



March 26 2026  
Planning Department  
Gravesham Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Windmill Street  
Gravesend  
DA12 1AU

## **20260207 Land North of Camer Road, Meopham**

### **Cobham Parish Council Objection to the Proposed - Dwelling Development – 725 houses**

The Parish Council strongly objects to the proposed residential development of approximately 725 dwellings on land between Meopham and Sole Street.

This proposal represents development of exceptional scale in a rural area and would fundamentally alter the character, identity, and functioning of the surrounding villages. The Council considers that the development would conflict with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), undermine the emerging Local Plan of Gravesham Borough Council (GBC), and result in significant and irreversible harm to the rural character and infrastructure of the area.

#### **1. Loss of Separation Between Villages**

The proposed site forms an important area of open countryside separating the villages of Meopham and Sole Street.

Development on this scale would:

- remove the open countryside that currently separates the settlements
- create a continuous built form between the villages
- lead to the merging of Meopham and Sole Street into a single built-up area
- the proposed development is double the current population of Sole Street

One of the purposes of Green Belt and countryside protection policies is to prevent settlements from merging. Even if this site did fall under the new NPPF definition of

“grey belt,” the importance of its role and crucial spatial function in maintaining the separation and individual identity of neighbouring villages must be given due consideration.

The likely long-term effect would be the gradual transformation of the area into an extension of the urban area of Gravesend and eroding the rural character of the Gravesham rural area.

## 2. Harm to Rural Landscape Character

The site forms part of a much-valued area of open countryside, contributing significantly to the rural character of the parish and wider landscape.

The scale of the development would introduce a large urban housing estate into a rural landscape, resulting in:

- substantial loss of openness
- significant visual intrusion
- permanent urbanisation of currently undeveloped countryside

This landscape is widely valued for its open views, agricultural land, and rural setting, which would be irreversibly altered.

## 3. Unsuitable Rural Road Network and Transport Concerns

The surrounding road network consists primarily of narrow rural lanes not designed to accommodate large volumes of traffic.

Recent experience demonstrates fragility:

- Closure of Halfpence Lane forced traffic onto Henhurst Road for three months
- Resulted in congestion, severe deterioration of road surfaces, damage to verges, and safety concerns

The Parish Council requests a full Road Safety Audit and comprehensive transport modelling by Kent County Council (Kent County Council Highways), including:

- rural lane capacity and junction safety
- school and sports traffic
- pedestrian and cyclist safety
- cumulative impacts with other developments and the Lower Thames Crossing
- The traffic data supplied by the developer dates from 2019 and is out of date by seven years. The developer needs to source more recent traffic data.

- One access point from Camer Road is not sufficient for the size of the site despite the proposed large roundabout with Camer road
- The Active travel point in Norwood Lane could lead to parents dropping off school children for the new primary school Norwood Lane is not suitable for vehicles to be turned around.

Without this, the impacts on road safety and network capacity cannot be properly assessed.

#### 4. Community Facilities and Infrastructure Uncertainty

The outline proposals include a community centre, sports facilities, sports pitches, and a primary school.

However:

- No operator or funding arrangements are identified for community or sports facilities
- The school is not guaranteed, as it depends on KCC funding and approval. The developer may build further properties on the proposed site for the school.
- Parking requirements for the local centre and sports pitches are not fixed; left to "future accumulation exercises"
- Operational arrangements, use, and management of facilities are unspecified
- The healthcare provision is not sufficient for 725 dwellings. The local Doctor's Surgeries are full and there is no space for new residents.

This demonstrates that key infrastructure remains aspirational rather than deliverable, creating uncertainty about whether these facilities will actually be provided or sustainable.

#### 5. Procedural Fairness and Consultation Issues

- The Parish Council was not originally included on the list of consultees, limiting time to respond
- Documentation is extensive and complex; the Council requests the application be considered by the Development Control Committee to ensure transparency and proper scrutiny
- Hundreds of objections have already been submitted by local residents, indicating high levels of concerns.

#### 6. Technical Assessments

The Parish Council requests that the following critical technical matters are addressed before the application can be determined:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening
  - The scale of the proposal requires a formal EIA to assess landscape, biodiversity, transport, and water impacts.
- Full Transport Modelling
  - Including cumulative impacts with other local developments and the Lower Thames Crossing
  - Assessing peak hours, school and sports traffic, and pedestrian/cycling safety
- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment
  - Including surface water management, capacity of existing drainage infrastructure, and extreme weather scenarios
  - Norwood Lane has flooded quite regularly previously
- Biodiversity and Ecology Surveys
  - Protection of habitats and species, including bats, badgers, and birds
  - Submission of mitigation and long-term management plans
- Community Facility Management Plans
  - Clarification of operator, funding, maintenance, and parking arrangements
  - Ensuring facilities are deliverable and sustainable
- KCC Public Rights of Way have stated that a Public Rights of Way Management Scheme should be submitted
  - This must address:
    - protection during construction
    - long-term maintenance
    - integration with the development layout
    - safe access for walkers, cyclists, and other users

The absence of this information prevents the LPA from fully assessing the application, justifying deferral.

## 7. Water Supply and Utilities

- A full assessment of water supply and wastewater infrastructure is required
- 725 homes would place significant demand on local utilities
- Confirmation from providers is needed that capacity exists or will be provided

## 8. Cumulative Impact with Strategic Infrastructure

- The proposed development, combined with Lower Thames Crossing and other nearby developments, would place substantial pressure on local roads, landscape, and services
- A proper cumulative assessment is required before determination

#### 9. Prematurity and Emerging Local Plan

- The emerging Gravesham Local Plan has undertaken site selection, sustainability appraisal, and Green Belt assessment
- The site is not allocated for development, indicating it is not suitable or sustainable
- Approval of this development now would pre-empt the plan-led process, undermining the Regulation 19 Local Plan

#### 10. Conclusion and Requested Actions

The Parish Council strongly objects to the proposed development.

The scheme would:

- result in loss of separation between neighbouring villages
- lead to merging of settlements and erosion of village identity
- cause significant harm to rural landscape character
- place unsustainable pressure on rural roads
- conflict with the emerging Local Plan
- rely on uncertain and undeliverable infrastructure
- leave key technical matters unassessed
- undermine the plan-led system

The Parish Council requests that the determination of the application be deferred until:

- all technical assessments are completed
- Public Rights of Way, transport, water, flood risk, and ecological impacts are fully assessed
- delivery and management plans for community facilities are provided
- adequate time for public consultation is allowed
- the application is considered by the Development Control Committee

This deferral is necessary to ensure transparent, evidence-based decision making and to protect the rural character, infrastructure, and identity of Meopham and Sole Street.