

# About Esquire Developments

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Esquire Developments is a multi-award winning SME Housebuilder based in Longfield, Kent. Founded in 2011, we have established ourself through the delivery of high quality bespoke residential developments across Kent and build approximately 120 homes a year. In 2020, Whathouse awarded us Gold as best small Housebuilder and in 2024 Bronze as best medium Housebuilder.

We adopt a tailored approach, adapting designs and layouts to reflect local characteristics, respecting each community's unique needs. This is achieved through our local knowledge and experience, understanding of place, and crucially, engaging with local communities. This positively focuses our approach to planning and design, with a greater experience of the needs and workings of the parish.

Each of our developments is bespoke, and we do not have fixed house types. This allows us to be totally flexible when it comes to tailoring the right mix and design of each home. Revealed in the high-quality of architecture and materials, this ethos extends to the refinement of open spaces, establishing welcoming and inclusive environments.

As an SME Housebuilder reliant on our reputation, we deliver high-quality homes that bring choice and variation to the housing market, catering for a diverse range of prospective buyers. We are environmentally conscious and have committed to playing a positive role in addressing the Climate Emergency (see later boards). We also pride ourselves in delivering homes exceeding the minimum sizes and finishes that the general housing market sometimes supplies.



CLAGUE  
ARCHITECTS

ESQUIRE  
DEVELOPMENTS



# The Site



The site (approximately 8ha) is located to the south west of Istead Rise, extending from the edge of the Primary School to the east, to Willerby Farm to the west and behind the residential close of Rosegarth and properties fronting Downs Road.

The site comprises 3 distinct parcels, comprising existing arable land, the rear garden of No.64 Downs Road and the former Piggery, now in use as a horse paddock.

There are existing accesses to the site adjacent to No. 64 Downs Road, and an access track to the piggery on the northern side of No. 34 Downs Road. The site slopes towards Downs Road, reflective of the undulating character of Istead Rise and comprises a number of trees and vegetation defining the boundary edges. National Grid Power lines run east west through part of the site and are a visually prominent feature.

The site is in close proximity to the services and facilities of Istead Rise - being located adjacent to the Primary School and Scout Hut and a short walk (>5 minutes) to shopping parade. Bus stops are located along Downs Road with the closest being next to the Primary School.





# Our Approach to Climate Change



Fabric first approach to sustainability



Extensive Landscaping to benefit biodiversity



All houses to have an EV charging point



Air Source Heat Pumps installed in all homes



High Specification Glazed Windows



Electric Only Dwellings



Increased Cavity Wall Thickness



Natural material utilising local supply chains

We take a proactive approach to address the Climate Change emergency. We recognise that as an SME housebuilder, we have an impact on the environment and we wish to minimise this as best we can. In this regard, we have committed to deliver ‘electric only’ developments, meaning we no longer provide homes with traditional gas boilers. Instead, we are presently installing air source heat pumps and alongside a ‘fabric first approach’ we are achieving approximately a 50% carbon reduction in our homes over and above current building regulations.

The fabric first approach means that the improved efficiency of our dwellings is inherent within the build. This means that not only is it more efficient, but also that they are not features that can be easily (if at all) removed by future homeowners, resulting in the efficiency of the building being maintained for its lifetime. By way of example, we build our homes with greater cavity wall thickness allowing for increased thermal protection, higher specification glazed windows and greater base floor depths.

Coupled with the air source heat pumps and that all our homes come with rapid charge electric vehicle chargers, we feel that we are playing our part in trying to minimise the impacts of our developments on the environment and help accelerate the culture change in regard to greener living, reducing the amount of fossil fuels used by the home and vehicle.





# Why are We Here?



We are in the midst of a National Housing crisis. Put simply not enough homes are being built across the Country. Both the current and former Government committed to improving housing delivery and placed requirements on Local Planning Authorities to demonstrate they have at least 5 years’ worth of housing land supply. Unfortunately, due to some significant constraints in Gravesham, including Green Belt designations and complicated unviable Brownfield sites not being delivered, Gravesham Borough Council can only demonstrate 2.9 years worth of housing – a shortfall of 1,785 homes. This is exacerbating the housing crisis locally and results in unaffordability in the area.

In 2020, the Council consulted on its Local Plan, a document to identify suitable sites to deliver homes to meet the boroughs housing needs. The site was identified as a potential site by the Council.

However, progress of the Local Plan has been slow due to ever changing Government Guidance and delays to the announcement of the Lower Thames Crossing.

Notwithstanding, in December 2024, responding to the housing challenges facing the Country, the newly elected Labour Government introduced a new national planning concept, known as ‘Grey Belt’. This has been introduced to try and deliver more homes in sustainable locations which due to very strict Green Belt policy, have not previously been possible.

A Grey Belt site must meet certain criteria, including satisfying that it does not undermine certain ‘functions’ of the Green Belt and that any development coming forward meets the ‘Golden Rules’.

Accordingly, the purpose of the guidance is to loosen Green Belt planning policy to enable Councils such as Gravesham to support appropriate ‘Grey Belt’ development and help the Council achieve its housing targets to meet local needs.

This site is considered to meet the requirements of the Grey Belt tests and proposes to accord with the Golden Rules – crucially delivering 50% of the development as Affordable Housing.

### 13. Protecting Green Belt land

142. 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.
143. Green Belt serves five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:
- a. 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;
  - b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed<sup>66</sup>;
  - c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework<sup>67</sup>; and





# Opportunities & Constraints



The site is located to the south west of Istead Rise Village and is well related to the existing built form to provide for a logical extension to the village.

A number of constraints and opportunities are present which influence how development could come forward. The site slopes northwards towards existing residential dwellings fronting Downs Road where the land rises again along Upper Avenue and surrounding streets offering a view of the site. However, long distance views are limited due to the topography and strong dense vegetation lying further south of the site towards New Barn.

