-sac (and therefore cars travelling along it do so at low speed) and there would be suitable visibility splays at the exits from the site, cars reversing onto the road would not be at undue danger or risk of causing an accident.

KCC Highways did not provide any comments for the application and have not raised objection to it.

Kent County Council's Cycle Parking Standards require one space per bedroom, in residential developments – eight spaces for this proposal. However, the Cycle Parking Standards are maximums and so two cycle spaces would be sufficient for each property.

The proposed block plan indicates secured and covered cycle parking to the side of each dwelling in an undercroft area, which would provide adequate space for the bicycles. It is considered that these spaces could easily and conveniently be accessed for the cycle parking.

Adequate car and cycle parking provision would therefore be provided on the site in accordance with paragraphs 109- 114 of the NPPF, Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Local Plan First Review (1994) and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, subject to further details of the cycle parking provision.

Suitable visibility splays would be provided for the site and harm to pedestrian safety would be limited.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain

KCC Biodiversity have stated that "*We are satisfied that sufficient ecological surveys have been completed*". They recognise the presence of ancient woodland to the rear of the site and state that no development must be within a 15m buffer of the woodland. The plans submitted with the application indicate this would be the case – the 15m buffer is outlined in blue on the site location plans, with the remainder of the site in red. The response from KCC Biodiversity states "*it is not best practice to have an ancient woodland buffer zone within a rear garden, but as this is an existing rear garden we accept that there could be no change in this case, if measures are in place for the protection of ancient woodland and associated buffer zone, including soils*".

Under the Environment Act 2021 and supporting statutory instruments, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory for most development. The legislation requires a minimum 10% gain in biodiversity from acceptable development, either on- site, off- site or a combination of both. BNG provided under the mandatory requirements off- site and significant BNG on- site must be secured by a legal agreement for 30 years under an approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

There are strict requirements in terms of what an application must contain in relation to BNG before it can be accepted as valid, as set out in Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Net Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This requires a completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre- development biodiversity value of the on- site habitats on the date of the application, and other information.

However, there are a number of exemptions from the BNG regulations;

- householder development, as defined in Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015;
- development granted planning permission by a development order under section 59. This includes permitted development rights;
- development subject to the de minimis exemption – development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 sqm of habitat, or 5m of a linear habitat such as a hedgerow;
- self- build and custom- build development – development that comprises
 - no more than nine dwellings; and

- is carried out on a site that is no larger than 0.5 hectares in size; and
- consists exclusively of dwellings which are self- build or custom- build, as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2105.

Self- Build

The application has been submitted with a BNG self- build form, indicating that the applicants would undertake the building works themselves. The self- build of a development consisting of no more than nine dwellings, on a site that has an area less than 0.5 hectares meets the definition of self- build housing in section 1(A1) of the Self- Build and Custom House Building Act 2015.

The glossary of the NPPF (2024) defines self- build and custom- house building as;

"Housing built by an individual, or a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-Build and Custom House Building Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act".

The Self- Build and Custom Housing Building Act 2015 (as amended) further elaborates that self- build housing is not *"the building of a house on a plot acquired form a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person"*.

This application seeks to construct two dwellings: their proposed construction is considered to meet the definition of self- build. Therefore, no additional information is required under Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 for BNG.

Protected Species

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats have been submitted with the application. They conclude the site is negligible for the presence of bats and the presence of most other species would be unlikely. Hedgehogs however, may be sheltering or commuting in the area. Precautionary mitigation can be included in a condition for a Construction Environmental Management Plan. Given the proximity of the site to ancient woodland, a sensitive lighting strategy would be required by condition too.

Ancient Woodland

The application site is adjacent to an area of designated ancient woodland. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF (2024) states;

"Development resulting the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists".

Comments from KCC Biodiversity state there is an existing structure on the site and the 15m ancient woodland buffer is located in the existing garden area of the application site. The comments explain the buffer zone should be 15m from development including garden areas. However, in this case, there is an existing garden area in the 15m buffer. KCC Ecology Advisory Service conclude that the existing garden use within the buffer is not deal but accept that it could not be changed. Conditions to include the prevention of construction materials being stored in this zone and a CEMP would assist in limiting the impact upon the ancient woodland.

The condition suggested by Southern Water regarding the proximity of landscaping proposals in proximity to Southern Water public apparatus is noted. However, it is considered that this may be included in the landscaping condition for the site, rather than a separate condition.

Conditions for matching materials, the removal of permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings and the insertion of openings in the flank elevations of the dwellings, the submission of details of hardsurfacing and boundary treatments and landscaping, drainage and sewerage, lighting, a Construction Environmental Management Plan and refuse and recycling facilities are considered

appropriate and necessary in order to ensure the development has an acceptable impact in terms of character and appearance, amenity and on protected species.

Conclusion

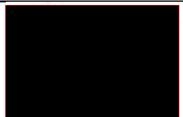
The proposed dwellinghouses would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the site and the street scene as they would be compatible with the established rural character of the area. The dwellings would provide a suitable living environment for their future occupiers while not adversely harming the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring and surrounding dwellings. Harm to highway safety would not arise from the development. Biodiversity net gain issues would not arise from the scheme as the development is to be self- build.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable, in accordance with the requirements of the Design for Gravesham – Design Guide (2024), Policies CS14, CS15 and CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Recommendation

The recommendation is to approve this application.

(For detailed reasons for approval and informatics, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mr Tom Gabriel	Team Leader:	Mrs Faye Walsh
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	3 rd November 2025	Dated:	07 November 2025