

Project: **Cascades Leisure Centre, Gravesham**
Doc Title: **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ADDENDUM**
Client: **Wilmott Dixon**
Doc ref: **GCLC-COL-XX-XX-T-L-0003-P02**
Status: **For Planning - Section 73 Application**



Issue and Approval Schedule

Revision Record:

Date	Status	Amendments	By	Checked
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09.01.2026	P02	Policy updates	CG	CG

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Addendum has been prepared by Colour Urban Design Ltd to accompany an application made under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) for an amendment to planning permission ref. 20221293 for the redevelopment of the Cascades Leisure Centre site in Gravesend. The application is submitted on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council.

1.2 Design Changes

- 1.2.1 Further to discussions between Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) and the appointed Main Contractor, changes to the planning-approved scheme have been made which relate mainly to the height and footprint of the proposed leisure centre building, together with changes to associated landscape areas within the redline boundary. These changes are illustrated in plan form in Landscape General Arrangement Plan GCLC-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-1000 (revision P15), appended to this document. In summary, the design changes comprise:
- A reduction in the overall height of the leisure centre building due to the removal of the 2700mm high roof plant enclosure, the lowering of the Community wing by 880mm, and the lowering of the Pool Hall wing by 570mm.
 - A reduction in the overall size of the proposed leisure centre building's footprint by 706 sq m by shortening its eastern and southern extents.
 - A corresponding adjustment to the position of the proposed service road running around the eastern and southern sides of the proposed leisure centre building, together with adjustments to the position of associated staff parking and coach parking on its eastern side, and substation and bin store on its southern side.
 - A reduction in the extent of proposed block paving within the immediate curtilage of the proposed leisure centre building, by proposing macadam instead.
 - Retention of the existing external play area rather than its replacement with a reconfigured play area, as was previously proposed in the planning-approved scheme.
 - A downgrading of the proposed "fitness loop", running around the perimeter of the site, to an informal pedestrian route without formal demarcation via white lining, as was previously proposed in the planning-approved scheme. However, the position and extent of the route, composed of close-mown grass, remains as per the planning-approved scheme.
 - Removal of the trim trail equipment and associated bark-chip path on the existing tree-line bund, south of the leisure centre.

- Inclusion of a temporary car park, proposed on an area of existing hard-standing located just beyond the north-western corner of the originally approved site. Works are limited to resurfacing the current macadam to provide a temporary facility accommodating 84nr standard parking spaces. This addition would extend the planning red-line boundary by approximately 80 metres to the north-west.
- A reduction in the specified height (though not overall extent or quantity), at the time of planting, of the proposed woodland mix located north of the main car park and in small pockets adjacent to existing woodland on the eastern and southern sides of the proposed leisure centre building.
- A reduction in the number of individual trees proposed within the landscape surrounding the existing play area and southern kickabout field. However, proposed tree planting within the immediate curtilage of the proposed leisure centre building, including the main car park, remains as per the planning-approved scheme (ie sizes and quantities have not changed).
- An updated identification of the trees to be removed to accommodate the proposed development, resulting in a net increase of one additional tree to be removed. This is due to an error in the identification of trees for removal in the previous planning application rather than as a consequence of changes brought about by the proposed scheme. As previously confirmed, the number of trees located within the building footprint (all Category B) remains unchanged, and all trees to be removed *outside* the building footprint are Category C.

1.3 Changes to Landscape Planning Policy Context

- 1.3.1 Since the original scheme received Planning Permission on 3 March 2023, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has changed, with the latest edition published on 12 December 2024 with slight amendments in February 2025.
- 1.3.2 It is therefore necessary to demonstrate that the proposed changes embodied in the Section 73 application do not materially alter the landscape and visual effects that were previously assessed, *and* that the design changes sit comfortably within the current planning policy context.
- 1.3.3 Current NPPF policies, which have changed since the original planning consent was granted and which are of relevance to LVIA, are noted below:
 - Green Belt (Paragraphs 142 to 160 of the current NPPF): While the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy - to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open – remains unchanged, Paragraph 013 of the Green Belt PPG clarifies that openness (a core Green Belt Concept) has both spatial and visual aspects. It confirms that what matters in Green Belt is the extent and visual influence (openness) of built form, not whether the land is beautiful or of scenic value, per se.
 - Paragraph 154 states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt, however part d) outlines an exception to be “the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces”.

- Grey Belt (Paragraphs 155-157 of the NPPF): The revised policy introduces the concept of a “grey belt” — areas of Green Belt which do not strongly contribute to three of the five purposes (checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving historic character) and which may be treated as not inappropriate for development if the proposal does not fundamentally undermine Green Belt purposes. However, it is worth noting that for LVIA purposes, the policy emphasis is on the *effects* on visual receptors (Paragraph 135) and landscape character (Paragraph 187), not the Green Belt *status* itself.
- 1.3.4** More broadly, the NPPF’s Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (Paragraphs 187-201) requires that decision-making must take into account whether proposals cause adverse impacts that *significantly and demonstrably outweigh benefits*, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.
- 1.3.5** Local Plan Policy – In general, local policies reiterate the NPPF’s stance that developments which maintain or improve the openness, and fit within the built-rural context, are viewed favourably.

1.4 Changes to Baseline Conditions

- 1.4.1** Since the original planning permission for the proposed Cascades Leisure Centre was granted in March 2023, planning permission has been granted for the Lower Thames Crossing, the road infrastructure of which will pass within c200m of the Application Site’s eastern boundary (while running in roughly a north-south direction). Enabling works for this road infrastructure project are due to start in early 2026.
- 1.4.2** To date, there have been no other material changes to the baseline conditions of the Study Area.

1.5 Landscape Considerations

- 1.5.1** The proposed design changes to the leisure centre scheme - which relate mainly to a reduction in the height and footprint of the proposed leisure centre building - do not materially change the findings of the planning-approved LVIA with regards to current planning policies relating to Green Belt, Landscape, Heritage or Access designations, or landscape character areas. This is because the reduction in the size of the building generates less “harm” than the previous planning-approved scheme.
- 1.5.2** The current proposal reduces the structural massing and visual influence of the proposed leisure centre building and, consequently does not worsen the established effects on the Green Belt’s spatial and visual aspects that were accepted in the previous planning permission. Grey Belt considerations are not relevant to the Application Site.
- 1.5.3** In relation to adverse impacts on landscape character areas, the reduction in the extent and size of the proposed leisure centre building lessens potential effects, though these are not marked enough to significantly reduce any further the findings of the original landscape assessment.

- I.5.4** The extension of the redline boundary to accommodate the proposed temporary car park in the NW corner of the Application Site does not impact on landscape character or any landscape designations, as the proposed car park simply repurposes and resurfaces an existing expanse of macadam.
- I.5.5** The omission of proposed trees to the existing play area and southern kickabout area does not significantly impact landscape character as these areas are already surrounded by large, mature trees that provide a naturalistic character to the Application Site, while also contributing to the character of the surrounding area.
- I.5.6** The future Thames link crossing will significantly change the character of the existing rural landscape east of the Application Site. However, this will not worsen the impact on landscape designations or landscape character, relative to the conclusions of the planning-approved scheme.
- I.5.7** In relation to sustainable development, any residual landscape/visual harm generated by the current proposals is no greater, and likely less, due to the reduced size and extent of the proposed leisure centre building compared to the previous planning-approved scheme, and does not significantly outweigh the benefits.

I.6 Visual Considerations

- I.6.1** Since the original scheme was granted Planning permission, there have been no changes to baseline visual conditions vis-a-vis the Zone of Visual Influence and the nature and location of visual receptors.
- I.6.2** The proposed design changes to the leisure centre building and associated landscape areas within the redline boundary do not materially change the findings of the planning-approved LVIA with regards to the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) or the visual amenity of representative visual receptors, as assessed in the planning-approved LVIA. This is because the height and footprint of the proposed leisure centre building is slightly reduced which will lessen potential visual effects, though these are not marked enough to significantly alter the original findings of the visual assessment.
- I.6.3** The omission of proposed trees around the existing play areas (west of the proposed leisure centre building) and kickabout area (to its south) does not materially affect screening of the proposed building from representative viewpoints as screening is still provided by existing mature trees which are to be conserved.

I.7 Summary and Conclusion

- I.7.1** The design changes embodied in the Section 73 scheme do not materially alter the conclusions of the planning-approved LVIA in relation to either landscape or visual impacts. The amendments include a reduction in the height and footprint of the proposed leisure centre, minor adjustments to the position of the service road, staff & coach parking and service structures (including proposed substation and bin store), the removal of the proposed external play area in favour of retaining the existing one, and a reduction in the tree specification within the proposed woodland mix. They also include the omission of

proposed tree planting within the existing play area and parts of the southern kickabout field, and the resurfacing of an existing hard-paved area to create a temporary car park.

Since the proposed building is now slightly smaller in height and footprint than the previously approved scheme, landscape and visual impacts are slightly reduced, relative to the previously consented scheme. However, the design changes are not significant enough to justify a more beneficial regrading of landscape and visual effects, so these remain as per the original planning-approved LVIA.

APPENDIX I.0 LANDSCAPE GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN



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DRAWING TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:
2333-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-1000 - LANDSCAPE GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN
2333-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-1001 - HANDWORKS & LEVELS PLAN
2333-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-3000 - SITE SECTION A & B
2333-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-3001 - SITE SECTION C & D
2333-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-5000 - PLANTING STRATEGY PLAN
ALL STRUCTURAL ITEMS INCLUDING FOUNDATIONS, REDDING, SUBBASE MATERIALS TO STRUCTURAL ENGINEER'S DETAIL
ALL UNDERGROUND DRAINAGE REQUIREMENTS TO CIVIL ENGINEER'S DETAILS
UNDERGROUND SERVICES TO M&E ENGINEER'S DETAILS

P15	Site boundary updated + all paving VE'd	11.12.25	JR	CG
P14	Surface materials updated	19.11.25	HP	CG
P13	Revised Layout	08.10.25	HP	CG
12	Revised Layout	21.02.25	JR	CG
11	Amended car park and playground	03.02.25	TK	CG
10	External flumes added	30.06.23	CG	PO
09	Amended building footprint & coach parking	26.05.23	CG	PO
08	Revised Car Park Layout	14.03.22	DC	PO
07	Revised Layout	06.03.22	DC	PO
06	Revised Layout	24.11.22	TK	PO
05	Revised Layout	18.11.22	BF	PO
04	Revised Layout	14.11.22	AH	PO
03	Revised Layout	11.11.22	TK	PO
02	Pedestrian link added to c/p	20.07.22	CG	PO
01	First Issue	14.07.22	CG	PO
Rev	Amendments	Date	Drwn	Chkd

Project
Cascades Leisure Centre, Gravesham
Drawing Title
Landscape General Arrangement Plan

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London 0203 92 49 888
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