

## **LONDON RIVER HOUSE ACCESS UPGRADE**

### **Planning Statement, Heritage Statement and Design & Access Statement**

**April 2026**

#### **Project background:**

The Port of London Authority (PLA) has an office facility and associated car parking at the following site:

Port of London Authority

London River House

Royal Pier Road

Gravesend

Kent

DA12 2BG

At this facility many PLA departments have a permanent base. The London River House (LRH) building forms part of the wider LRH complex which includes Alex House, Port Control Centre and Royal Terrace Pier. Car parking is provided adjacent to LRH and Alex House. This application seeks full planning permission for a new pedestrian access gate into the London River House complex from Royal Pier Road.

The Port of London Authority (PLA) is a Statutory Harbour Authority for the Tidal Thames, acting as custodians for the river across 95 miles from Teddington in West London into the Thames Estuary. The PLA works to keep commercial and leisure users safe, protect and enhance the environment and promote the use of the river for trade and travel. The Port of London oversees 230,000 vessel movements handling over 53 million tonnes of cargo each year and is currently the largest Port in the UK.

#### **Planning History and designations:**

Below is a summary of the recent planning history at this site.

**Plan reference:** 20260357

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of condition 7 (Hard Landscaping and Drainage) attached to planning reference number 20221294.

**Status:** Under consideration as at 22 April 2026.

**Plan reference:** 20260209

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission reference number 20250381 to allow alteration of flood defence wall at Port Control Centre, River Thames

**Status:** Pending Consideration 30 March 2026.

**Plan reference:** 20251208

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of conditions 2 and 3 (External Facing Materials) attached to planning reference number 20250381.

**Status:** Approval of details 22 Jan 2026

**Plan reference:** 20251207

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission reference number 20250381 to allow addition of a small window on level 4 on the east elevation. Removal of a Window on level 1 on the east elevation. Addition of a door and steps to the north elevation. Addition of a small window on level 4 of the west elevation. Removal of a window on level 3 of the west elevation. Addition of a small set of steps to the west elevation.

**Status:** Approval of Non-material amendment 19 December 2025

**Plan reference:** 20250770

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of condition 11 attached to planning permission reference number 20221294 relating to full details of its (refuse store) appearance and size.

**Status:** Approval of details 24 September 2025

**Plan reference:** 20250435

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of condition 12 and 13 attached to planning permission reference number 20221294 relating to a condition assessment of the site's tidal Thames flood defence and carry out such works as to provide a minimum 20-year service life for the site's tidal

flood defence without the need for further intrusive works during this time. These repair works must be detailed in a report

**Status:** Approval of details 7 October 2025.

**Plan reference:** 20250381

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission reference number 20221294 for Demolition of an external stairwell, construction of a new single storey roof space, removal and relocation of the radar mast, internal refurbishment, improvements to the exterior facades and new landscaping to provide a level access to London River House and the PCC. The existing link between the PCC and Grade II listed Royal Terrace Pier will be enhanced, and repaving works is proposed in the forecourt area of the listed pier; to allow landscaping changes and amendment to the plans.

**Status:** Application Permitted 3 December 2025

**Plan reference:** 20250385

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for Listed Building Consent for the demolition of an external stairwell, construction of a new single storey roof space, removal and relocation of the radar mast, internal refurbishment, improvements to the exterior facades and new landscaping to provide a level access to London River House and the PCC. The existing link between the PCC and Grade II listed Royal Terrace Pier will be enhanced, and repaving works is proposed in the forecourt area of the listed pier.

**Status:** Application Permitted 3 December 2025

**Plan reference:** 20231211

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of condition 3 attached to planning permission reference number 20221294 relating to full Preliminary Ecological Assessment and enhancement opportunities.

**Status:** Approval of details 18 January 2024

**Plan reference:** 20230914

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for the approval of condition 6 attached to planning permission reference number 20221294 relating to full details of the size and appearance of the communications tower.  
**Status:** Approval of details 7 November 2023

**Plan reference:** 20221294

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Demolition of an external stairwell, construction of a new single storey roof space, removal and relocation of the radar mast, internal refurbishment, improvements to the exterior facades and new landscaping to provide a level access to London River House and the PCC. The existing link between the PCC and Grade II listed Royal Terrace Pier will be enhanced, and repaving works is proposed in the forecourt area of the listed pier.

**Status:** Application Permitted 20 April 2023

**Plan reference:** 20221295

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Application for Listed Building Consent for the demolition of an external stairwell, construction of a new single storey roof space, removal and relocation of the radar mast, internal refurbishment, improvements to the exterior facades and new landscaping to provide a level access to London River House and the PCC. The existing link between the PCC and Grade II listed Royal Terrace Pier will be enhanced, and repaving works is proposed in the forecourt area of the listed pier

**Status:** Application Permitted 20 April 2023

**Plan reference:** 20220149

**Address:** London River House Royal Pier Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2BG

**Application:** Removal of existing mesh from two existing arches, infilling of all (5 no.) existing arches with railings, installation of mechanically operated sliding security gate to under-croft on West elevation, removal of existing hand railing and installation of infill railing panels on South elevation and installation of 2 no. pedestrian security gates to under-croft on South elevation.

**Status:** Application Permitted 22 March 2022

This area of the London River House complex has the following planning policy designations:

- located within the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area in the sub area 'East of Town Centre and Riverside'.
- Riverside Conservation Area.
- Flood Risk Area (Flood Zone 3) (see associated FRA)



*Figure 1: View of existing location towards existing residential.*



*Figure 2: View of existing location towards existing car park (existing sign to be moved).*

### **Proposed Development:**

Following a review of the pedestrian access points for staff into and out of the London River House complex, both while construction works are ongoing in relation to the overall Port Control Centre development and once the Port Control Centre development is completed, it has been determined that an additional access point is required for staff, visitor and contractor access to enter/exit the facility, particularly to ensure there is an adequate amount of safe pedestrian access points during a

fire evacuation procedure at the LRH facility. This is based on a recent assessment of fire risk procedures for the LRH complex for staff, visitors and contractors exiting the site as part of a fire evacuation.

It is therefore proposed to replace part of the existing fence adjacent to an existing vehicle access barrier with a new pass-controlled gate. The extent of the proposed works is shown on drawing no 600-PLA-01-LRH-DR-0010. No changes will be required to the existing vehicle gate or paving in this area, which will follow an already recognised walkway. The proposed gate will be powder coated in a black finish and maintained as such thereafter to match the fencing on the LRH estate. The location of the proposed gate is also situated away from any tree root protection zones from the existing trees so will have no impact.

Potential alternative solutions considered included:

- Creating a new gated entrance in between the LRH car park and the main entrance – This would have involved creating a new pathway onto an existing grassed area and would also have potential impacts on root protection zones.
- Create a new gated entrance near to the bin storage area at the south west corner of the LRH complex – considered to be too far from the main office buildings, and would also be located closer to the Gravesend Blockhouse Scheduled Monument.

Given the potential fire safety implications for PLA staff, 'do nothing' is not a viable option from a Health and Safety perspective.

The solution that has been submitted for planning has sought to retain as far as possible the existing layout, to have a minimum impact on existing views of the river whilst matching the existing fencing as seen in figures 1 & 2 above and figure 3 below which is located around the parameter of the site.



*Figure 3: Existing fencing at location of proposed pedestrian gate.*

The intention of the proposal is to encourage a safe, alternative entry/exit into the PLA's LRH complex, particularly in the event of a fire evacuation procedure, that also reduces the risk of staff, contractors and visitors entering/exiting the LRH complex on foot via the vehicular entrance/exists which presents a risk to health and safety due to the existing barriers.

#### **Planning Policy Statement:**

##### **National Planning Policy Framework (2025)**

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through decision taking.

The NPPF identifies good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It also supports sustainable economic growth.

##### **Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted) 2014**

The Core Strategy recognises that there are a number of commercial and other supporting river related activities within the borough and that these serve to support the River Thames as a working waterway.

Strategic Objective 10 seeks to safeguard and where possible improve existing employment sites.

London River House is located within the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area in the sub area 'East of Town Centre and Riverside.'

The Core Strategy specifically recognises the Port of London Authority offices and associated land around Royal Terrace Pier which it is stated form part of the river-related employment in the Borough.

The Core Strategy advises that the strategy for employment sites is to protect employment floorspace unless it is truly redundant for modern needs, support the refurbishment and upgrading of existing premises and facilitate the expansion of river-related employment.

Policy CS07 is concerned with economy, employment and skills. It states at 5.1.35 development proposals facilitating the expansion of river-related employment will be supported, particularly where these involve the use of the river for transport and/or provide specialist training or other facilities intended to support the continued use of the River Thames as a major commercial waterway.

Policy CS19 is also of relevance. It states new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards.

The application site is located within the Riverside Conservation Area and Policy CS20 places a high priority on the preservation, protection and enhancement of heritage and the historic environment. It supports proposals that preserve and, where appropriate enhance the Borough's conservation areas. For further information please see the heritage statement below.

#### **Appraisal of proposed development against planning policy:**

London River House is a strategic facility within Gravesham supporting river related activities that are undertaken by the PLA and others. The Port of London itself is the largest port in the Country. The proposed development addresses a health and safety issue in a functional way, which is in keeping with the infrastructure already present within the wider LRH complex. The PLA has sought to keep the views consistent through the area by utilising an open style of gate which is of the same design and look of the existing fencing. On balance it is considered that the proposals accord with the Core Strategy's Strategic Objective SO10 and with policies CS07, CS19 and CS20.

#### **Heritage Statement**

The proposal is within the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area, first designated in 1980 and extended in 2009. The London River House Complex includes the Grade II listed Royal Terrace Pier, including the pavilions flanking the entrance, (English Heritage Building ID: 356419.). Within the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area Appraisal (2009) the London River House complex is highlighted as a set of 'neutral' structures. Through the LRH complex site there are a number of 'positive views' that will not be affected as a result of this proposal (see figure 4 below).

Policy CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment) in supporting paragraph 5.16.9 states that Proposals should have regard to any relevant conservation area appraisals and associated

management plans and must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the heritage significance of any affected assets, their context and setting. Given the small scale of this proposed development, and its chosen location adjacent to an existing vehicular entrance/exit also used by staff on foot, it is considered that this proposal will not materially affect the character or appearance of the wider area and will not reduce the significance of the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area setting. The proposals will also continue to ensure that the local character of this stretch of the River Thames is of the highest quality and a strong positive feature of the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area and the borough as a whole. This will be achieved by ensuring the finishes (including height) of the proposed gate will match the existing fencing in place at this location on the LRH estate.



In terms of planning policy with regard to heritage the NPPF (2025) makes reference to the importance of conserving and enhancing the historic environment, including heritage assets at risk of neglect, decay or other threats. Specifically, paragraph 212 of the NPPF advises that consideration should be given to the impact of the proposed development on the significance of a designated asset and that great weight should be given to its conservation. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional.

As part of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014), the following policies are relevant to the consideration of this application and seek to ensure the character of the town remains enhanced and protected.

- Policy CS19: Development Design Principles. New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive.
- Policy CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment. The Council will accord a high priority towards preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment. This includes the preservation of, amongst other matters, surviving built features.

It is considered that the proposed development will have a neutral impact on the character of the Conservation Area and will continue to ensure that the local character of this stretch of the River Thames is of the highest quality and a strong positive feature of the Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area. This is achieved through ensuring the finishes (including height) of the proposed gate will match the existing fencing in place at this location, that will have no significant visual impact on the surrounding area, including the setting on nearby heritage assets including Royal Terrace Pier and Gravesend Blockhouse. The proposal therefore preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and causes no harm to the significance of designated heritage assets in accordance with Local Plan policy CS20 and the NPPF.

## **Conclusions**

The proposed development would provide a valuable improvement to access arrangements at the PLA's facility. On balance it is considered that there would be no detrimental impacts as a result of the proposed development.