

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260716

Location: Stable Cottage Steeles Lane Meopham Gravesend

Description: Replacement of outbuilding to form residential annex

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Douglas Powell

Site Visit Date: Desktop Assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form;
 Drawing No. 26-17-01 – Location Plan;
 Drawing No. 26-17-02 – Site Layout Plan As Existing;
 Drawing No. 26-17-03 – Site Layout Plan As Proposed;
 Drawing No. 26-17-04 – Floor Plan As Proposed;
 Drawing No. 26-17-05 Rev A – Existing Elevations;
 Drawing No. 26-17-06 Rev A – Proposed Elevations;
 Supporting Information – Planning Supporting Statement;
 Supporting Information – Bat Activity Letter;
 Supporting Information – Preliminary Ecological Assessment; and
 Supporting Information – Design and Access Statement.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20161066	Erection of detached garage in rear garden.	Application Refused Appeal Allowed	25.05.2018 23.11.2018
19840351	Erection of conservatory	Permitted	15.05.1984
19820015	Formation of all weather riding area and erection of two 25 feet hgh flood lighting poles each fitted with 1500 watt tungsten halogen lights	Permitted	24.02.1982
19810583	Erection of two storey side extension to form porch hall and lounge with bedroom and bathroom over	Application Refused	22.07.1981
19730247	conversion of two existing cottages into one, single storey side extension and construction of new cesspool.	Permitted	16.07.1973

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development

- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- C13 – Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

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 3 – Decision-making policies
- Section 4 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 5 – Meeting the challenge of climate change
- Section 12 – Making Effective use of land
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 14 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 19 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

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)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

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).

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 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.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

Meopham Parish Council recommends No Objection to this planning application, subject to the following matters being addressed by appropriate planning conditions:

1. Separate Hereditament

A suitably worded condition or legal mechanism to ensure the proposed accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling and cannot be sold as a separate hereditament.

2. Materials and Appearance

Prior approval of the proposed external materials finishes and treatments to ensure the development remains sympathetic to the character and appearance of the original stable block.

KCC Heritage

Thank you for your letter consulting us on the above planning application. Steels Cottage is a unlisted 19th century farmstead and while of some minor interest in its own right, it is likely that the construction of the farmstead would have truncated any earlier archaeological deposit that may have been present with the proposed area of development. I would therefore suggest that in this instance I suggest that no archaeological measures are required.

I hope that the above is helpful and would be pleased to discuss further if required.

Neighbouring properties

The application was advertised by the displaying of a site notice and letters sent to two individual properties with an overall expiry date of 14th September 2026. No comments have been received.

Officer's Analysis

Site Description

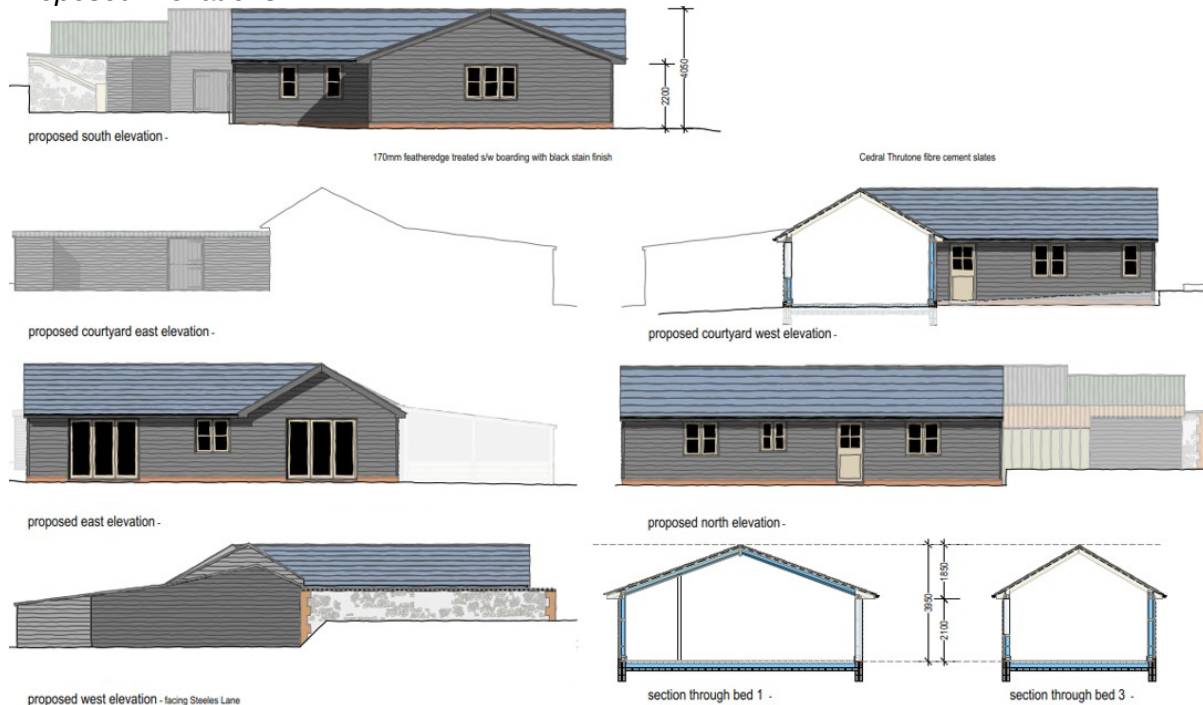
The application site is located with the Metropolitan Green Belt, the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area, Grade 3 Agricultural Land and an area of Archaeological Potential.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to demolish the existing stable block and replacement with a new outbuilding to form a residential annexe.

The proposed annexe would be an 'L' shape and measure 12.5x12.8m at the maximum and a height of 2.2m to the eaves and 4.05m to the ridge with a pitch roof. The annexe would contain an entrance hall, an open plan kitchen, living/dining and study area, sensory room, three double bedrooms, two bathrooms and a cloakroom. From the submitted floor plans, the proposed annexe would be a three bedroom six person unit.

Proposed Elevations



Proposed Floor Plans



Green Belt

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Policy GB2 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e. Assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Policy GB1 states that the general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions.

Policy GB6 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Policy GB7 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a. Development which is for agriculture, horticulture and forestry, or which is solely for nature conservation, restoration and/or enhancement;
- b. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building⁴⁰. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- c. Limited infilling in villages lying within the Green Belt;
- d. Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in this Framework or the development plan (for instance, on a rural exception site);
- e. The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt;
- f. Certain other forms of development, provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes. These are:
 - i. Mineral extraction and processing, engineering operations, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location);
 - ii. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order;

- iii. Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- iv. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments.

g. Development where all of the following apply:

- i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed⁴¹;
- iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework⁴²; and
- iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8.

h. Residential or mixed-use development which would:

- i. Be within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station (applying the definitions in the glossary at Annex B);
- ii. Be physically well-related to the station or the settlement within which the station is located;
- iii. Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure;
- iv. Not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location; and
- v. In the case of proposals for major development, comply with policy GB8.

The proposed development comprises the replacement of an existing outbuilding and may therefore be considered an exception under Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026). The proposal would replace the existing outbuilding/stables that has an external footprint of approximately 131.65m² and a ridge height of 4.05m. The proposed replacement annexe would have an external footprint of 126.51m² and a ridge height of 4.05m.

Whilst the annexe would have a more domestic appearance than the existing stables, it would not result in an increase in external footprint or ridge height. Consequently, the proposal would not result in any material increase in the external dimensions, massing or volume of the building. In this respect, the development would not constitute disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and would therefore accord with Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026).

Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions. As the proposal would not increase the physical extent of the existing building to be replaced, there would be no adverse impact on the spatial openness of the Green Belt. However, the proposed annexe would result in a change of an agricultural building for the keeping of horses to a residential unit and as such would introduce a materially greater level of domestic activity and associated residential paraphernalia. The scope and impact of the introduction of a residential unit, will be assessed in the subsequent sections. However, in terms of the physical impact of the proposed building on the openness of the Green Belt, it is considered that the proposal would not conflict with the Green Belt purpose identified in Policy GB2 of the Framework of safeguarding the countryside from



encroachment. There is also no evidence to suggest that the development would undermine any of the other Green Belt purposes set out within Policy GB2 of the NPPF (2026).

Development in the Countryside

Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. It sets out a number of criteria that should be met when considering proposals for domestic extensions. As the policy pre-dates the NPPF 2026, the weight attached to the policy must be considered carefully; with greater weight being given where the approach is consistent with Policy GB7 of the NPPF 2026.

In particular Saved Policy C13 places an overall limit on extensions of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling unless the increased floor space has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling (criteria (ii)). It also requires the massing, scale and form of any extension to be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting (criteria (vi)). It is considered that these factors are relevant in determining whether the size of an extension is proportionate and as such, these aspects of the policy are broadly in line with the NPPF 2026 and should be afforded weight.

In this regard, reference to an appeal decision at no. 42 Beechwood Drive (reference APP/K2230/D/23/3326603 dated 13 February 2024 – Appendix 1) is relevant, here the Inspector stated that;

“The GLPFR pre-dates the Framework’s publication and, through applying restraint upon development in the Green Belt, Saved Policy C13 appears broadly consistent with the Framework and thus should be afforded considerable weight.”

Therefore, it is considered that Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) is relevant to the determination of this application.

The original building, for the purposes of assessing whether the proposed development is a disproportionate addition or not, has been in place for many years. There is no planning permission for the building but according to historical maps, it was constructed sometime before 1960. The stable building has been extended with the first evidence being sometime before 1990.

Satellite Images

1960



1990



Whilst the proposal is not an extension to a dwelling in the countryside, it would however result in a replacement building that would result in substantial residential unit and therefore an increase in habitable accommodation.

Point (iv) of Policy C13 states that;

(iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.

The proposed replacement building, described as an annex, would be served by its own independent access, parking provision and curtilage. As such, it would function largely independently of the host dwelling and would not rely upon it for day-to-day occupation. The proposed accommodation comprises three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a sensory room and associated living facilities, providing a level of accommodation consistent with that of a self-contained dwellinghouse.

Furthermore, the scale, layout and degree of separation from the main dwelling would facilitate independent residential occupation. The proposal would therefore create a unit that has the characteristics and functionality of a separate dwelling, rather than accommodation that is clearly ancillary and subordinate to the host property. The provision of a distinct curtilage, independent access arrangements and self-contained facilities would also facilitate the future formation of a separate planning unit.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered contrary to criterion (iv) of Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994), as it would facilitate the creation of a separate residential curtilage and has the potential to operate as an independent dwellinghouse. As such, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of the policy.

Very special circumstances

Referring to Policy GB6 of the NPPF (2026), inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances, and such circumstances will not exist unless the harm resulting from the proposal, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The submitted Planning Statement advises that the proposed annexe is required to accommodate the applicant's grandson and is intended to meet his specific needs. The applicant has also provided supporting information regarding those medical and care requirements. Whilst these personal circumstances attract significant weight and may amount to very special circumstances, the proposed development extends well beyond what would reasonably be required to provide ancillary accommodation to support independent living with care. In particular, the scale, extent and level of accommodation proposed are more akin to a separate dwellinghouse than an annexe subordinate to the host dwelling.

Principle of a Residential Annex

Residential annexes are a common form of development, typically proposed to enable family members to live in close proximity to relatives whilst retaining a degree of independence. To be regarded as ancillary accommodation, rather than a separate unit of residential accommodation, an annexe must remain closely linked and subordinate to the host dwelling.

In this case, the proposed development would provide a detached residential building containing a kitchen/living area, study area, three double bedrooms, two bathrooms and a sensory room. The accommodation would be occupied by the applicant's grandson and live-in carers. Furthermore, the building would benefit from its own access, parking provision and curtilage, enabling it to operate largely independently of the main dwelling.

Nevertheless, when taking into account the specific needs of the applicant's grandson, the principle of providing annexe accommodation is considered acceptable. However, for such accommodation to be regarded as genuinely ancillary, its scale, facilities and relationship with the host dwelling would need to demonstrate a greater degree of dependence, with no realistic opportunity for the creation of a separate residential unit or curtilage. Whilst certain elements, such as occupation and use, could potentially be controlled through planning conditions, the overall scale and level of accommodation proposed exceed what would reasonably be expected of an ancillary annexe.

The following sections assess the detailed design, residential amenity and highway implications of the proposal.

Design, Character and Appearance

Policy CS12 states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes within the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that proposals will take account of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment.

Policy CS19 states that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive and will conserve and enhance the character of the local, built, historic and natural environment.

The site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character area. The key characteristics include gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland, neat pattern of small square fields in the south, broader irregular shaped fields to the north, narrow lands and roads lined with hedgerows and traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular. The guidelines are to conserve and reinforce.

The objectives of Section 14 of the NPPF (2026) is to promote high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places. Policy DP3 specifically requires development proposal to respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings;

The proposed development would not result in a significant alteration to the size, scale, height or bulk of the existing stables, however the overall design would alter the external appearance from a stable block to a single storey detached dwelling, creating a more urban design than the existing agricultural one. However, the use of sympathetic materials of timber feather edge boarding, grey slate roof tiles, stained timber windows, together with the window and door layout and design are such to respect the surrounding character. However, the acceptability of the proposal is not primarily a matter of design, but of use. The footprint of the proposed annexe, being 126.5m² is larger than the host dwelling itself which is 117.9m², representing how disproportionate the use of the proposed replacement outbuilding as an annexe would be. It would be expected that an annexe is subservient to the host dwelling, and not larger.

On balance, the proposed development would not comply with the requirements of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Policy DP3 of the NPPF (2026) in terms of design, character and appearance due to the proposal representing a self-contained unit, being larger than the host property.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires that all development should be 'fit for purpose' and be 'adaptable to allow changes to meet the need of users' and that 'the design and layout of new residential development, including conversion, should accord with the adopted GBC Residential Layout Guidelines'.

The proposed annexe has a gross internal floor area of 114m² which exceeds the minimum 95m² 3 bed-6 person single storey dwelling as laid out in the Nationally Described Space Standards (2015) and all habitable rooms would have good access to natural light and outlook.

Albeit that the Council disagrees with the fact that the replacement outbuilding is proposed as an annexe, the proposal will provide acceptable living conditions that safeguard the amenity of future occupiers in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) the room sizes accord with GBC Residential Layout Guidelines (2020). No unacceptable harm has therefore been identified in this respect.

Neighbouring Amenity

In considering any proposals for development it is important to ensure that it does not cause demonstrable harm to the amenity of any existing residents or property such that it will materially harm their living conditions. Policies seeking to protect amenity and ensure acceptable future living conditions are included

in the Local Plan Core Strategy. Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires new development to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land.

Policy P3 of the NPPF (2026) also assists and seeks to ensure developments will not give rise to, or contribute to, an unacceptable level of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring residents and occupiers, or unacceptable levels of air, noise, artificial light, water, soil or other forms of pollution on or beyond the site.

The introduction of an additional residential unit would have the potential to intensify activity and domestic noise close to neighbouring properties. However given the siting of the building, and the existing residential nature on this plot, it is considered that such impacts would likely not be excessive in their impacts.

The development will not cause any detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbour in terms of overlooking, loss of light, sense of enclosure or outlook. There will be no encroachment onto neighbour's land. Overall, no unacceptable harm has therefore been identified in this respect, in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Policy P3 of the NPPF (2026).

Parking and Highways

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.

The application property has its own parking and the proposed annexe would have its own separate parking and utilise the existing access. A residential annexe would not normally result in a significant increase in vehicle movements, however as the proposal is for a three-bedroom residential unit, akin to a separate residential dwelling, together with a live-in carer, the proposal would require two parking spaces. The area to the front of the annexe would provide for sufficient parking.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety and would make sufficient provision for the parking of cars within the site, in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards. As such, the proposed development would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located in area of archaeological potential. Steels Cottage is a unlisted 19th century farmstead and while of some minor interest in its own right, it is likely that the construction of the farmstead would have truncated any earlier archaeological deposit that may have been present with the proposed area of development, but KCC Heritage has advised that no archaeological measures are required. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policy CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Conclusion

The proposed annexe, by reason of its level of accommodation, together with the provision of an independent access, parking area and separate residential curtilage, would result in a self-contained unit capable of functioning independently from the host dwelling. The proposed building would provide accommodation commensurate with a separate dwellinghouse rather than accommodation that is incidental or ancillary to the main residence, and would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential planning unit and curtilage. The proposal therefore fails to comply with criterion (iv) of Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994), which seeks to ensure that extensions and ancillary accommodation do not facilitate the creation of a separate residential curtilage. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994).

The proposed annexe is considered to be independent of the main dwelling as it would include all the day-to-

day facilities of a separate planning unit and would not be incidental or reliant on the main dwelling, which is further exacerbated by the size of the annexe and its separate access. Therefore, as a matter of fact and degree, an independent unit would be created, and the proposal is contrary to Policies CS02 and CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Recommendation

Refusal

(For informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Amanda Cue	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	<i>A Cue</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	28 th September 2026	Dated:	1st October 2026