

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

Change of use of existing dwelling house to a children's home at 75 Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1XN – SW/25/504240 (KCC/SW/0154/2025)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 December 2025.

Application by Kent County Council Infrastructure Division for a change of use of dwelling house (use class C3) to children's home (use class C2) at 75 Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1XN - SW/25/504240 (KCC/SW/0154/2025)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Paul Webb

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site, an existing residential property, is located within the built-up area boundary of Sittingbourne. Homewood Avenue is located to the south of the London Road (A2) and runs east to west between the junctions of Borden Lane and Ufton Lane. The property is set one metre away from the eastern boundary of the site and there is a driveway and single garage located between the property and the western boundary. There is an existing vehicular and pedestrian access to Homewood Avenue and a large driveway for approximately five car parking spaces. The wider area comprises of a mix of urban development, predominantly residential dwellings along with some local facilities and services. Westlands Primary School is located on Homewood Avenue to the northeast of the application site. The site is situated in an area with good transport links. Sittingbourne train station is within walking distance, approximately 20 minutes from the site and bus services operate along both Homewood Avenue and London Road. There are several bus stops located within the vicinity of the site, with the closest stop being located on Homewood Avenue some 0.2 miles to the east.

Background

2. The applicant advises that the proposed development is required to help to address the current shortfall in suitable placements for children in need. Kent County Council (KCC) is seeking to invest in its own in-house residential care homes to deliver better outcomes by providing more suitable placements to best meet the needs of those children most in need.
3. The applicant advises that increasing residential placement costs within Children's Services was identified as a critical area within 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy' (reported to cabinet on 5 October 2023). As part of KCC's long term financial sustainability planning for Children's High-Cost Placements, investment in KCC's own in-house residential children's care homes is part of a range of options to deliver best value and better outcomes for children. Nationally other local authorities are already operating, or in advanced stages of delivering, in-house residential

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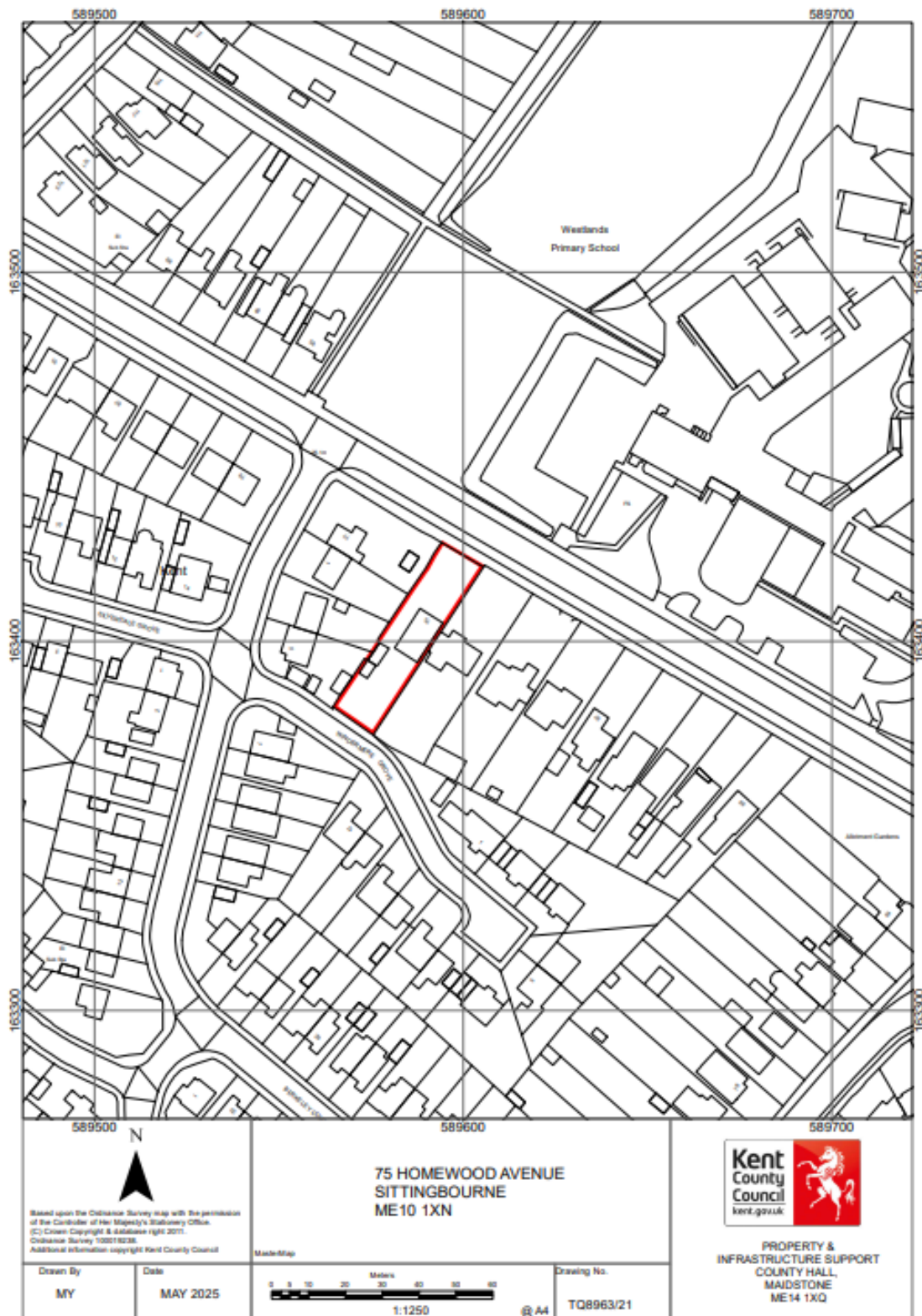
Site Location Plan



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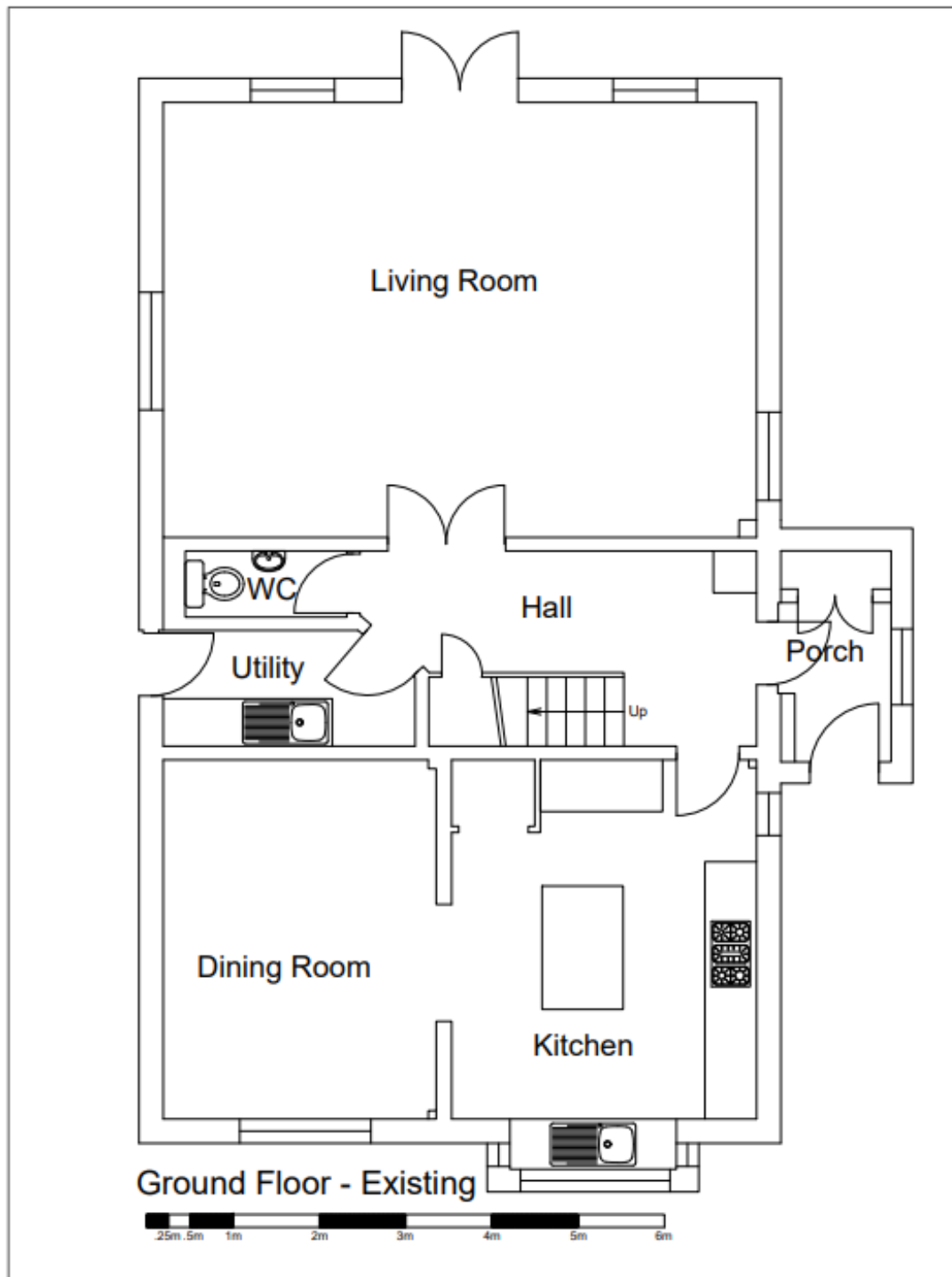
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Site Location Plan



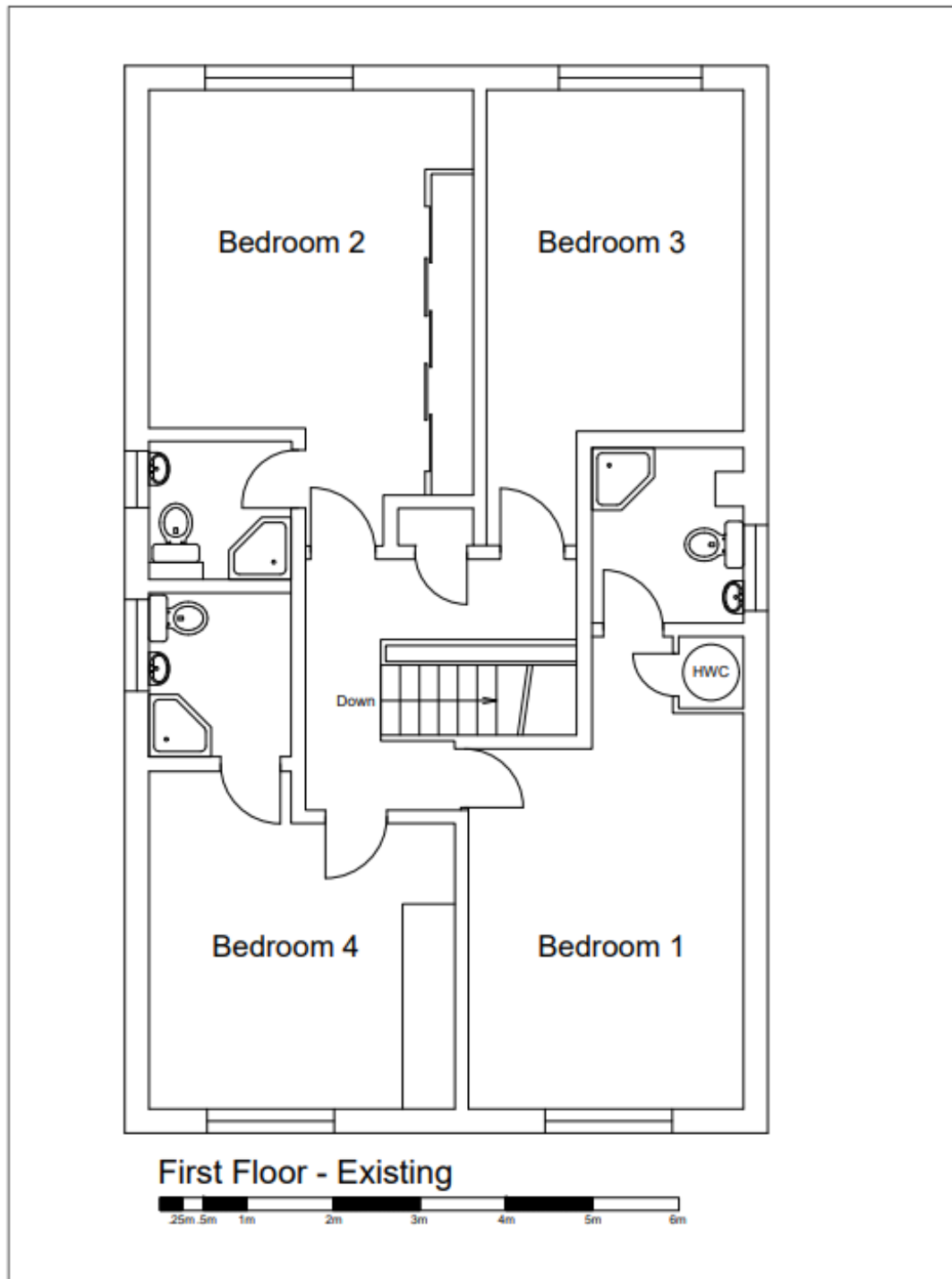
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Existing Ground Floor Plan



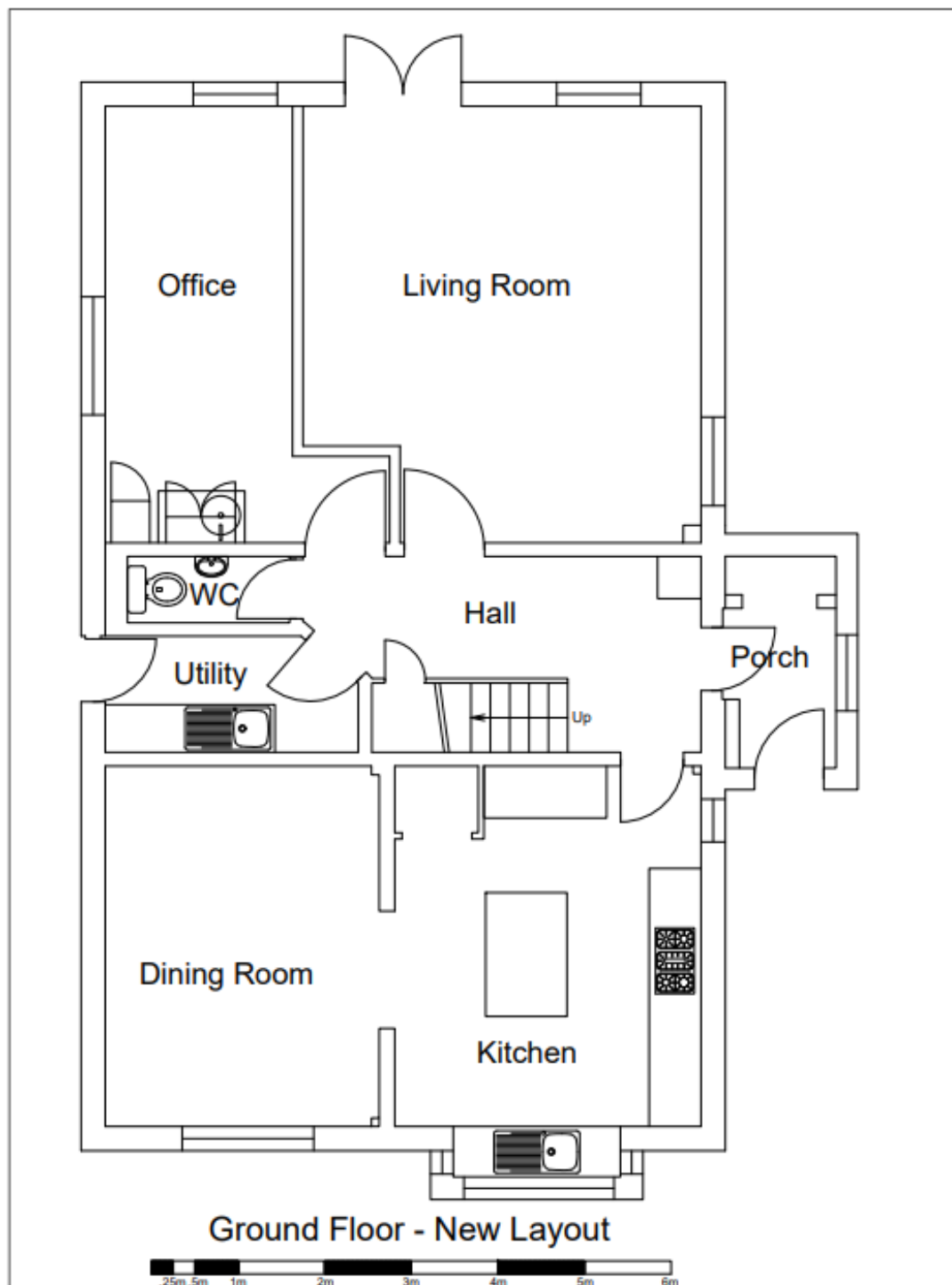
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Existing First Floor Plan



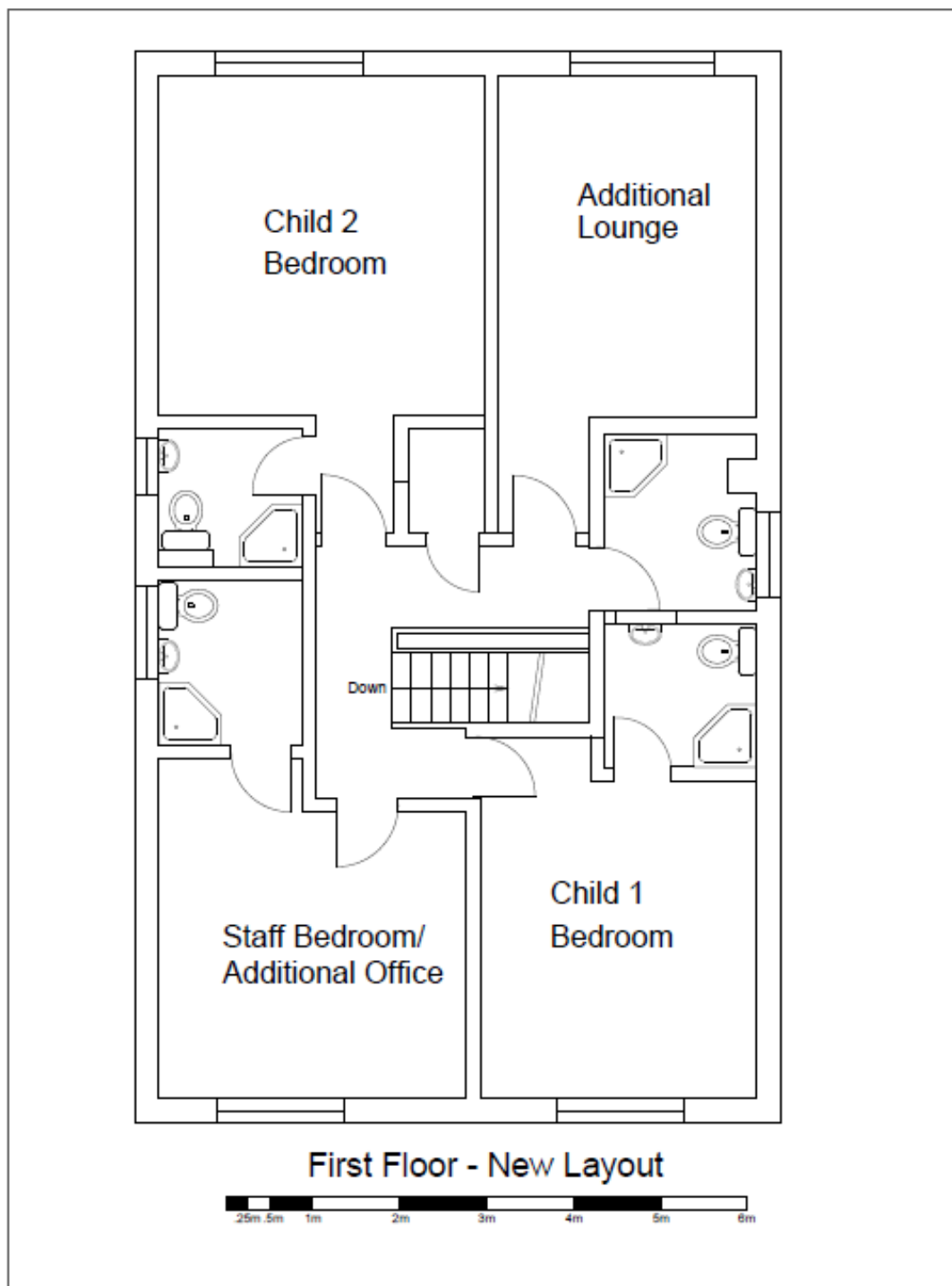
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Proposed Ground Floor Plan



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children's care homes and this planning application is seen as an important part of this strategy for Kent to meet this identified need.

4. Achieving best value from in-house residential children's care homes is not just about financial viability and cost-effectiveness. It is also about exercising Kent's corporate parenting responsibility to transition a looked after child to independence within adulthood, experiencing the safest journey whilst developing social skills and resilience in emotional wellbeing and mental health.
5. KCC is actively working to reduce the use of unregistered accommodation (i.e. accommodation which is not registered with Ofsted). Unregistered accommodation is used exceptionally in an emergency where there is no other alternative in circumstances of imperative necessity and where the placement is essential to avoid a breach in the child's Convention Rights. Developing in-house residential children's care homes would ensure that KCC was only placing children in registered children's care homes under section 22C (6) (c) of the Children Act 1989. In accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration) (England) Regulations 2010, KCC would therefore need to seek registration of its children's care homes and the manager(s) of the homes from Ofsted. The residential children's care homes and the manager(s) would then be subject to Ofsted's regulatory regime.
6. Currently there is insufficient suitable registered provision within the County, resulting in a reliance on unregistered or out-of-area placements in emergencies. By developing in-house children's homes, KCC would both expand capacity to meet rising demand and would also ensure that all children would be placed in Ofsted-registered settings.
7. This application proposes a change of use of a residential dwelling (use class C3) to a residential children's home (use class C2), which the applicant advises would help address the shortfall in suitable placements and contribute to meeting the needs of under-represented sectors in the community.

Planning History

8. One previous planning application for this property had been submitted to Swale Borough Council (as the appropriate Local Planning Authority to deal with residential planning applications) under planning reference SW/05/1511 which was approved on 3 February 2006. The planning application description was for the proposed raising the height of the roof to create a two storey dwelling (to provide additional bedroom area) and for a two storey rear extension.

Proposal

9. This planning application proposes a change of use of a residential dwelling (use class C3) to a residential institution (use class C2) to operate as a residential children's care home and to provide care and accommodation for up to two children. The existing property is a four bedroom dwelling comprising a lounge, kitchen, dining room, utility, toilet at ground floor level, and four bedrooms on the first floor, three of which are en-suite.
10. The proposed home would be registered with Ofsted for the care of two children from the ages of eight up to eighteen with social and emotional behavioural needs. It is

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proposed that the home would be staff by Kent County Council employees and would have a registered manager who would oversee a deputy manager and staff with delegated responsibility for the day to day care to the children. This would be provided 24/7 throughout the year on a rota basis. The care would respond to the children's physical and emotional wellbeing needs, engaging the children in a program of education and activities by using positive support approaches, as well as supporting the children and young people to learn everyday skills to build independence. This is proposed to support the children's well-being and development. Staff would function as the children's carers by taking them to school and other extra-curriculum activities.

11. It is proposed that the children's home would operate on a rota basis with a minimum of two staff on each shift. Dependant on the children in placement and their needs the type of overnight shifts would differ from between sleep in staff or waking night. It is also proposed to provide resting accommodation for the staff working within the home. Support staff would be present within the proposed home with ratios dependant on the children's individual support needs. One of these staff members would be a senior support worker overseeing the shift.
12. The existing house layout is already configured to provide homely and nurturing accommodation for children which is required by Ofsted regulations. The house already comprises of a family lounge, family kitchen/dining space, utility room and WC, all of which are proposed to remain in their existing use. A downstairs staff office is proposed to be created via an internal partitioning of the current large lounge with an entrance from the current hallway. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, and it is proposed to be utilised as two children's bedrooms with en-suite facilities as well as creating a staff resting space/night office with en-suite facilities, a lounge/relaxation break out space and an additional family bathroom.
13. This proposed arrangement of the home, including a staff office and additional resting space/night office is deemed necessary to ensure that staff have immediate access to administrative resources whilst remaining on-site for supervision and any required emergency response. It should be noted that the internal office provision falls within the ancillary rights of a C2 use and does not change the primary residential function.
14. Out the rear of the property there is a garden secured with perimeter boundary fencing, an external room for activities/break out and storage in the form of a garage/shed. The front of the home has a large driveway for approximately five vehicles, and the current access and entrance arrangements are proposed to remain unchanged from their existing form and design.
15. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the external fabric of the property. Any external works required, for example replacement fencing, would either consist of maintenance works which would not require planning approval, or fall under the definition of permitted development and therefore not require the submission of a planning application.

Planning Policy

16. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

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- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance**, sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- planning law requires that applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (*paragraph 48*).
- within the context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes (*paragraph 63*).
- whether impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity or congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. Appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location (*paragraph 115*). Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road would be severe (*paragraph 116*).
- outlines that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions (*paragraph 124*).
- the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and effective engagement is essential for achieving this (*paragraph 131*).
- achieving the requirement for a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Planning decisions should ensure that developments would function well and add to the overall quality of an area; be

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sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish or maintain a strong sense of place, creating a welcoming and distinctive place to live, work and visit; include an appropriate mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible (*paragraph 135*).

- (ii) The adopted Bearing Fruits 2031 – The **Swale Borough Local Plan (adopted July 2017)**

Policy ST 1 Delivering Sustainable Development in Swale: Seeks to deliver sustainable development in Swale, all development proposals will, as appropriate meet 12 aims. Those relevant to this proposal include:

1. Build a strong competitive economy by meeting identified needs for inward investment and indigenous growth on allocated and suitable sites, including meeting the needs of under-represented sectors;
9. Promote healthy communities through:
 - d) safeguarding services and facilities that do or could support communities.

Policy ST 3 The Swale Settlement Strategy: Seeks that by use of previously developed land within defined built up area boundaries and on sites allocated by the Local Plan, development proposals will be permitted in accordance with the following settlement strategy:

1. The main Borough urban centre of Sittingbourne will provide the primary urban focus for growth, where development proposals will support town centre regeneration and underpin the town's role as the principal centre.

Policy CP 3 Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes: States that actions by the public, private and voluntary sectors shall work towards the delivery of a wide choice of high quality homes that extend opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. Development proposals will, as appropriate:

6. Meet the housing requirements of specific groups, including families, older persons, or disabled and other vulnerable persons.

(iii) Other Material Considerations

17. In addition to the considerations arising from the planning policy section above, other strategic documents are also material considerations for the determination of this application.

Kent County Council's Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2022 to 2027

This document produced by Kent County Council and first published in August 2022, and updated in 2024, sets out the approach to meet the statutory responsibility to

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provide secure safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care, children in need and case leavers over the next five years.

Consultations

18. The following consultee responses were received:

Swale Borough Council raises no objection.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection.

Local Member

19. The local County Member for Sittingbourne South, Paul Webb, was notified of the application on 13 October 2025. No comments have been received.

Publicity

20. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices on 14 October 2025.

Representations

21. In response to the publicity, 2 letters of support and 2 letters of objection to the application have been received.

A summary of the main planning issues raised is set out below:

Support

- No objection to the change of use but request that the boundary treatment to the west of this property is replaced.

Objection

- The staff and children will be able to view neighbouring rear gardens.
- Existing planting which may provide screening now can vary between the seasons.
- Estimate that the number of staff and visitors to No 75 could be at least 18 different people in a day.
- Although parking issues have attempted to be mitigated concerns are raised.
- Living opposite a primary school, the area needs less visitors and members of the general public.
- The area gets extremely congested around school times and narrow roads (gets affected by even an additional couple of vehicles being parked).

Discussion

22. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 16 above and other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be

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determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal therefore needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations including those arising from consultation and publicity.

23. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to objections received from local residents following publicity of the application. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of and need for the development, impact on residential amenity, and transportation and highway considerations.

Principle of Development and Need

24. The principle of the proposed development is to address the current shortfall in suitable placements for an under-represented part of the community by providing two additional placements for children in need, while seeking to ensure that the development would not affect the character or amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. Through Kent County Council investing in its own in-house residential care homes, it can provide suitable Ofsted registered placements to best meet the requirements of children most in need in Kent.
25. Increasing residential placement costs within Children's Services was identified as a critical area within 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy' (October 2023). As part of KCC's long term financial sustainability planning for Children's High-Cost Placements, investment in KCC's own in-house residential children's care homes is part of a range of options to deliver best value and better outcomes for children. The proposal would also exercise Kent's corporate parenting responsibility to transition a looked after child to independence within adulthood, developing social skills and resilience in emotional wellbeing and mental health. Furthermore it is also proposed to reduce the use of Ofsted unregistered accommodation and developing in-house residential children's care homes would ensure that KCC was only placing children in registered children's care homes under section 22C (6) (c) of the Children Act 1989.
26. The current shortage of suitable children's homes reinforces the need for more homes and related services. I consider that this proposed change of use would help to address that shortfall in suitable placements and would align with Policy SP1 (Strategic Objectives) and Paragraph 63 of the NPPF. The change of use from use class C3 to C2 would support the Council's objective to provide a diverse mix of housing to meet identified needs for specialist accommodation within the community, and align with national policy which highlights the importance of meeting the required size, type, and tenure of housing for different groups, including children in care.
27. It is acknowledged that the change of use would result in the loss of one residential dwelling in the Sittingbourne Borough Council area, which currently demonstrates around a 4 year housing land supply against the required five years. However, given that the loss is minimal and the change of use would directly address an urgent community shortfall for specialist residential accommodation, it should be considered acceptable and would not significantly impact the council's overall housing supply.
28. It is evident that from the above there is clear policy support and backing for the delivery of in-house residential children's care homes. I am therefore satisfied that there is a

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case of need for the development and support the principle of the proposed change of use.

Impact on Local and Residential Amenity

29. The proposed development would help to address the current shortfall in suitable placements for an under-represented group within the community by providing two additional placements for children in need, while ensuring that the proposed change of use would not, in my view, materially affect the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Impact on the character of the area

30. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the external fabric of the property and would not, in my view, materially alter the nature of the current residential dwelling use or adversely affect the character of the wider residential area. The proposed children's home, in terms of its layout, facilities and overall character, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the use would operate in a way that mirrors a typical family home.
31. Whilst the proposed change of use from a C3 use class (residential dwelling) to a C2 use class (children's home), may appear as a significant shift in use, in practice this would not be the case. The total number of children and staff residing there would not be significantly greater than the number of people who might occupy the home under a family scenario. The number of occupants and the intensity of the use remains broadly the same, with no increase in overnight sleeping accommodation and only 2 children living at the property at any one time.
32. I consider that the key difference between the proposed use as a children's home and a C3 (dwelling) use relates to the arrangement of care provision. The children's home would accommodate a maximum of two young people, with two staff members on duty at all times and overnight, operating on a shift pattern. Although it is suggested by a local resident that there could be 18 people visiting the site a day, given the level of occupancy and these anticipated shift patterns, the overall activity and general comings and goings would be comparable to those of a family household. Indeed, it is common for adult children to still reside in the family home, themselves owning cars and commuting to and from work in addition to the parents.
33. As the current proposal is for a comparable use to a residential property in terms of occupancy and day to day activities, I consider that any material impacts to the character of the area would be minimal. Given this, I see no reason to refuse the application on this ground. In my view, the residential character of the area would be retained, and the use of the property as a children's care home would be compatible with neighbouring land uses.
34. Paragraphs 131 and 136 of the NPPF set out that new development needs to be of an appropriate design and that proposals should be of a character sympathetic to the local area, establishing a sense of place, taking into account building materials and building styles. The proposed change of use would not involve any material alterations to the property's exterior, retaining the existing residential scale and appearance of the

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building. Therefore, I am satisfied that the proposed development would have little or no impact on the existing residential character of the surrounding area.

Residential Amenity

35. Concern has been raised that by converting the residential property to a children's home this would introduce KCC staff and children to the property, which would impact the privacy of neighbours. In addition, the creation of a children's home would not be a normal neighbour relationship as the residents would not know the identity of the persons present in the property.
36. It should be noted that these comments received in relation to privacy would apply equally to the use of this property as a family dwelling as they would a children's home. In both instances the house and gardens would likely be occupied by children as a primary residence. As mentioned previously, there are no plans to change how the property would operate. The proposed children's home in terms of its layout, facilities and overall character, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the proposed change of use would operate in a way that would mirror a typical family home. There are no restrictions on how or when residents use their own gardens and I do not see why there would be any restrictions or difference of use of the garden for the proposed children's home. The children would be supervised just like they would be in a typical residential property. I would not expect that the children's home would result in any significant difference.
37. It is acknowledged that the site is surrounded by residential properties, and concerns have been raised regarding possible increased comings and goings affecting neighbouring amenity. During working hours, it is proposed that up to five staff members (support, care, and management) would be present at the children's home at any one time and that this number would reduce at weekends, when two care staff would be on duty. When the children are at school, only support and management staff are proposed to remain on the site. The applicant advises that visitor attendance would be infrequent and strictly pre-arranged. Furthermore, it is proposed that shift changeover times would be scheduled to avoid the local primary school's drop-off and pick-up times, thereby minimising any potential disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood.
38. It is proposed that two staff members would be present through the night, with provision made for a staff resting area. This arrangement would reflect typical domestic routines and occupation. Given that the proposed use would involve only two children and that the number of staff and nature of activity would be comparable to those of a typical family occupying a four-bedroom dwelling, the use of the home would not result in unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance and would remain consistent with residential accommodation.
39. While it is acknowledged that there may be some additional activity during staff shift changeovers, the limited scale of the use and the small number of staff mean this would not result in a material difference from the normal day-to-day activities typically associated with a C3 use (residential dwelling). Such activities include deliveries and refuse collection, the school run, working from home activities, or in the case of properties occupied by elderly or disabled residents, visits from carers providing regular daily support.

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40. I therefore consider that the proposed change of use would demonstrate no material difference in the nature or intensity of occupation compared to a C3 residential dwelling. Additionally, it should be noted that the internal office provision falls within the ancillary rights of a C2 use and does not change the primary residential function. The proposed layout, facilities, and activity patterns compare to those of many typical family households, and I consider it would result in no adverse impact on the general amenity of the local area.

Transportation and Highway Considerations

41. Concern have been raised regarding the potential highway impact that the proposal would have in terms of increased parking upon Homewood Avenue and the surrounding residential roads. It has also been raised that the proposed development would likely lead to additional traffic congestion in the area that already suffers from parking associated with the primary school which is located to the northeast of the application site.
42. As advised above, the proposed children's home, would be very similar to a property occupied as a family dwelling house and the proposed use would operate in a way that would mirror a typical family home. The site has been selected by KCC as it provides off street parking for up to 5 vehicles, which would accommodate the anticipated maximum demand based on staffing. The two children would be taken to and from school and extracurricular activities each day and would receive supervision by carers and staff, who would engage with the property in a manner similar to adult residents, parents or guardians.
43. During working hours, it is proposed that up to five staff members (support, care, and management) would be present at the children's home at any one time and that this number would reduce to two care staff at weekends. Visitor attendance would be infrequent and strictly pre-arranged. Furthermore, it is proposed that shift changeover times would be scheduled to avoid the local primary school's drop-off and pick-up times, thereby minimising any potential disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood. It is acknowledged that at staff changeover times, additional cars may be present, and it would be the responsibility of the Registered Manager/Shift Leader to ensure staff co-ordinate change over to at all times minimise any on-street parking.
44. In light of the above, it is not considered that the proposed use would create any increase in highway congestion and parking demand at the property over the existing lawful occupation as a residential dwelling. Notwithstanding this the home selected is situated in an area with favourable transport links to both the train station and local bus services. Staff are also anticipated to be local, and they would be encouraged to travel by walking, cycling, public transport, or car sharing. Staff working in the home would not always be required to drive. From assessing other children's home, it is found that care roles such as these are often staffed locally and the site's accessibility within the Sittingbourne urban area was a key factor in its selection by KCC. As at present, sufficient parking is available on-site to accommodate staff and visitors. The property benefits from a generous driveway within its curtilage, which ensures that parking would not cause obstruction on the street along Homewood Avenue or the surrounding residential roads.

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45. Homewood Avenue is subject to a 30mph speed limit and there are no parking restrictions along this road, apart from a series of corner protection markings (double yellow lines to prevent parking) at the road junctions that come off Homewood Avenue. On the other side of Homewood Avenue is Westlands Primary School and there are two sets of yellow School Keep Clear and zig zag road markings painted on this side of Homewood Avenue. In the vicinity of the proposed children's home there are no parking restrictions and whilst concern has been raised that this area gets extremely congested around school times with parental parking, it is anticipated that the shift changeover times for the children's home would be scheduled to avoid the local primary school's drop-off and pick-up times, thereby minimising any potential disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood.
46. It has been confirmed that five is the expected maximum number of staff at this site at any one time, and not the number expected to be on site at all times. There would be sufficient parking available on site to meet these requirements, even at the times with maximum staffing on site. This would ensure that parking would not cause obstruction on the street along Homewood Avenue. Whilst recognising local concerns regarding impacts upon Homewood Avenue and the surrounding roads, and access for deliveries and emergency services, I am satisfied that these are not overriding and are acceptable.
47. It is not considered that the proposed use would create any increase in highway congestion and parking demand at the dwelling over the existing lawful occupation as a residential dwelling. It would not be uncommon for some households such as those with adult children still living at home, to have multiple cars and drivers in a single household. Furthermore, if it was considered dangerous in any places for vehicles to be parked on street then it would be in the gift of the Highways Authority to introduce parking restrictions and yellow lines. However it should be noted that Kent Highways have been consulted on this planning application and raised no objection to the proposed change of use of the residential dwelling to a children's home.
48. I therefore consider the proposed development to be acceptable on highway grounds and would have sufficient off road car parking to cater for staff. It therefore complies with the NPPF regarding transportation and highway considerations.

Other Planning Issues

49. Other comments have been received from local residents, which have been considered as follows.

Existing Vegetation and Fencing

50. Concern has been raised that existing screening could alter during the seasons. However, in the event that any future changes might be made to boundary treatments outside of KCCs control, then KCC would likely install fencing within their ownership and control within Permitted Development Right limits to maintain security and privacy to the children's home.
51. Adjoining residents have requested that the existing boundary fencing to the west of this property in Homewood Avenue and Berkeley Court, are replaced to improve security, safety and privacy. Given these works would constitute Permitted Development as the proposed replacement fencing would be below 2m in height, the applicant has

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confirmed that they would be very happy to discuss and consult with the neighbours to undertaken these works, if the change of use of the property gains approval. Any new fencing in this area would need to drop down into the existing brick wall on the entrance of the driveway to ensure safety and visibility of the path and street and not be adjacent to the highway. I propose that this matter is dealt by an Informative.

Conclusion

52. This planning application proposes a change of use of a residential dwelling (use class C3) to a residential institution (use class C2) to operate as a residential children's care home and to provide care and accommodation for up to two children. The proposed home would be registered with Ofsted for the care of two children from the ages of eight up to eighteen with social and emotional behavioural needs. The proposal has given rise to a variety of planning issues including the principle of development and the need; impact on residential amenity; transportation and highway considerations and other planning issues. These matters have been considered and addressed in detail throughout this report. Subject to the imposition of the conditions listed below, I am satisfied that the proposed change of use from a residential dwelling house to a children's home would not adversely impact the residential character of the area, neighbouring and local amenity or the surrounding highway network.
53. There is strong strategic and policy support for the provision of in-house residential children's care homes. The proposed development would help to address the current shortfall in suitable placements by providing two additional placements for children in need, while ensuring that the proposed change of use would not materially affect the character or amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. The development would satisfy the County Council's 'Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2022 to 2027'. There is further support in the NPPF and the development plan policies in the Swale Borough Local Plan, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is evident from the above that there is clear policy support and backing for the delivery of in-house children's care homes.
54. Having had due regard to the planning documents submitted as part of this application, the consultation responses received and representations made, I am of the opinion that the proposed development, subject to the conditions listed below, would not give rise to any material harm, is acceptable and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained within the NPPF. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted, subject to the planning conditions and Informative set out below.

Recommendation

55. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
1. Development shall commence within 3 years of the date of the permission;
 2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details.
56. The following Informative is also proposed:

**Proposed change of use of dwelling house into children's home at
75 Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne - SW/25/504240
(KCC/SW/0154/2025)**

- The applicant is encouraged to engage with the occupiers/owners of the neighbouring properties to the west of the application site in Homewood Avenue and Berkeley Court prior to the erection of any new boundary fencing.

Case Officer: Mrs Lidia Cook

Tel. no: 03000 413353

Background Documents: see section heading
