

Development of up to 725 Dwellings on Land North of Camer Road, Meopham, Kent

Further to our objection submitted on the planning portal, we object in the strongest possible terms to this application.

Under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Gravesham Borough Council must have regard to the development plan and to material considerations. The Council cannot lawfully replace those statutory duties with a political delivery programme, a formulaic national target, or a generic slogan about “benefit over harm.”

That is exactly what is being attempted here.

This objection relies first and foremost on ministerial correspondence, FOI responses, council replies, regulatory letters, and official statistics already obtained and used by residents. Those documents repeatedly show the same thing: the alleged “benefit” side of the planning balance is not proved. The harms are real, local, cumulative, and often irreversible. The benefits are asserted, inflated, and unsupported by the underlying data said to justify them.

This application should be refused.

1) Government Ministers confirm the Standard Method does not prove genuine local need

Ministers have confirmed in correspondence that the Standard Method does not separate settlement-related demand from wider housing pressures. The Government’s own guidance states that the Standard Method “uses a formula” based on housing stock and affordability pressures. That is a formulaic input. It is not proof of genuine longstanding local need in Meopham, five-year residency need, employment-linked need, or proof that this specific Green Belt site must be developed.

The Council and applicant are trying to turn a formula into a fact. They cannot do that lawfully.

2. Ministers confirmed councils are responsible for local need, yet neither ministers nor councils hold the data

Ministers state that housing decisions are for local authorities based on local need. Yet both ministers and councils have repeatedly confirmed that the underlying data needed to prove the composition of that claimed need — including residency, employment, and separation of demand streams — is “not held”.

The claimed need is therefore an unseparated aggregate and an unevidenced assumption.

3. The Standard Method does not separate genuine local need from wider externally generated demand

This is the central defect. The method does not separate longstanding local need from migration-driven growth, settlement pressure, or other external demand. Residents hold

correspondence confirming the deeper data is not held, not separated, or not recorded in a form that proves genuine local need.

That is fatal to the weight the Council can give to the alleged benefit. If the inputs are unseparated, the need is unproven. If the need is unproven, the benefit is inflated.

4. This creates a rolling, never-ending crisis model

The alleged crisis is structurally open-ended and can be used repeatedly to justify more housing, infrastructure, and loss of green fields, habitat, farmland, and heritage across Kent and beyond. It is not a finite, locally measured shortage. It is a rolling aggregate used as a perpetual override.

5. The political programme has been openly admitted

On 28 February 2025 the Deputy Prime Minister stated that she was

- “handing mayors the sledgehammer”,
- that “mayors are an army to take on the blockers”, and
- that they are “at the centre of our plans to build 1.5 million homes.”

These are not the words of neutral, evidence-based planning. A “sledgehammer” or “army” is not a lawful material consideration. This application sits inside that national political programme.

6. Population decline and demographic reality contradict the crisis narrative

POSTnote 745 of 20 May 2025 and ONS data show fertility at 1.44, the lowest on record, an ageing population, and natural population change heading into decline. Broad migration-driven or formula-led pressure does not prove genuine local need in Meopham.

7. Salami slicing must be assessed honestly

This major outline application cannot be treated in isolation. Residents are aware of the pattern of breaking large schemes into staged or linked parts. The Council must assess the full cumulative impact, not just the narrow slice placed in front of it.

8. The harms are real, direct, cumulative and irreversible

This proposal on arable farmland within the Metropolitan Green Belt would cause:

- permanent loss of open countryside and Green Belt land, and the applicant’s “grey belt” claim does not remove the strong presumption against inappropriate development.
- urbanisation of the rural gap between Meopham and neighbouring settlements.

- harm to the character and setting of Meopham village and nearby heritage assets, including Camer Park;
- increased traffic pressure on the A227 and local roads.
- strain on drainage, sewage, schools, GPs and other infrastructure.
- loss of productive agricultural land and habitat.

These harms are specific and immediate. The alleged benefits remain generic and unproven.

Conclusion

Gravesham Borough Council must not confuse a formula with a fact, a national target with proof, or a political programme with a lawful planning balance. The Standard Method does not separate genuine local need. The data is “not held”. Demographic trends contradict the endless-crisis narrative. What is being presented as local necessity is not proved local need. Permanent harm to Meopham’s Green Belt and countryside cannot lawfully be justified on that basis.

We therefore ask that planning permission be refused.

We reserve the right to submit further evidence at any later stage, including appeal or call-in.

Yours faithfully,

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