

Formal site visit
Request

RECEIVED

26 JAN 2026

Downs Road
Tstead Rise
Gravesend
Kent
DA13 9HG

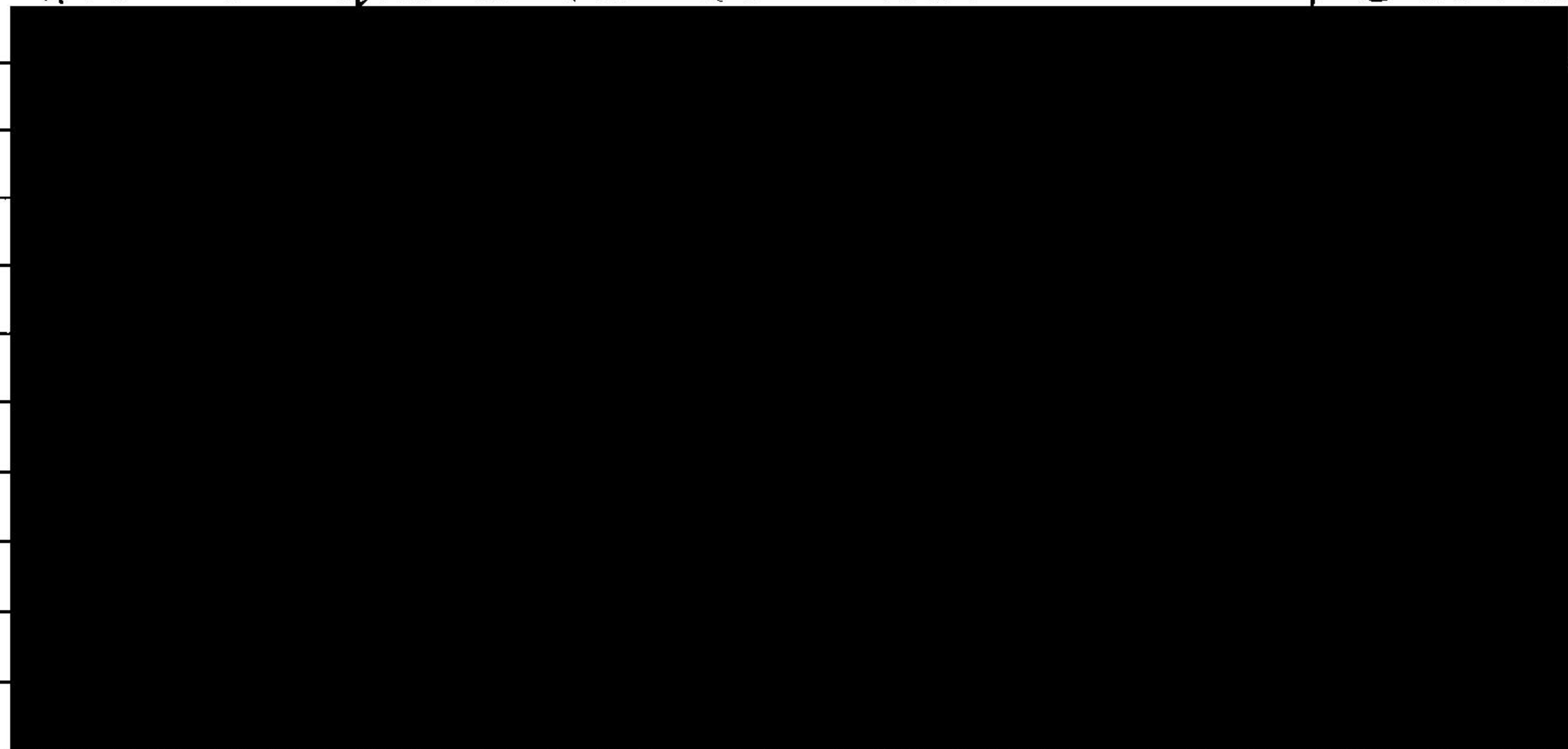
Adeoye Lawal
Planning Department
Gravesham Borough Council
Civic Centre
Gravesend
Kent

23-1-26

Dear Mr Lawal,

I have enclosed paper copies of the
30 documents that I emailed in case
there was an issue with you receiving
the emails or attachments. I wasn't sure
what format you preferred.

As per email, I would like to make a
formal request for a site visit at my location.



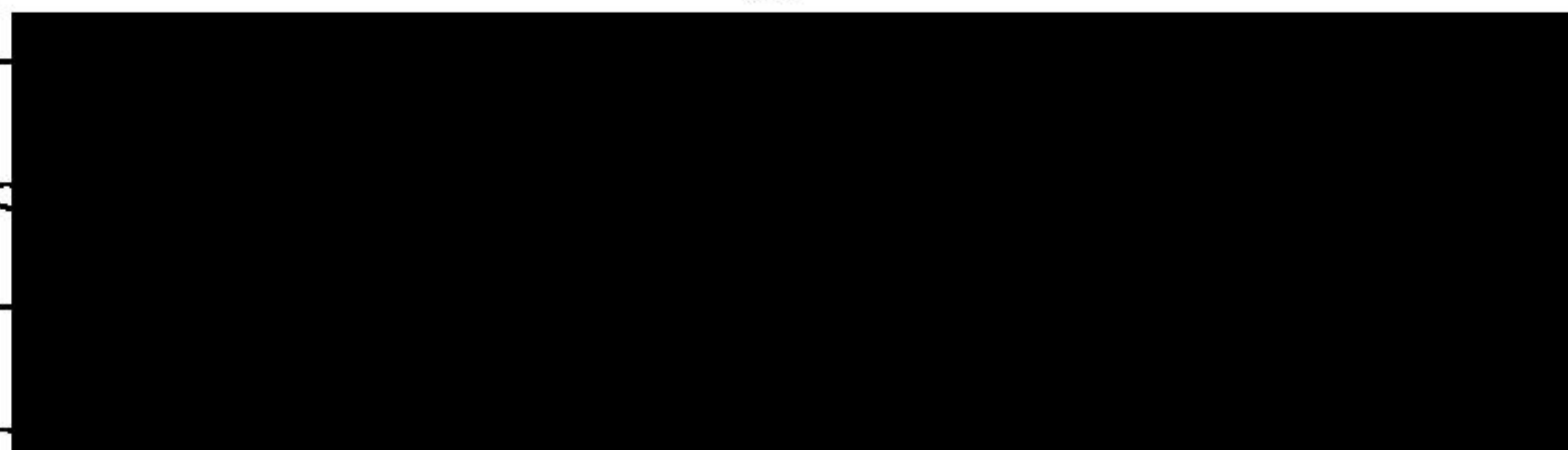
I think it would be impossible to

understand or appreciate how exposed we really would be without visiting our property & seeing the plans from the inside looking out.

Thank you so much for your time and understanding.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

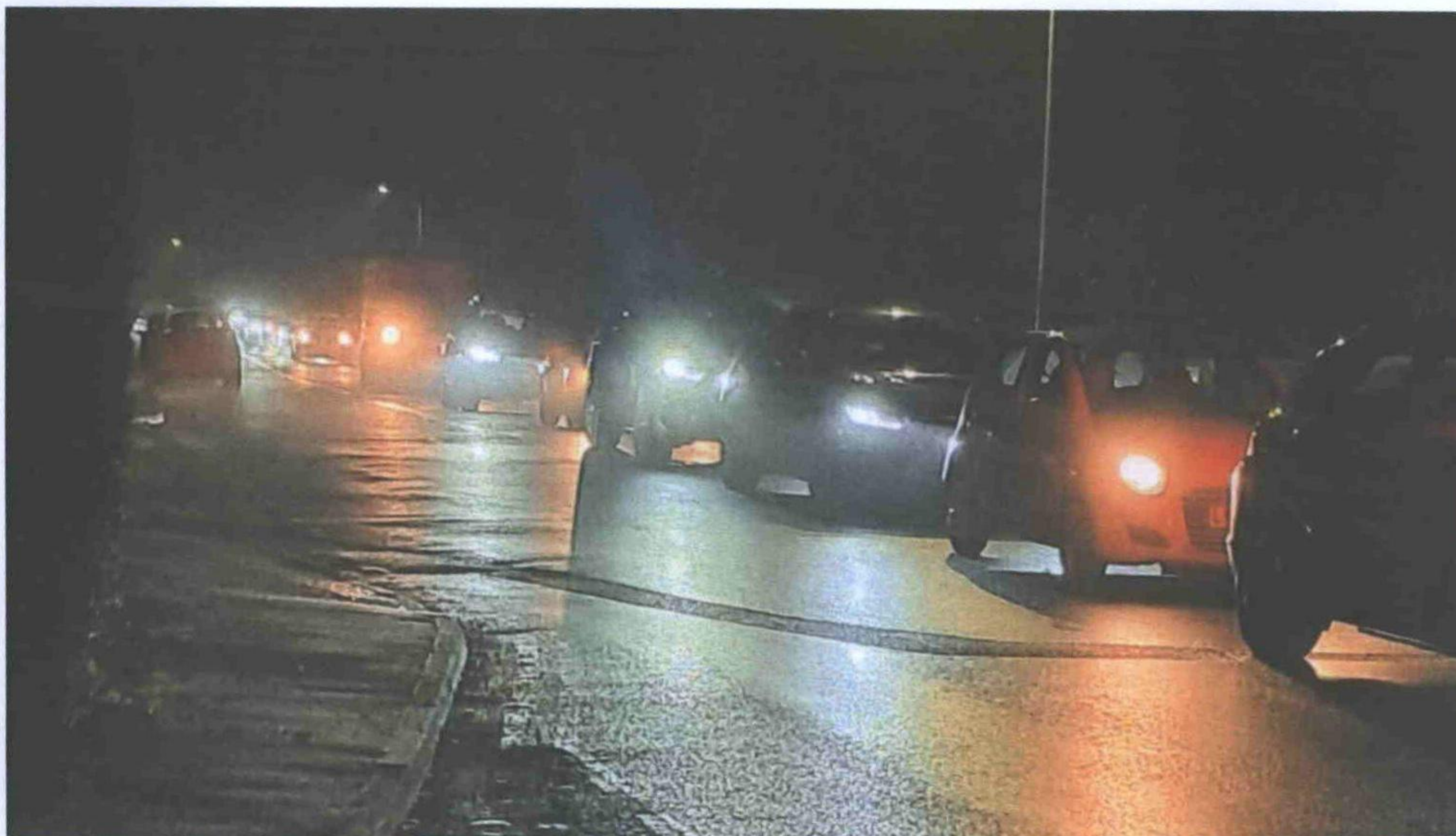
A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.A large black rectangular redaction box covering the address area.

P.S. I also wanted to ask why 32 Downs Road is not mentioned in the planning application, even though on the plans they have submitted, it has been replaced with a pond. There seems to be no mention of it?



This is the location of 32 Downs Road (Evelyn Cottage) shown above on an old land registry document (Google shows it incorrectly). In the developer's plan, this old historic cottage has been demolished and replaced with a pond, but this has not been requested in this planning application. The cottage (Land Registry title K719137) is historic farm house over 120 years old, very beautiful and part of the heritage of Istead Rise. It should not be demolished.

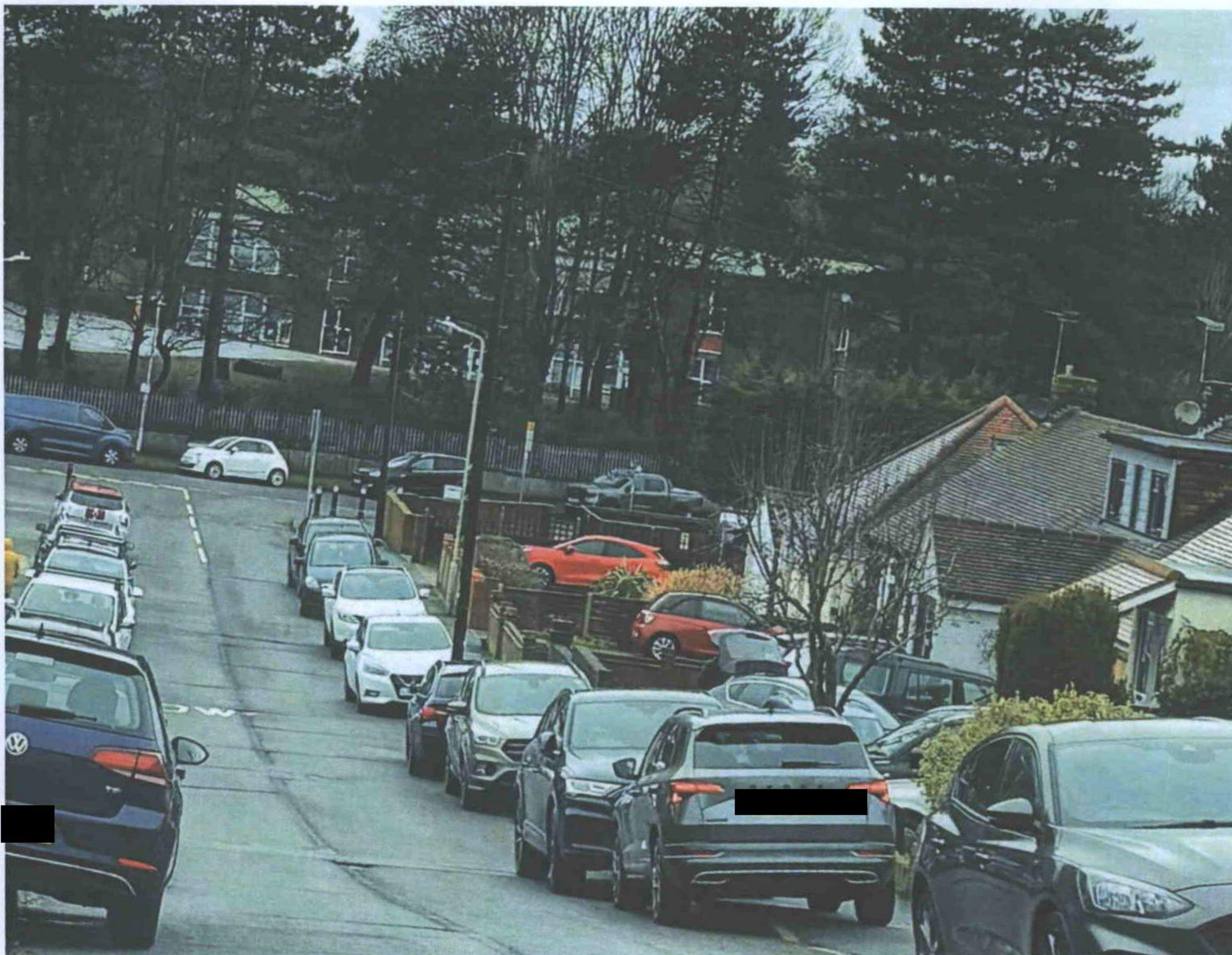




Photograph of traffic jam along Downs Road, Istead Rise, when there was a problem with the A2. Downs Road and Istead Rise is used as a cut through



Photograph of parking around Istead Rise Primary School in the area where the proposed new road would be and sole vehicular access point for planned development.



Parking on Arcadia Road looking down towards Istead Rise Primary School.

This would be the route most works traffic to the proposed development would have to take, because the gradient of the hill of Upper Avenue is much too steep for lorries, so they would have to avoid it.

The huge amount of overflow parking from the development would also end up in this already problem area.



Field slopes down towards houses on Downs Road, tops of which can just be seen in photo.

Field sloping downwards towards Downs Road, and cul-de-sac, Rosegarth sit lower than the field and many are bungalows. Putting houses higher up and close to their boundaries would cause a huge loss of light and privacy for these properties. The same with properties put too close to Longwalk.



View from kitchen window of Downs Road bungalow, which slopes upwards towards the field and view of the field from the garden. Putting houses at the end there would block out all light and property would lose privacy and security.





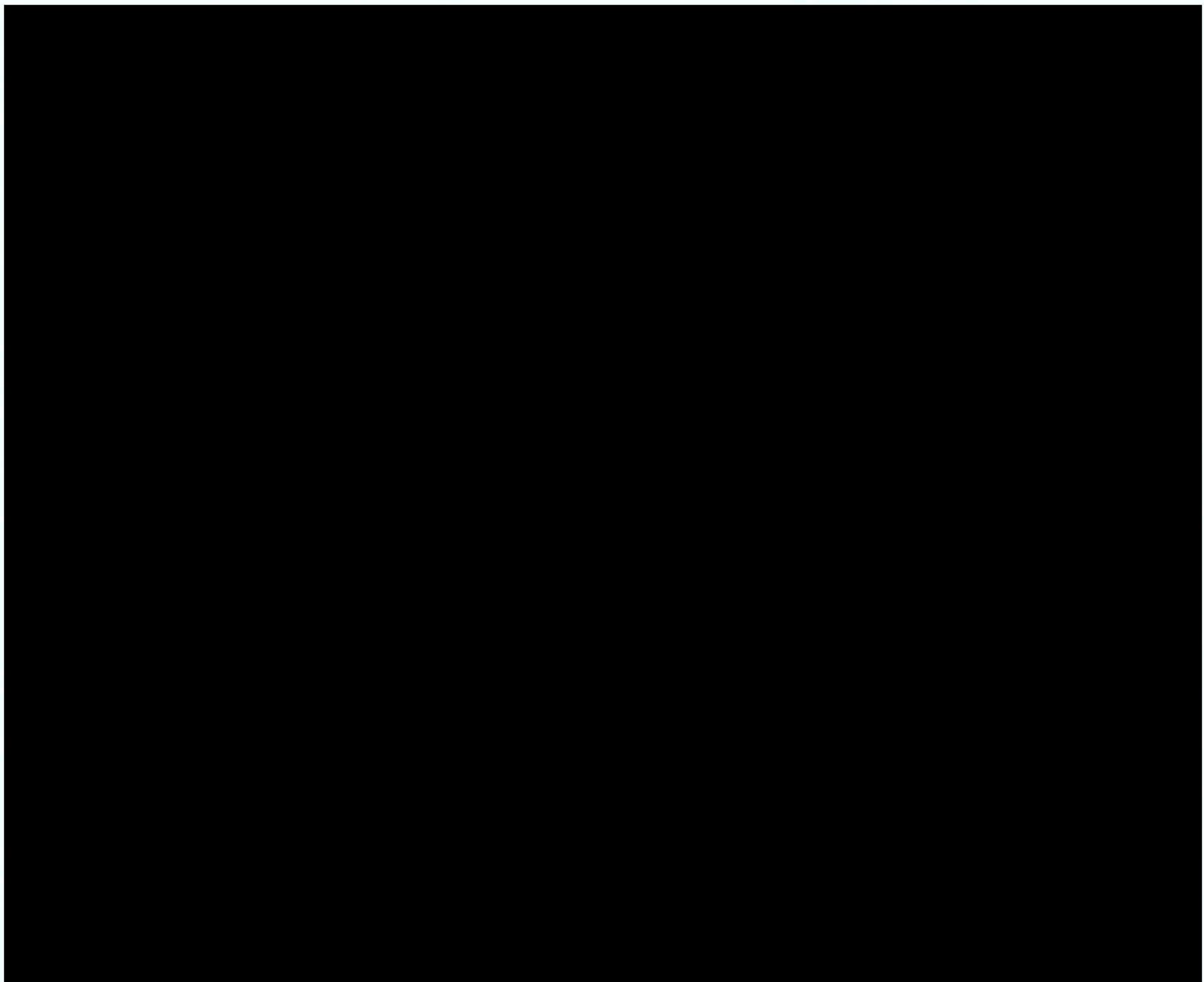
This photograph was taken of a Kestrel sitting on a post by the pond of [REDACTED] Downs Road, which is proposed to be surrounded by the development on three sides. The Kestrel lives in the wooded / orchard area planned for destruction and built over, shown in the aerial photograph below. It also hunts in these fields.

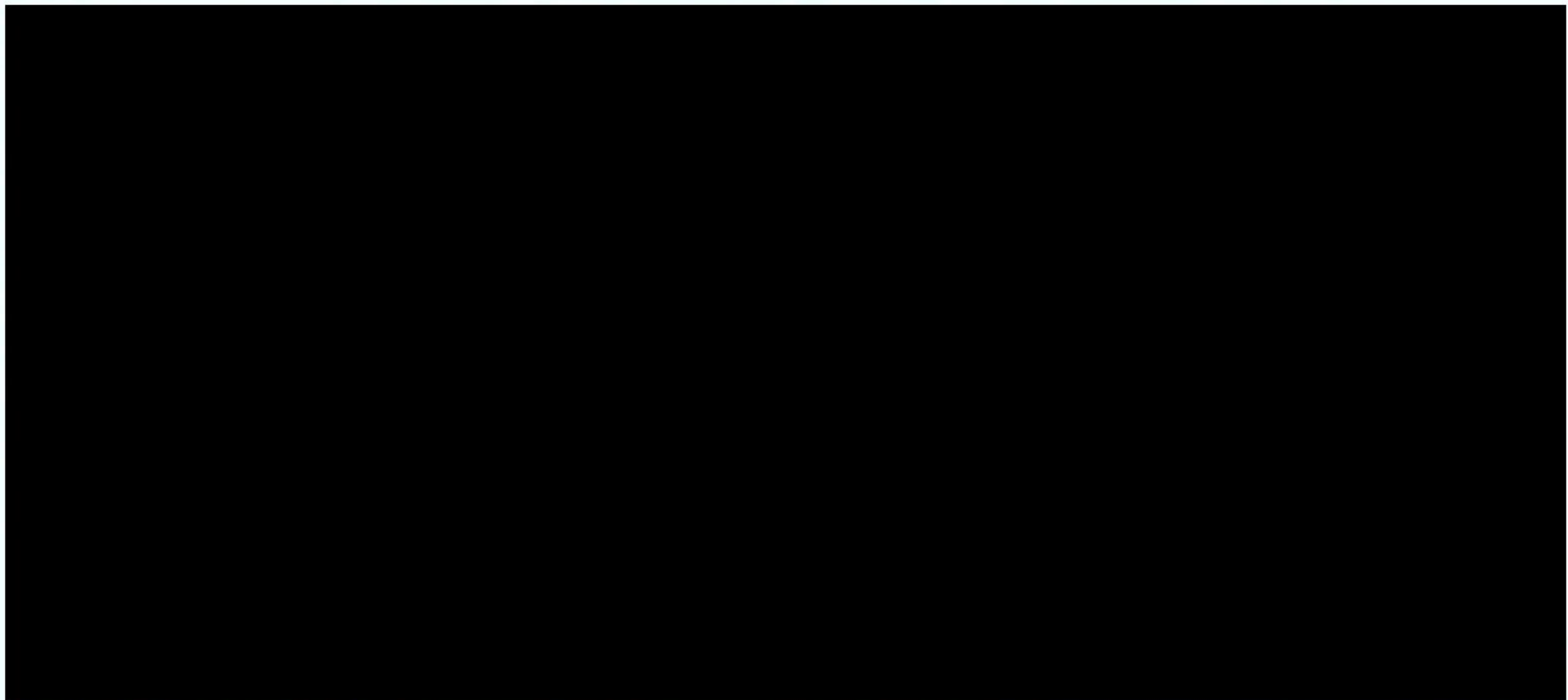


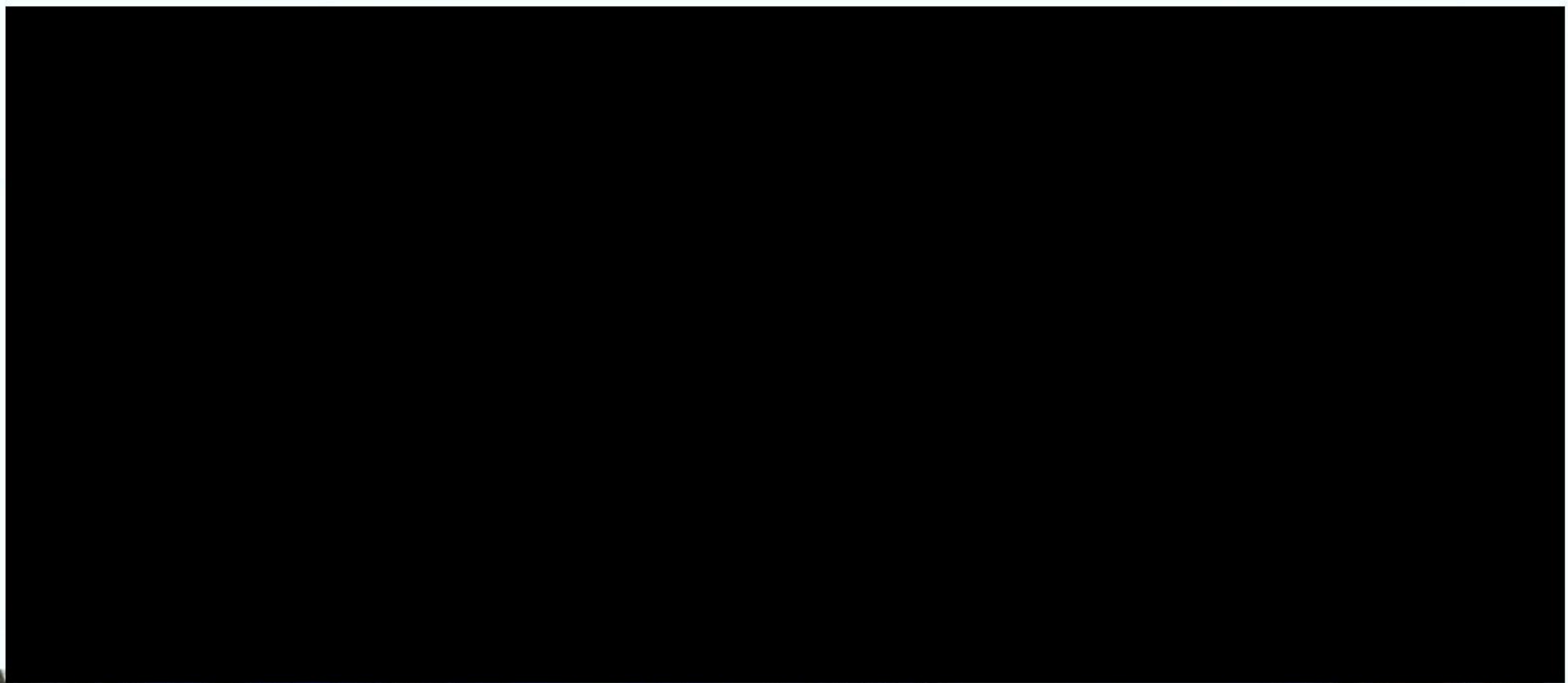
Some photos of [REDACTED]
Downs Road, in the centre of
& surrounded by development
plan ([REDACTED]) to give an
idea of the openness &
exposure & lack of privacy
development would bring
& the issues with trees also.

Developer wants to put a public
footpath around [REDACTED] 4 houses
[REDACTED] also.

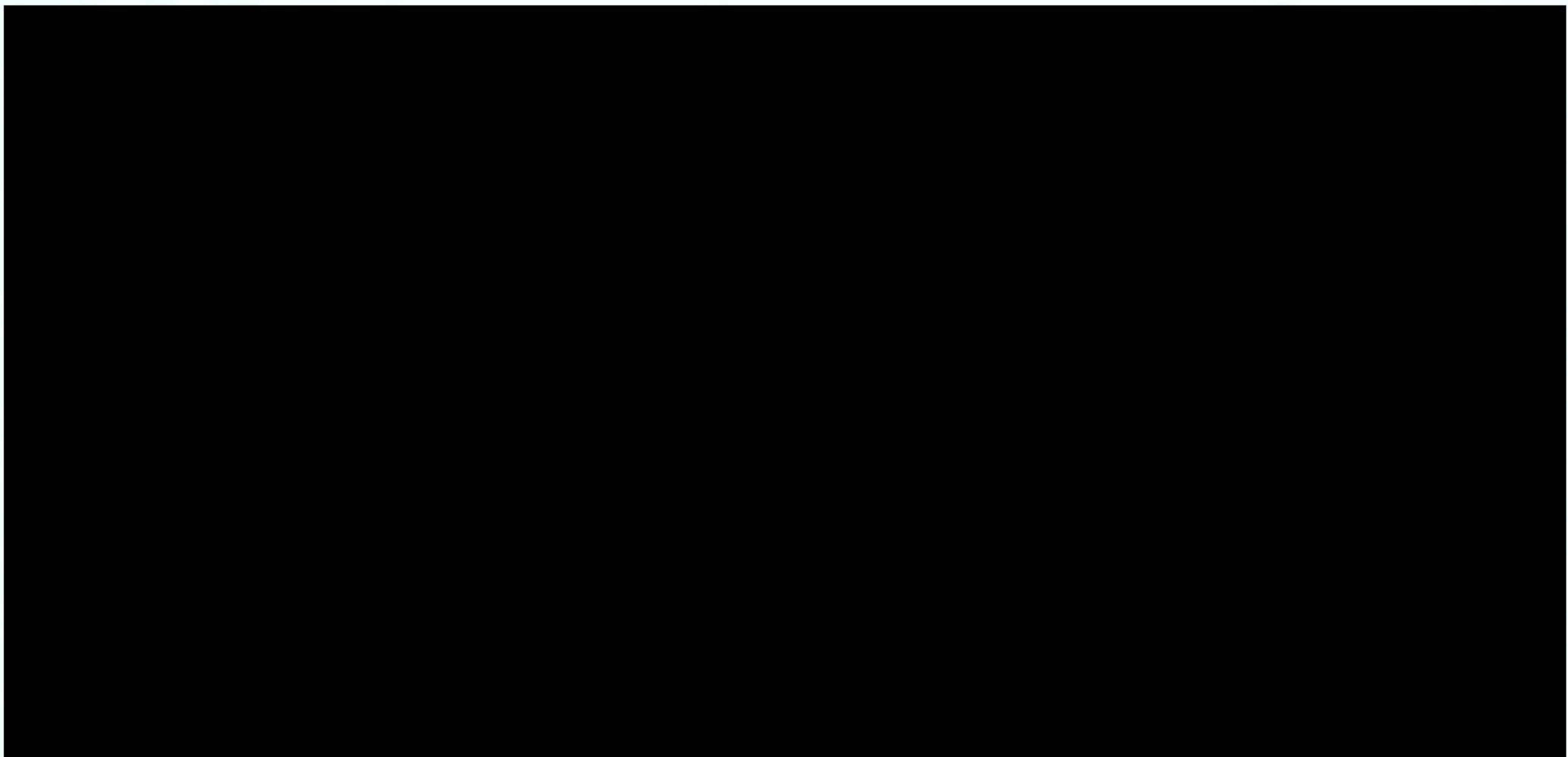








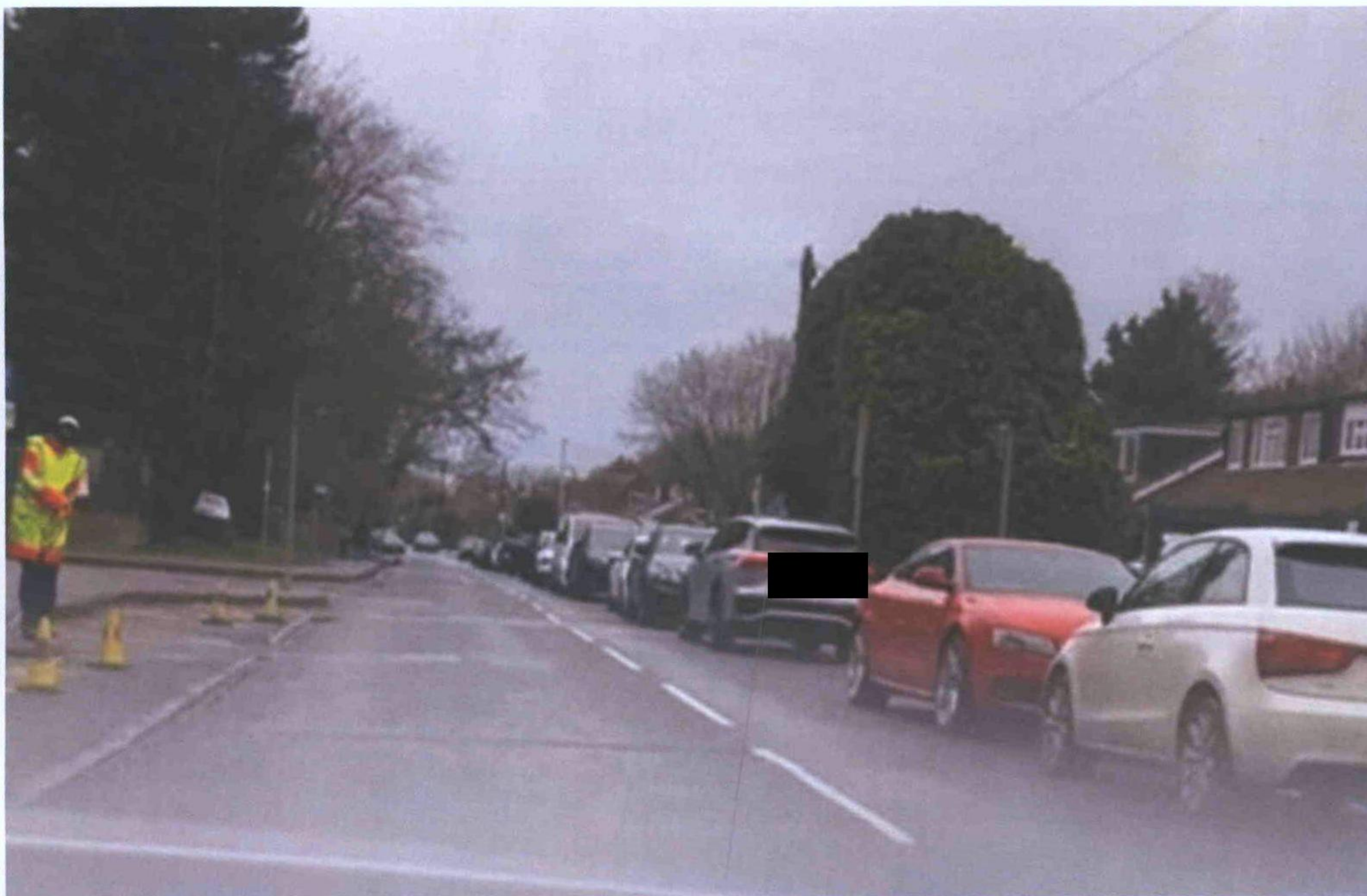




Some images to give an idea of size & location of the plan & proximity to the school & proximity of the proposed new road to the school.



Parking along Downs Road where proposed new road would be located





Drone photograph showing existing orchard, trees & hedgerow, which would be destroyed for proposed development. Mature trees for tiny saplings are not a like for like exchange.

Right side of photo shows the school, that the proposed development would be sharing a boundary line with.

Area is Greenbelt, fertile farming land and natural habitats to owls, birds of prey adders and badgers and bats, among others. These areas are irreplaceable.



Whole of the green area in the right of the photo above would be the new road and small part of new development right up against Istead Rise Primary School



Another view showing proximity of site to Istead Rise Primary School, Young Risers Pre-School & Kiddiecare



Blue arrow shows the entrance to Istead Rise Primary School, Young Risers & Kiddiecare. Yellow arrow shows location for the proposed new road to access the planned new housing estate (154 houses and sole vehicular access point!)





Another view of part of the site from above Downs Road looking towards the school.

Local GP Places

Developer stated:

- Istead Rise (Darnsway) has capacity for 7,740 new patients

Letter from surgery says they have zero capacity

Developer stated:-

- Meopham has capacity for 5,810 new patients

Letter from surgery says they have zero capacity

(copy of developer presentation
+ GP letters attached)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Downs Road
Istead Rise
GRAVESEND
Kent
DA13 9HG

4th September 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 18th August, the discussion by telephone yesterday and the further information you provided, regarding the proposals for building around Istead Rise. Having reviewed the printouts, I do recall the meeting back in June, unfortunately, I was on leave and out of the country at the time and therefore wasn't able to attend.

So, regarding the information we discussed, I can confirm that the NHS GP Database is wrong! We noted this earlier this year when it was released, but have been unable to get NHS England to change it. But it is WRONG!

It is difficult to be accurate about some numbers as the clinical system no longer provides a breakdown by site. But in broad terms (we search by postcode and break it down from there):

Practice List size:	16100 patients
Istead Rise:	5000 patients
Shorne:	2300 patients
Sumerhouse (Bexley):	8800 patients

In terms of GP numbers, we are (across the practice, ie 3 sites):

GP Partners:	5
Salaried GP's:	1.6
Total:	6.6 FTE

I can only assume that the NHS GP Database has picked up the GP Registrars – who are not employed by the practice, but seconded to us as part of their training. Numbers change every 4 months, we can have between 8 and 11 registrars based with us at any one time, but they are not "our" staff and should not be included. (The figures would also have included Dr Payne, our previous senior partner, who retired in February, he was 0.6 FTE and he was replaced by a 0.6 FTE Salaried GP, so that would balance the

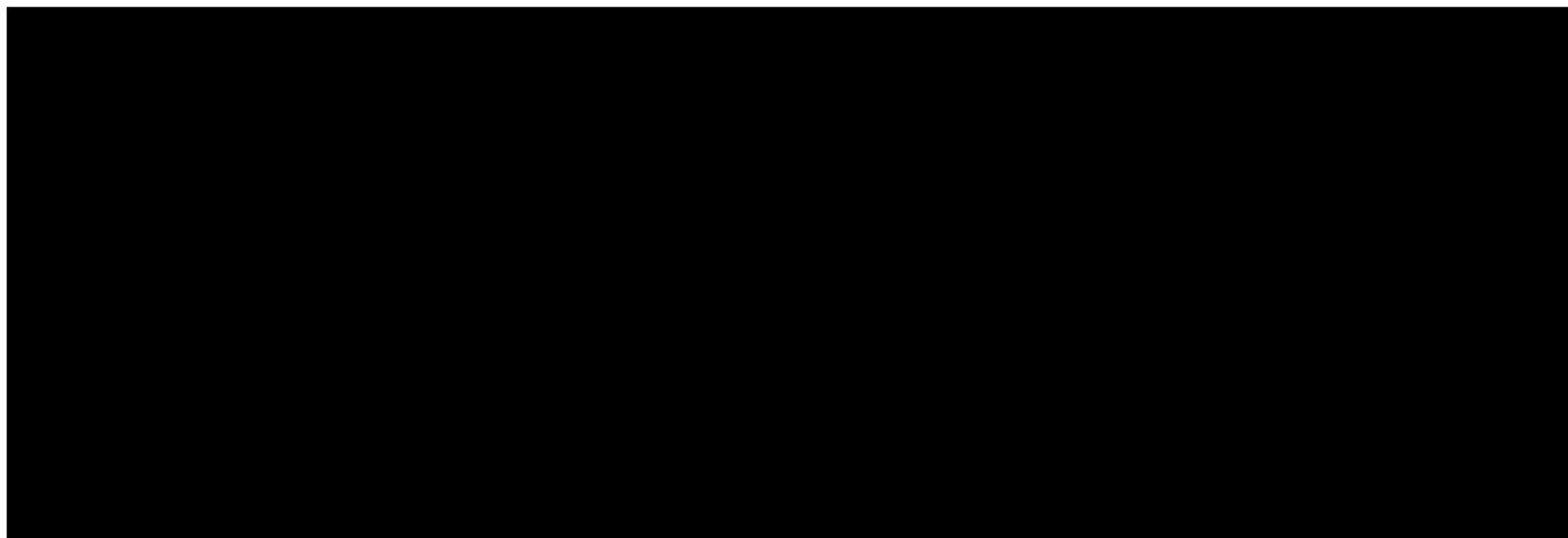
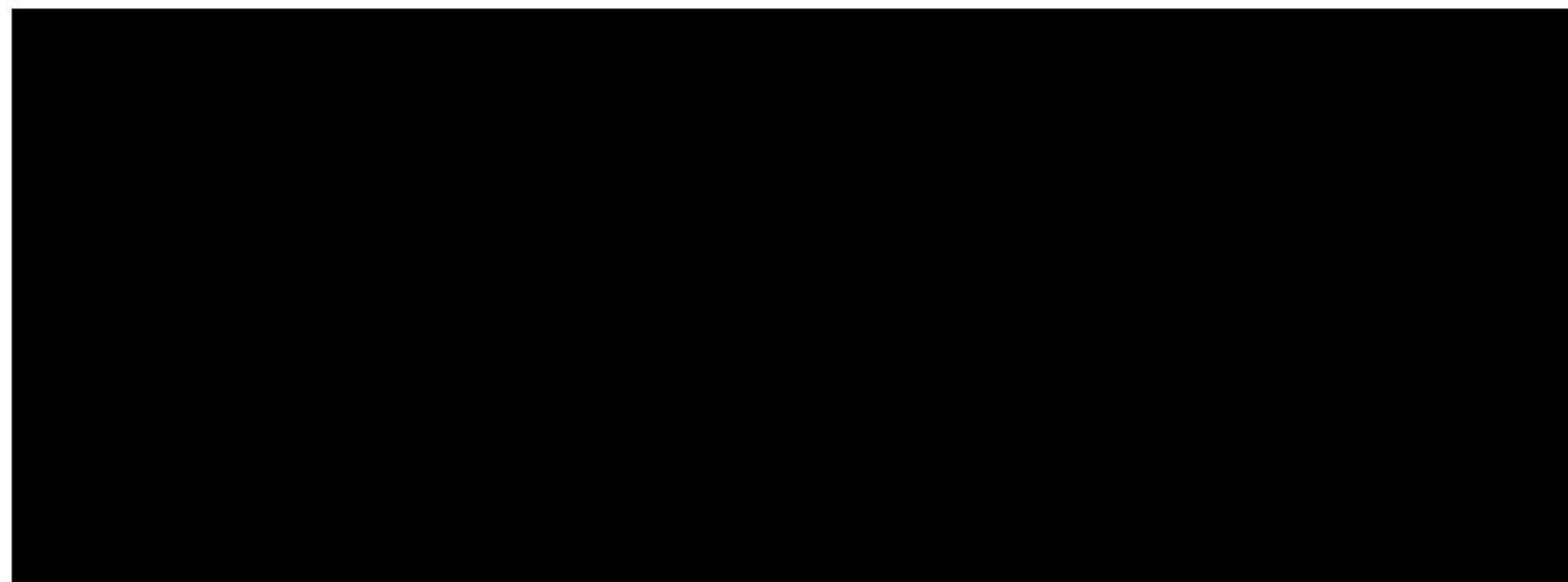
Branch Surgery: Shorne Village Surgery, Crown Lane, Shorne, GRAVESEND, Kent DA12 3DY
Telephone: 01474 247003

Branch Surgery: Summerhouse Surgery, Beaconsfield Road, BEXLEY, Kent DA5 2AE
Telephone: 01322 402210

figures back.) Whilst I do not have intimate knowledge of Meopham's situation, I do know that they are not 8 GP partners and like us, are a training practice, although they have fewer registrars, I suspect the figure quoted for them includes their registrars in a similar way to us. If you use their formula against our actual GP FTE, we are $6.6 \times 1.1216 = 7403$ patients, so we have negative capacity of 8697!

In terms of capacity, we do not have any spare capacity currently, with a daily fight to meet the excessive demand we are constantly under. The assumptions of the developers are I am afraid, fatally flawed. We have currently got no extra capacity with clinical rooms, they are fully utilised, so increasing numbers of clinicians is not possible with nowhere to put them! Further, the funding for general practice remains very poor, and is based on patient numbers, but paid in arrears. So funding for increasing lists will follow the increase in due course, but unless there is a massive increase, it is insufficient to be able to afford an extra GP – no one wants to be employed for 0.1 FTE of a role, which is all the extra funding would allow for.

I hope that helps and thank you again for the information provided.





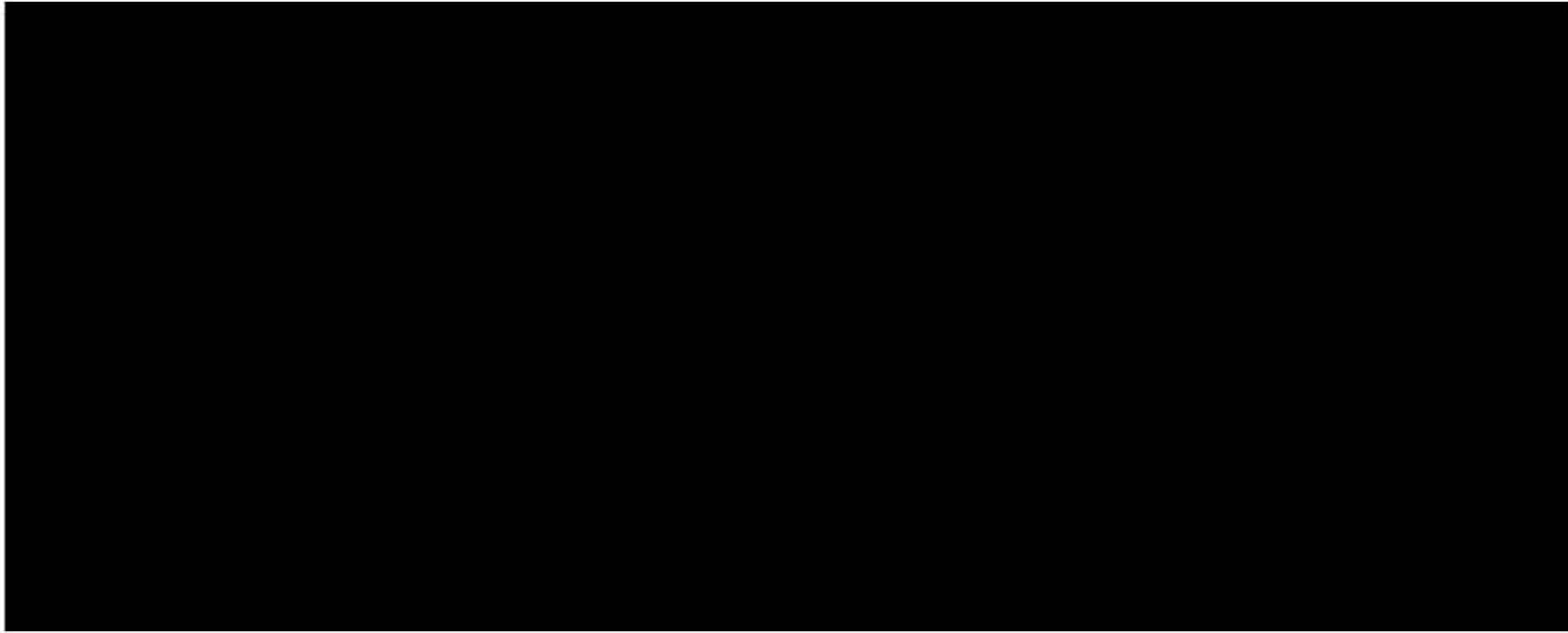
21st October 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I can confirm that  is currently very much at the limit of its capacity.

We would have no way whatsoever of offering any medical services to any of the proposed development within the village.

We have had no contact from council, government or developers to ascertain our capacity.





Data published by Esquire Developments on the GP services and availability in Istead Rise and Meopham serving Istead Rise Residents.

GP Provision

To understand the current capacity of GP practices within the local area, that could serve future residents of this development, an assessment of the NHS GP database has been undertaken. This database provides information on GP Practices, the number of GPs working at each practice and the number of patients on roll. The database is released quarterly, and this assessment is based on data from February 2025.

Using the Healthy Urban Development Unit (HUDU) standards, which is the nationwide approach to assessing capacity within a GP practice, a standard of 1,800 patients to 1 full-time GP is applied.

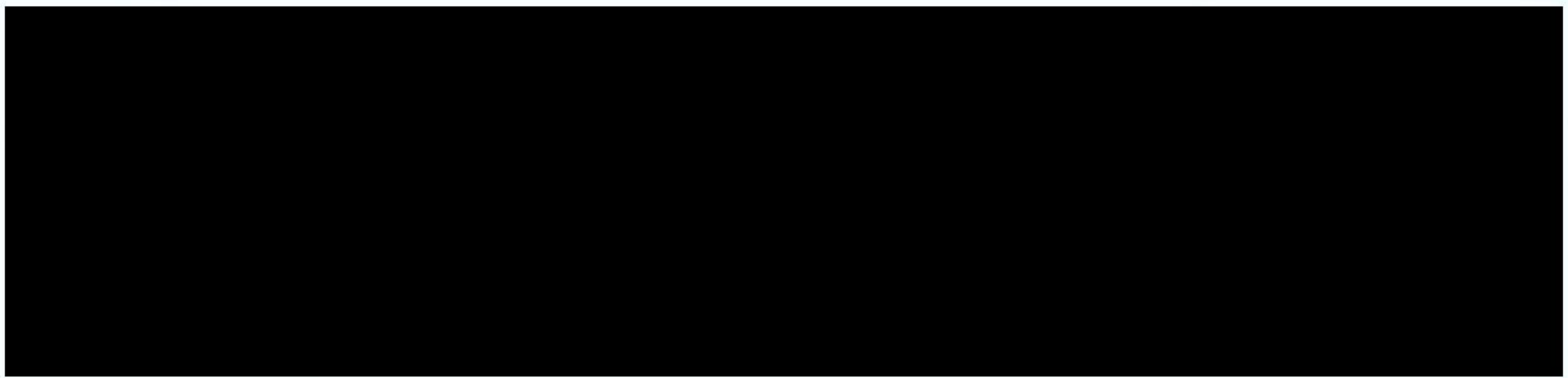
A table below sets out the local GP Practices and their current capacities based on the HUDU standard.

Practice	Postcode	FTE GPs	Patients	Ratio	Capacity
Downs Way Medical Practice	DA139LB	13.3	16,116	1:1,216	7,740
Meopham Medical Practice	DA130AH	8.9	10,227	1:1,148	5,810

Presently, there is suggested capacity within both the Downs Way Medical Practice, and Meopham Medical Practice to accommodate additional patients.

Based on the development of 160 dwellings with an average household size of 2.4 people. This would generate a need for 384 patient places. Therefore, there is capacity within the existing provision to accommodate the demand arising from the development.

Information about flood
Risk & Sewage



FLOOD RISK TO DOWNS ROAD

Downs Road Istead Rise was built on an old riverbed with the land on both sides sloping down towards the road. Behind Downs Road the fields, trees & hedgerows act as a natural soakaway giving protection to the road from flash flooding during a torrential downpour.

If this area were to be built over it would be catastrophic for Downs Road. Esquire have put two soakaway areas in their plans, which would work fine for parts of Downs Road in normal rain, but not during a torrential downpour. At this point the road would flood as the surface water would not be able to drain away quickly enough (in the same way Sainsbury's in Pepper Hill gets flooded about once a year due to the slight gradient of their car park towards the store) There are **no** soakaway areas planned towards Long Walk or Istead Rise Primary School! Downs Road already has a problem with huge amounts of standing water after a downpour, which can be there for days. Paving over the fields sloping towards the road would completely flood the road!

Flooding of Downs Road would be disastrous for residents. As well as the damage to properties, there would be the high cost of repairs and house insurance prices would increase dramatically, with many insurance providers no longer offering insurance. This is completely unacceptable.



This is a photograph taken from one side of the valley towards the other side of the valley. Downs Road is at the bottom. The opposite side of the valley works perfectly as a natural soakaway, but if it were to be built over flood water would have nowhere to go except downwards into Downs Road!

Information below sourced from 'The Flood Hub website

Flash Flooding

Flash flooding often happens without warning due to intense and heavy rainfall. Places that have gone through a long period of dry weather, as well as urban areas with a lot of hard surfaces, are at higher risk of flash flooding as the land can't absorb the water. Locations situated near steep valleys are particularly vulnerable to this type of flooding.

The Environment Agency have put together some further information on flash flooding, click [here](#) to find out more.

The source of the flash flood will often determine who is responsible for managing the flood risk.

Developing this area of land would put existing homes along Downs Road in much higher risk of flooding and devaluing them in the process.

FT Q 043

FLASH FLOODING

Flash floods are generally associated with short bursts of intense rainfall and are subject to location, ground conditions and the capacity of drainage infrastructure. They occur when the ground cannot absorb the water quickly enough, which can lead to drainage systems becoming overwhelmed. Some of the causes are outlined below:

Built Environment	Drainage	Ground Conditions	Topography
In urban areas, hard surfaces prevent surface water from naturally infiltrating into the ground. Features such as driveways, car parks and housing estates use impermeable materials, leading to increased surface water runoff because the water cannot seep into the ground.	After a heavy rainfall event, drains can become inundated by large amounts of water in a short period of time and might not have the capacity to cope with such large volumes. Roadside gullies are designed to keep roads free from surface water but can become covered with leaves and litter, preventing water from entering sewer systems.	When lawns and fields have been dry for long periods, the ground becomes hard, preventing surface water from percolating and causing it to run off overland. On the other hand, if the ground is saturated from previous wet weather, it cannot absorb more water, leading to significant surface water runoff.	A large area might receive the same amount of rainfall, but flooding will occur only in specific places. This happens because water runs downhill to lower ground, where it collects and pools. This rise and fall of the land, known as topography, determines how water flows and where it accumulates, guiding drainage to common outlets.



CASE STUDY: Poynton, Cheshire

On the 31st July 2019, numerous homes and businesses were affected by flash flooding in Poynton as heavy and intense rainfall hit the area, overwhelming drains which caused Poynton Brook to overflow. Homes, businesses and infrastructure were flooded and damaged by the floodwater. A major incident was declared and many homes were evacuated as nearly a month's worth of rain (~2 inches) fell in just 24 hours. Poynton Fire Station responded to more than 20 incidents over a four hour stretch including rescuing at least 11 people from floodwater. Roads were closed, including the new £290 million A555 dual carriageway, where two cars were abandoned and 800,000 litres of water had to be pumped away.

GRAVESHAM

Borough Council

BOROUGH TECHNICAL OFFICER

Roger Hill, BSc, DMS, CEng, MIMunE.



~~Northumberland Road,~~
Northumberland Road,
Istead Rise,
NORTHFLEET,
Kent

TOWN HALL
NORTHFLEET
GRAVESEND, KENT DA11 9HW
Gravesend (0474) 63216 Ext. 24

My ref PT/VL/P1/28

Your ref

Date 21st July, 1980

Dear Sir and Madam,

Proposed Recreation Centre
Istead Rise

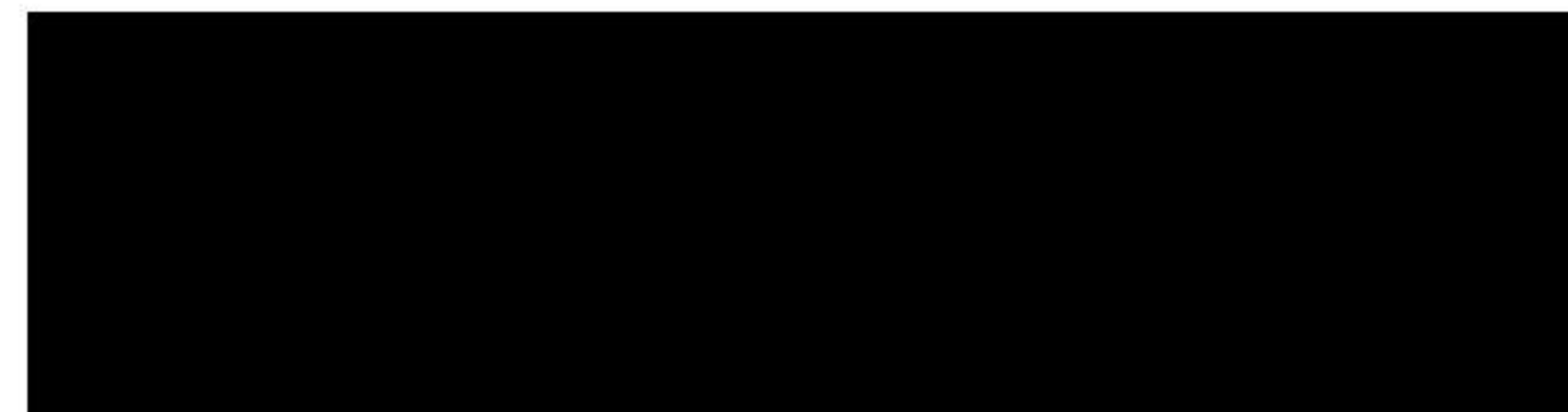
I understand that you have expressed concern over the proposed new drain connection to the sewer at rear of No. 46 Northumberland Road.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to drain the new recreation centre elsewhere due to levels. Your neighbours, Mr. & Mrs. Castle, were approached following a suggestion from a member of the local residents' organisation and they kindly agreed to assist the Council by allowing access to the sewer in their back garden. I understand that you are concerned that the additional flow into the sewer could cause problems but I would emphasise that this is extremely unlikely, in fact, the additional surcharge from the recreation centre, which will mainly be clean water, will definitely assist self-cleansing of the sewer due to the flushing action from the higher level.

Regarding the construction of the drain, it is inevitable that some inconvenience will be caused particularly if heavy machinery is used; however, every effort is to be made to minimise inconvenience and retain boundary hedges and in this respect the excavation is to be hand dug - heavy plant will not be used apart from a small compressor where concrete is to be broken-out.

I trust this clarifies the matter and overcomes your concern. Please let me know should you have any further queries.

Yours faithfully,



Borough Technical Officer

When calling please ask for Mr. Thomas

When replying please address your correspondence to The Borough Technical Officer

Information about character,
location & infrastructure
of Istead Rise

Supporting Information

Istead Rise is characterised by its beautiful iconic view of the orchard, fields & hedgerow from Upper Avenue.

An almost identical image has been posted by Gravesham Borough Council as an illustration of Gravesham's countryside mentioning that 'damage to wildlife and the grassland habitats will not be tolerated' (see additional sheet for print out of post).

This is the area for which planning permission is being sought by Esquire to build this huge new housing Estate. It is totally inappropriate and would radically alter the character of the village, as well as destroying natural habitats.



The image below illustrates how the new view could look if this development were to go ahead



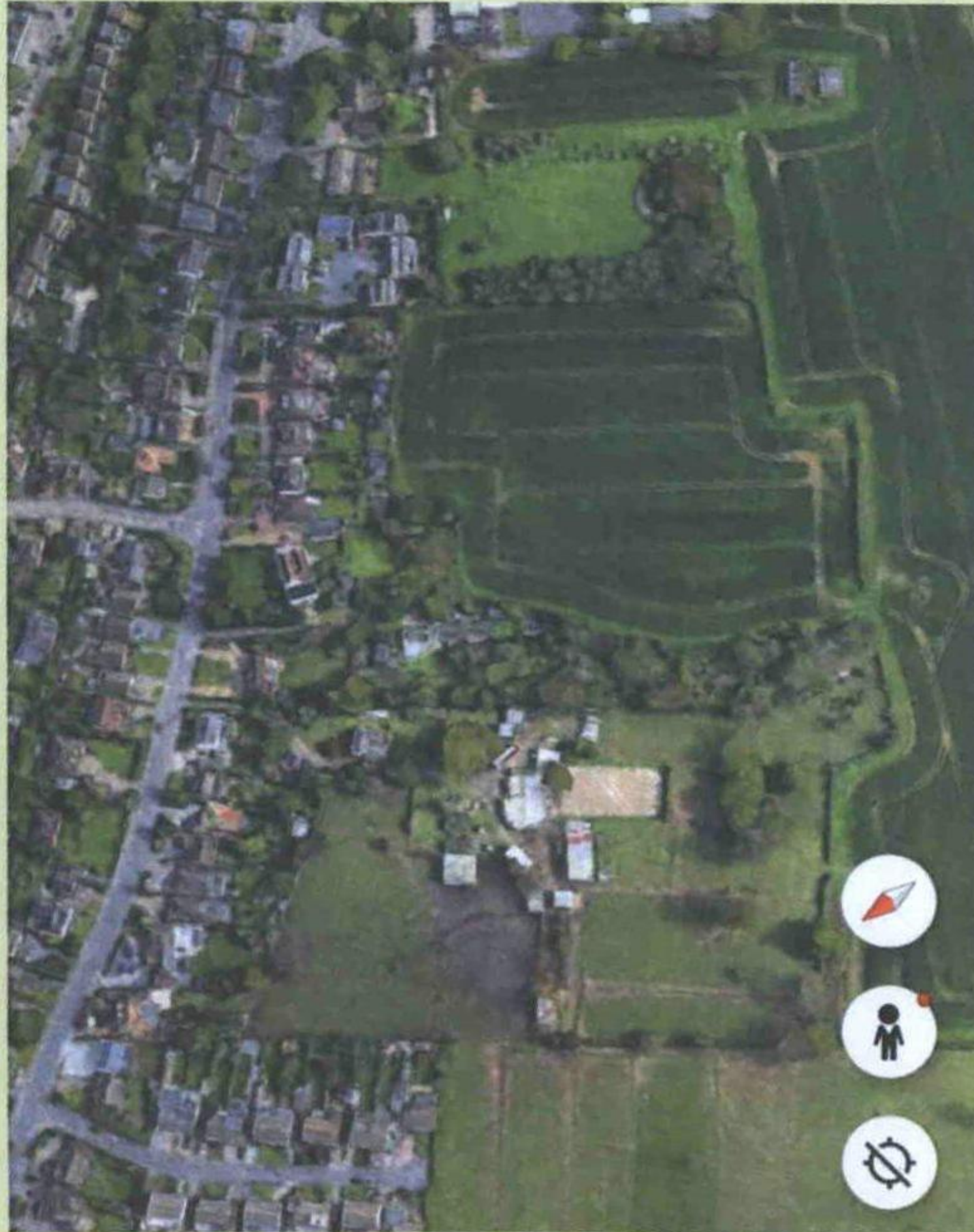
AI generated image for illustration only, not exact representation

Greenbelt & Urban Sprawl

The proposed site is on valuable Greenbelt land, which currently has arable crop fields, which are being used for that purpose. There is also an orchard, hedgerows, woodland and a working farm, as can be seen from the aerial photograph from Google Earth below.

There is also a significant amount of wildlife living in this area including a number of protected species, these include a barn owl, bats, badgers, adders and different birds of prey. Building on this land would mean destroying their natural habitats

The proposed site does **not** meet the accepted definition of 'Greybelt', so it would be wrong for it to be treated as such.



In addition Greenbelt land provides environmental & climate benefits such as carbon absorption, flood prevention, air quality improvements and contributes to food security as much of it is agricultural land.

This development would be inappropriate and would not be a benefit to local population in any way.

Gravesham has a huge number of empty properties and the government has made it clear that development **must** prioritise brownfield sites first. Gravesham has many such sites. Also developments are now required to deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain not a LOSS!

The Greenbelt is there for a number of reasons. The UK's Greenbelt policy primarily aims to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, preventing the merging of towns & villages, safeguarding the countryside, protecting natural habitats and preserving the character of towns & villages.

If this development were to go ahead, the small space between Istead Rise and New Barn would be further closed merging the two villages to become the size of a town and losing their unique character & identities.

The Google Earth image below shows clearly just how close the two villages are from each other. It is essential for both that this greenbelt gap remains in tact.





Istead Rise

Shops

Church

Downs Road

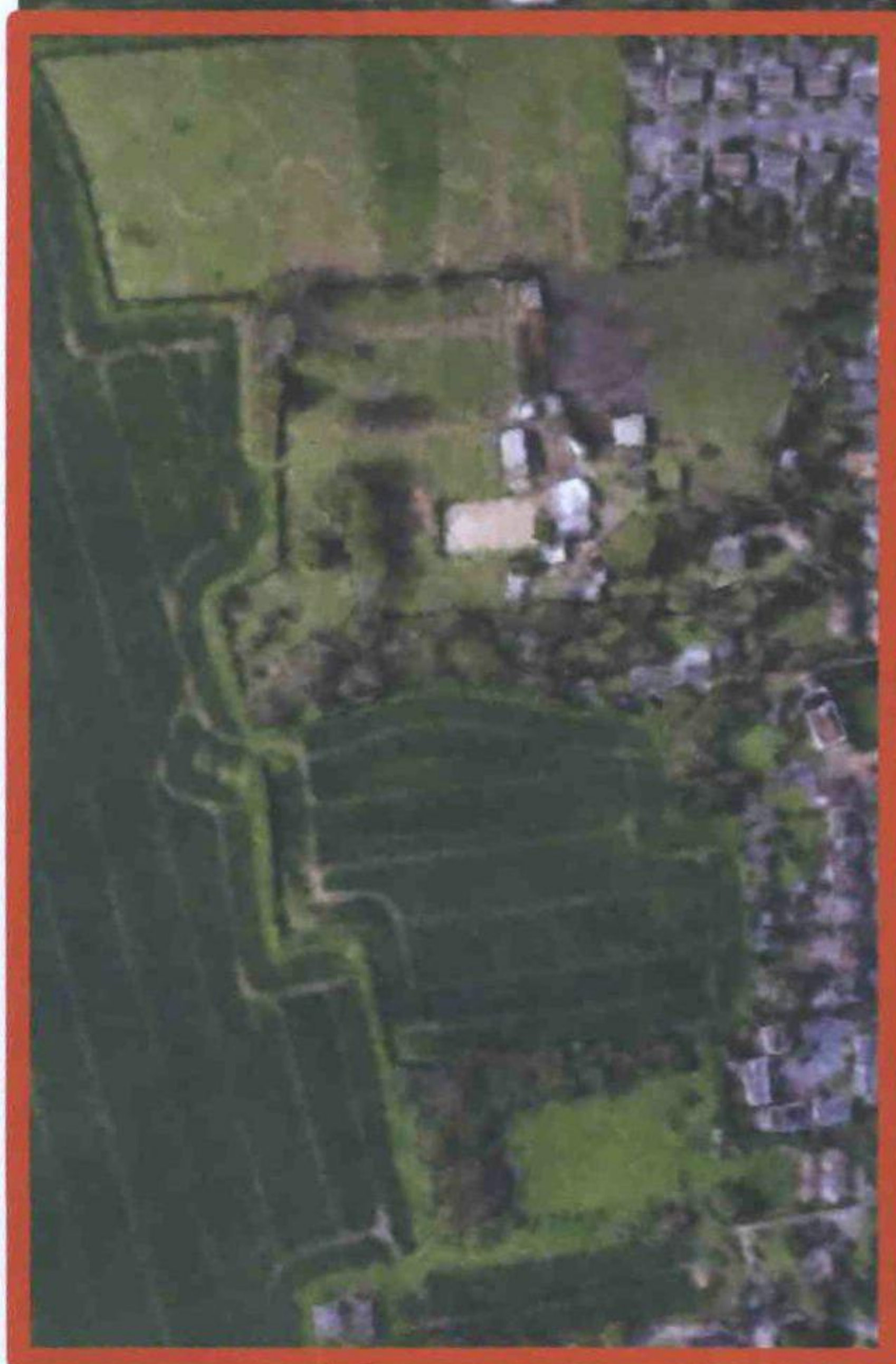
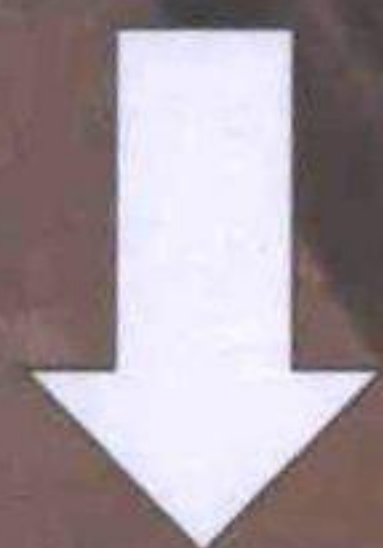
School

GREENBELT

Planned Development Zone

New Barn

Planned
Development
Zone



Church

Upper Avenue

Shops

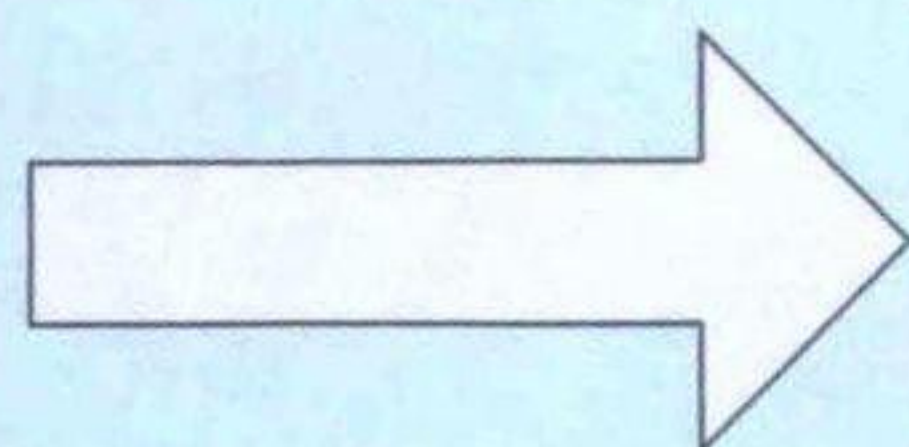
School



Proposed location for
new housing estate of
154 houses.
Planning Application
Ref: 20251233

Wrotham Rd

Istead Rise



Proposed
Development
Zone

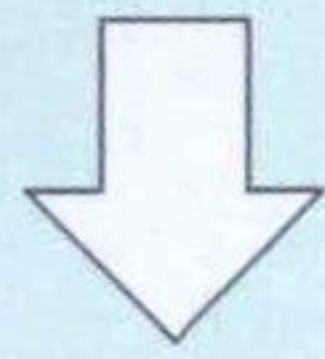
Greenbelt

New Barn

New Barn Rd



Planned
Development
Zone



Downs Rd

Istead Rise



iddiecare Kindergarten

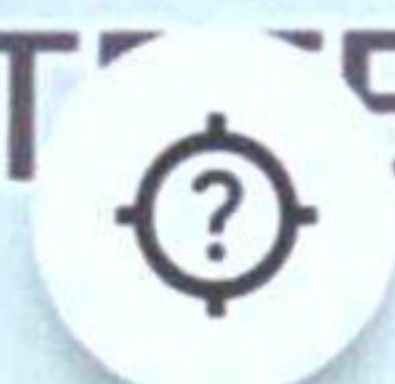
Downs Rd

SW



Nash Bank

NASH STREET



Supplementary Information - Lack of Infrastructure in Istead Rise

Istead Rise as a community is very poorly provided for in terms of infrastructure and what infrastructure we do have is already pushed to its limits with our current population.

GP Provision Esquire stated in their presentation that Downs Way Medical Practice in Istead Rise has capacity for 7,740 new patients. This is absolutely **untrue**. See additional letter from the Managing Partner at Downs Way for complete clarification on this. The surgery say it has **NO** capacity for additional patients and has a daily fight to meet the excessive demand they are currently under. Meopham surgery have said that they are in the same situation and has sought legal advice about Esquire's untrue claims regarding this.

Any new residents of Istead would have to find a surgery some distance out of area. The local hospitals are also massively over stretched in comparison to other parts of Kent & waiting lists are longer.

Public Transport There is none to speak of! We have **no** train station and a very **limited** bus service, which does not run on Sundays or after 5.40pm coming from Gravesend. There isn't a bus service to Bluewater, Longfield or Dartford either. School buses should be excluded from bus service figures. Istead Rise residents are 100% car dependant. So development could easily add another 400 cars onto our already very busy congested roads.

Walking & cycling There are **no** safe walking or cycling routes to Gravesend or any other towns or villages. Development is not close enough to walk to local shops either & would additionally involve climbing a very steep hill to get to them.

Local Shops Istead Rise only has a few local shops with a small car park. Already traffic queues to get in and out of the car park and accidents are frequent. More infrastructure is already needed here and could not accommodate a larger population.

Schools & Colleges In this area there are not enough secondary school or college places for our existing population and there is a great deal of competition for places. Children can end up being placed in a school from outside their local area and put on a waiting list for their preferred local school. This number of new houses would drastically add to this problem.

Roads & Village Access Points Development could easily add around 400 new cars onto our existing busy roads. Already traffic queues to get out of Istead Rise onto the Wrotham Road A227 and New Barn Road and if an accident occurs on the A2 traffic sometimes detours right through the village. There is only one planned vehicular access point to the proposed development and this is right next to Istead Rise Primary school, where Downs Road is already completely congested at school drop off time.

New Traffic Junction Development would see the creation of a new hazardous traffic junction, which would be located adjacent to the primary school. Children walking to school would have to navigate their way across this. Accidents and possibly deaths will likely occur. This junction would be exceptionally dangerous located where it is planned to be.

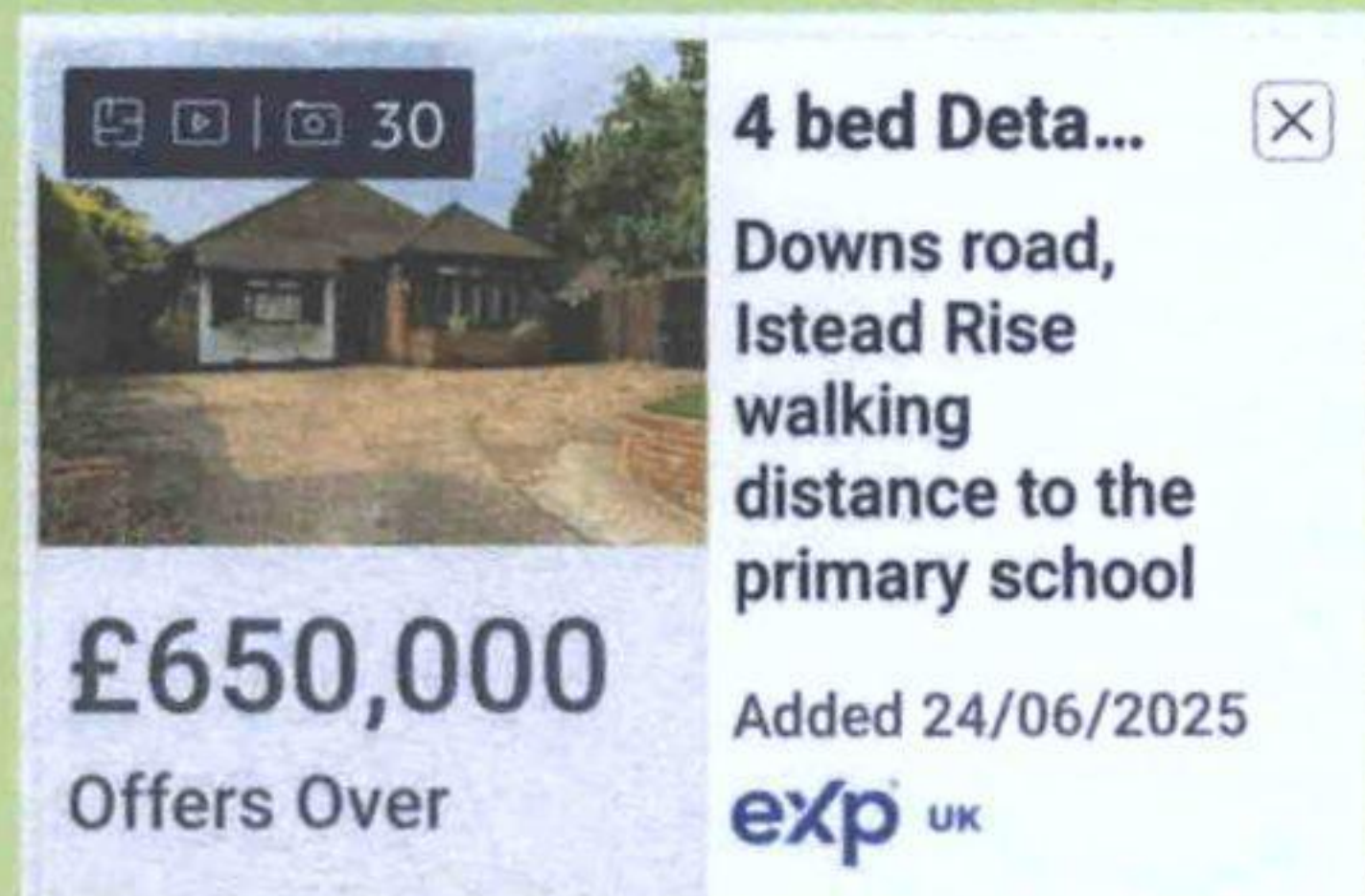
Parking & Child Safety Many developments have restrictions on parking and rules regarding the types of vehicles that can park there. Therefore roads around the development would house the overflow of the development's parking needs, causing the nearby roads around the school to be even more full up with parked cars, increasing the danger for school children crossing and making driving more hazardous. These parking problems would greatly increase the risk of accidents.

Emergency Access Points The two smaller access points designated for emergency services are completely unsuitable for being used in that way, being way too small & restrictive.

Additional Information

Contrary to what Esquire have said. **None** of these houses will be 'affordable'. Esquire only builds high-end properties. They have many developments, past and current on their website showing the different houses and options available. None of these are budget properties. The cheapest are around £600K and go up to well over one million.

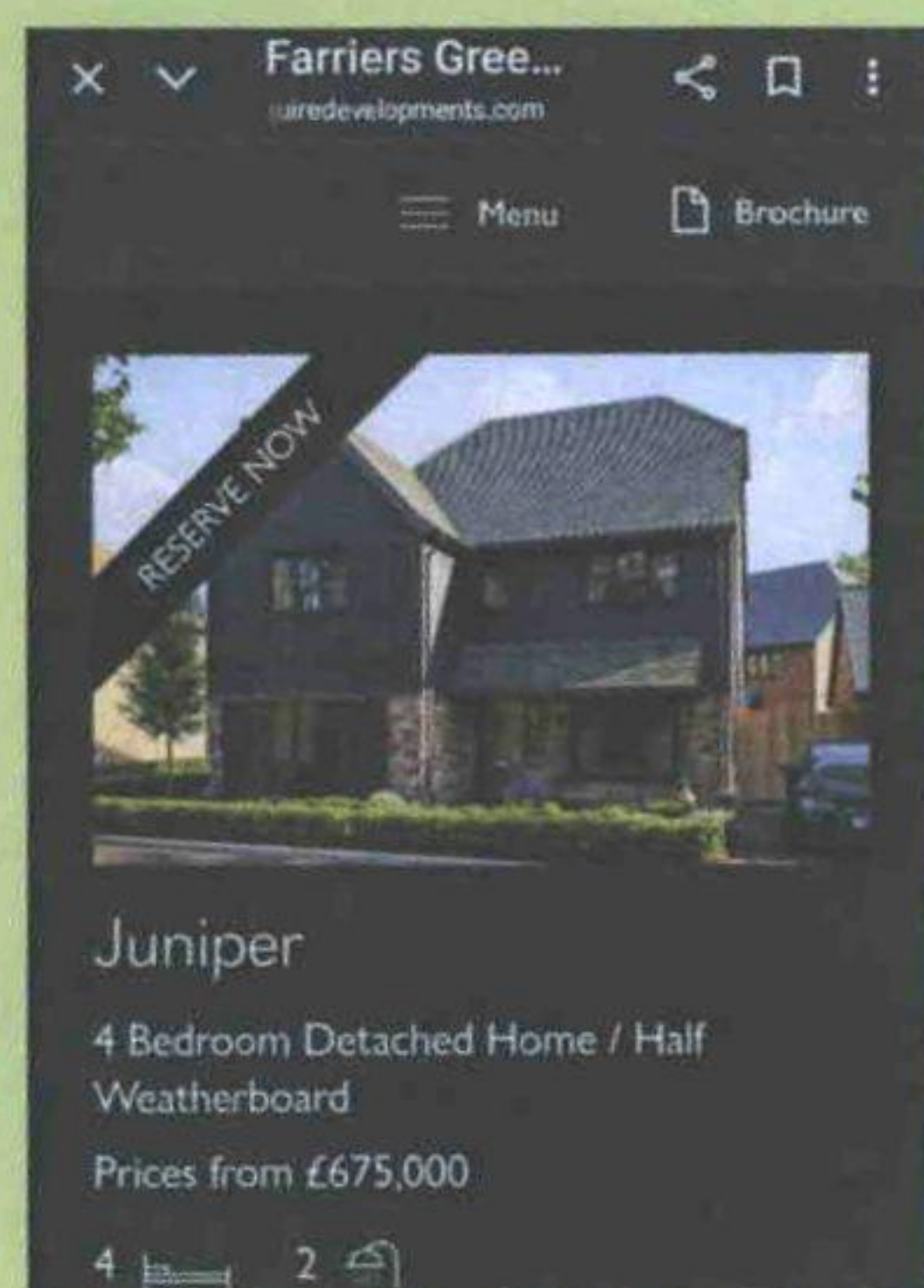
Esquire have refused to give any indications of possible pricing, but has said that their affordable housing is 20% below the market price at that time.



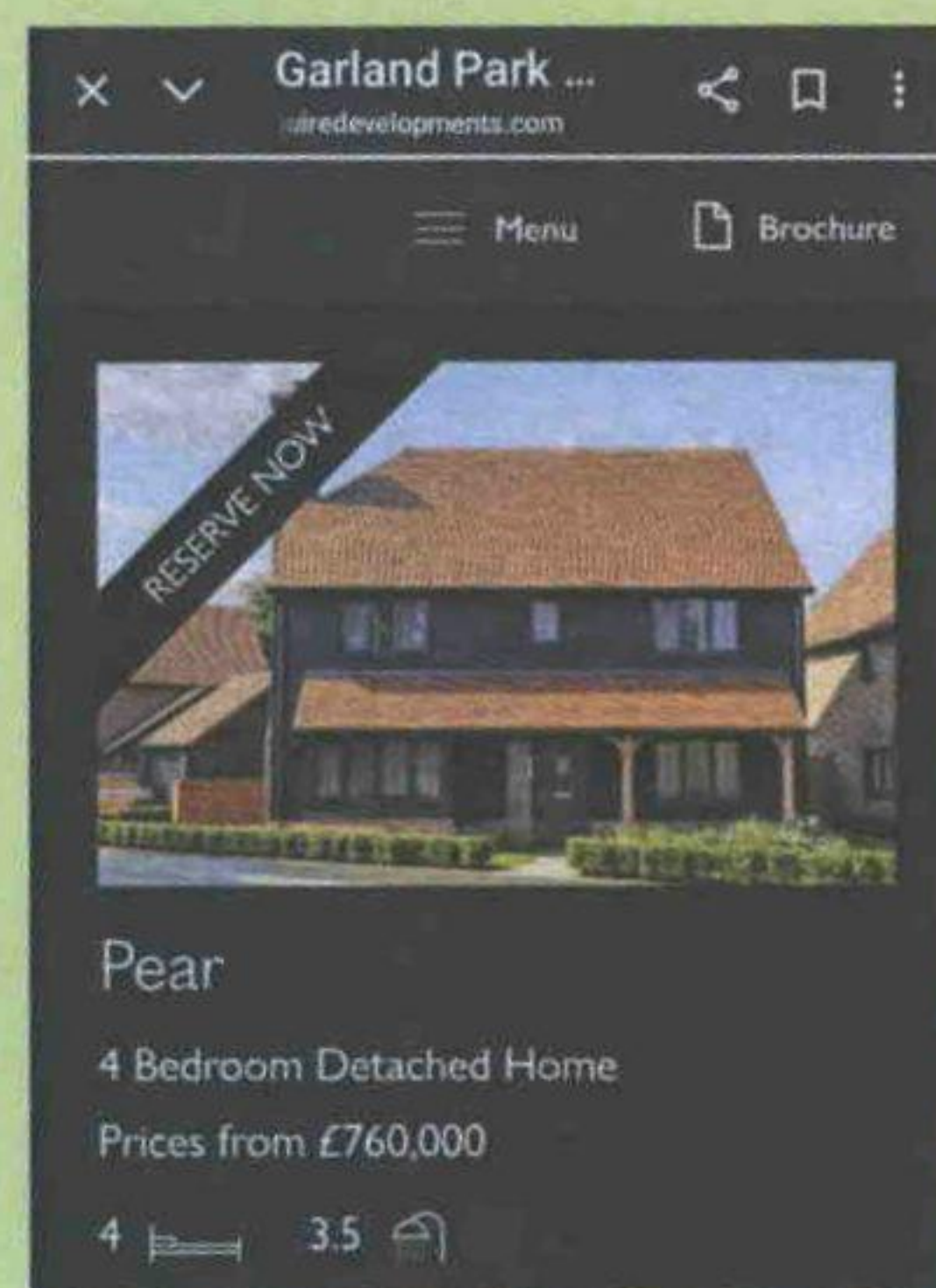
4 bed Deta...
Downs road,
Istead Rise
walking
distance to the
primary school
£650,000
Offers Over
Added 24/06/2025
exp UK

At this point in time, the property on the left is listed for sale advertised on Rightmove, located on Downs Road, Istead Rise, which is where Esquire are applying for planning permission. Some examples of Esquire's current properties for sale across different locations are shown below, from cheapest to higher end. Based on this information Istead Rise development properties would be expected to be marketed from **£600-£950K**

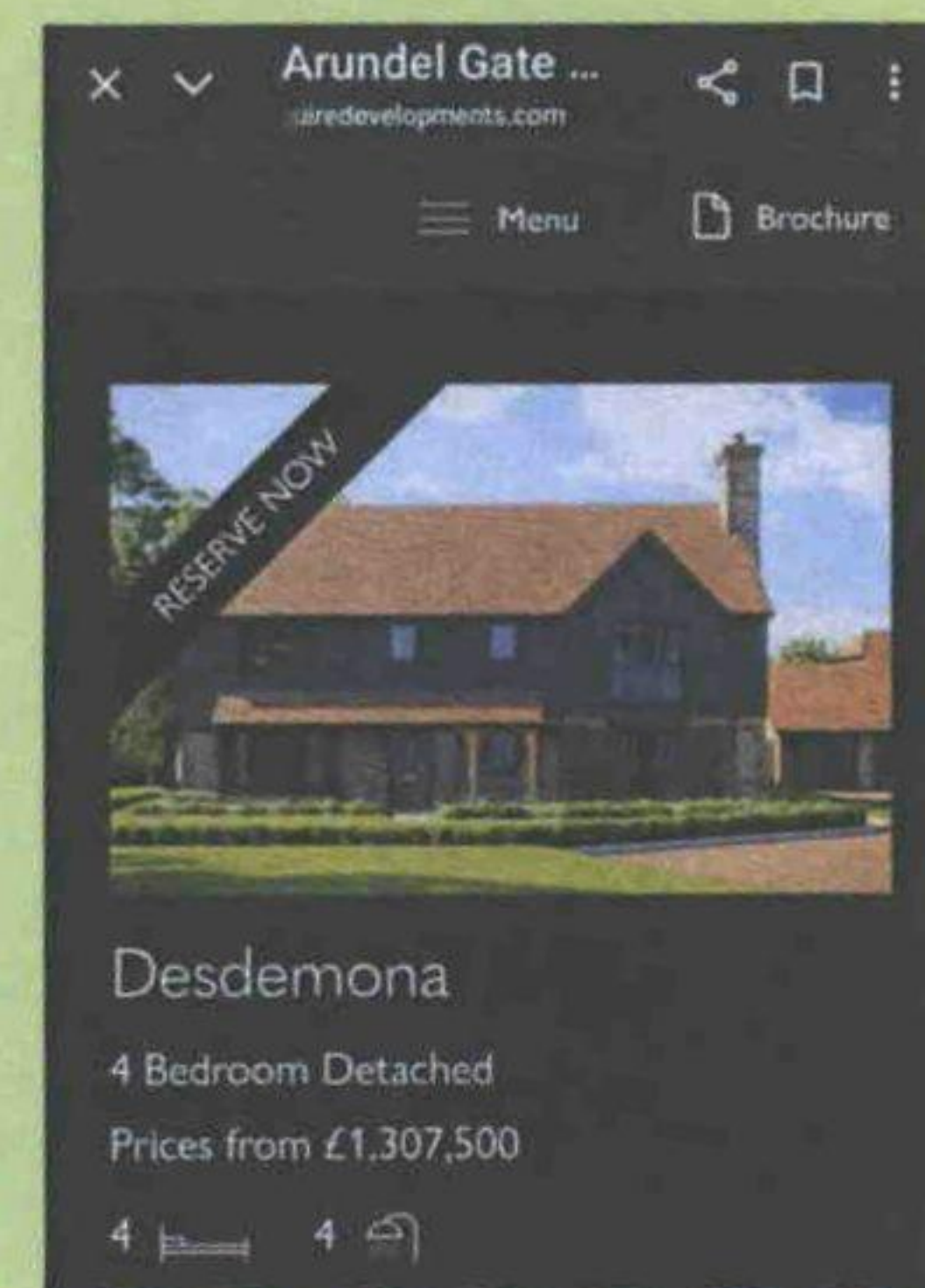
These types of properties do **NOT** reflect in any way the housing needs of the Gravesham area and would actually be attracting new people into the area from London!



Farriers Gree...
Menu Brochure
RESERVE NOW
Juniper
4 Bedroom Detached Home / Half
Weatherboard
Prices from £675,000
4 2



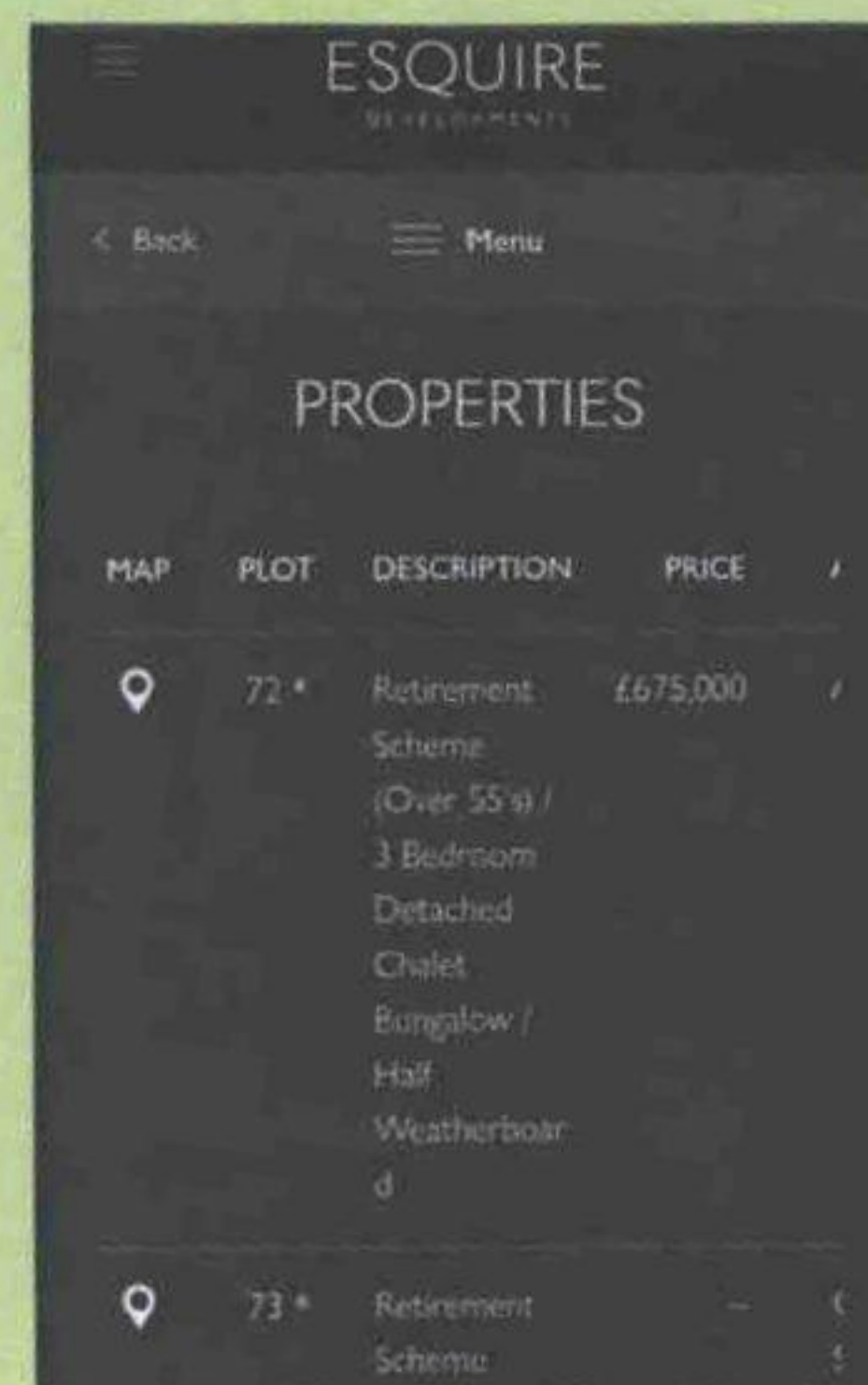
Garland Park ...
Menu Brochure
RESERVE NOW
Pear
4 Bedroom Detached Home
Prices from £760,000
4 3.5



Arundel Gate ...
Menu Brochure
RESERVE NOW
Desdemona
4 Bedroom Detached
Prices from £1,307,500
4 4

Esquire said that they have built many homes within this category before (affordable housing), but when pressed, could not provide one single example of this. However based on their definition of affordable housing (market value less 20%) then their affordable houses would be marketed for upward of **£520K**. This does not match Gravesham's affordable housing definition. Their prices do not reflect needs and budgets of local people. They would be completely unaffordable to those on the council's housing register as well as over 99% of the population of Gravesham.

The examples on the right show the discounted 'affordable' housing currently being sold by Esquire Developments. Their discounted over 55's houses are priced at £600K and £675K. Esquire's 'Affordable Housing' narrative is completely false. If permission were to be granted, genuinely affordable housing is **NOT** something Esquire will deliver!



ESQUIRE
DEVELOPMENTS
Back Menu
PROPERTIES
MAP PLOT DESCRIPTION PRICE
72 * Retirement Scheme (Over 55's) / 3 Bedroom Detached Chalet Bungalow / Half Weatherboard £675,000
73 * Retirement Scheme



MAP PLOT DESCRIPTION PRICE
69 * Retirement Scheme (Over 55's) / 3 Bedroom Detached Home / Half Weatherboard £600,000
70 Retirement Scheme (Over 55's) / 3 Bedroom Detached Home / All Brick £600,000
71 * Retirement Scheme £600,000

Post on Facebook from Gravesham Borough Council's website



Gravesham Borough Council ...

29 Apr · 🌐

Do you like visiting Gravesham's countryside? It's great, isn't it? 😊
But it is also vulnerable to damage if it is not looked after and treated with respect.

Please help us to keep Gravesham's countryside great by keeping to public footpaths and bridleways, and taking litter home.

And if you notice nuisance vehicles on land, fly-tipping, camping or fires, please take a note of vehicle registration plates and report it by calling Gravesham Borough Council on 01474 337 000 or via www.gravesham.gov.uk/keeping-gravesham-safe/tackling-anti-social-behaviour

In an emergency, always call 999.

Trespassing and criminal damage to wildlife and the grassland habitats will not be tolerated.



👍 69 💬 64 ➦ 7



Supporting Evidence Continued...

A photograph of Istead Rise's iconic view has been used by Gravesham Borough Council to illustrate 'Gravesham's Countryside' and that it needs to be 'looked after and treated with respect'.

Also that 'damage to wildlife and the grasslands will not be tolerated'

Esquire are requesting planning permission to destroy this exact greenbelt wildlife area to replace it with a new oversized housing estate.

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comfort of your
own home*

*High-quality
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with empathy
and dignity*

Sarah N, Gravesend

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Punjabi-speaking carers available.
Access to online portal detailing
carers assigned to clients



Home care services for older people & adults with learning difficulties

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A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"Wait for the Lord."



The above words are common ones found in the Bible, especially the Psalms.

Although this is a Christmas message many of you will be reading this during Advent.

Apart from the many different types of Advent calendars, Advent has become a bit of a forgotten season.

The shops and TV adverts have been trying to tell us these last few weeks that Christmas is already here. However, we have to wait. Which can be frustrating as none of us seem to like waiting (understandably!) as it often feels like things are out of our control.

For example, waiting at A&E or for news from a hospital appointment, waiting for a delayed flight or being stuck in traffic. The unknown always gets us thinking: "How long will I be here?" Which always makes it sound like a painful experience.

Instead, when things are out of our control, with a better frame of mind we can use the waiting time to be something full of joy. The joy of Advent is to wait for our Lord. Not to succumb to the marketing policies that are telling us Christmas is here already. We lose so much of Advent if we celebrate too soon.

When we look at the bigger picture too, we

often get frustrated with waiting because we all want to see a better world.

We wait for wars to end, for the climate crisis to be dealt with more seriously and for people to love each other more with the Biblical love that Jesus teaches. We long for change and justice.

As Christians, we know this comes with Jesus. We wait for His coming to dwell amongst us. The One who travels to Bethlehem to be born and will return in glory.

As Christians we have that 'hope' and we therefore should wait with patience and trust that this is all in God's timing ("I waited patiently for the Lord, he inclined and heard my cry," Psalm 40).

If you find yourself waiting for something unexpected this Christmas, then do use this as a God-given moment to try and find meaning or joy in it. It is the moment you now have, so use it for God's glory.

As an aside, I was listening to an album by the singer Nick Cave the other day which reminded me so much of the lengthy waiting we all experienced during the pandemic (it's now five years since that first lockdown Christmas).

As you'll recall, it was an incredibly frustrating time for all of us including singers, performers and actors as they could not ply their usual trade in front of an audience.

On this particular album by Nick Cave recorded during the pandemic, he performs a lot of his old songs by himself on a piano without his usual band with him. On the back cover of the album, Cave states:

"I loved playing deconstructed versions of my songs, distilling them to their essential forms."

This is also a good summary of how we can all treat Advent and Christmas. Can we try to deconstruct all that is happening in the usual December busyness (and often chaos!) and distil this festive period into its essential form?

As Christians we know that essential form is our belief and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That the waiting so many encountered all led to the glory of Jesus being born amongst us.

Jesus came among us, as a "light shining in the darkness." (John 1:5). If you get an opportunity this festive period, light a candle at home, turn off the lights and dwell on the flame burning brightly. Jesus is in our midst.

And we offer to Him all the darkness in the World in these present times knowing the light always win.

But sometimes we need to wait. And trust God in the waiting.

May this Christmas be full of great joy for you, and please do pray and help those who will find it a difficult period.

May we all know the Christ-child born for us, in our lives.

And may you deconstruct your Christmas into its most essential form.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS and blessings for 2026!

Rev Jim Fletcher

Chaplain to the Mayor of Gravesham
Rector of St George's, Gravesend

CHURCH SERVICES

CHRIST CHURCH, GRAVESEND

30 November	4pm	Christingle
21 December	6pm	Carols & readings
24 December	3pm & 5pm	Crib Service
	11pm	Midnight Mass
25 December	8am	Holy Communion BCP
	10am	Christmas Eucharist
28 December	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Parish Eucharist
4 January	8am	Holy Communion
	10am	Epiphany Eucharist

CITY PRAISE CENTRE

22 December	10am & 12pm	Christmas celebration
	11am-2pm	Christmas in the courtyard
25 December	10am	Christmas Day Service
31 December	9pm	Reset night

GRAVESEND METHODIST CHURCH

7 December	11am	Toy Service
14 December	2pm	Christmas Concert (£5 entrance)
21 December	11am	Carol Service
24 December	4pm	Crib and stories
25 December	11am	Family Worship

ST MARY'S, DENTON

25 December	9.30am	Mass
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ST BOTOLPH, NORTHFLEET

7 December	9.30am	Christingle
14 December	2.30pm	Advent Angel afternoon
20 December	7pm	Carol Service - Salvation Army
21 December	9.30am	Readings & Eucharist
24 December	2pm	Carols and Cake
	4pm	Christmas Starts Here
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass, First Eucharist
25 December	9.30am	Said Eucharist

ST MARK'S, ROSHERVILLE

7 December	11.15am	Christingle
21 December	11.15am	Readings & Eucharist
25 December	11am	Said Eucharist

ST GEORGE'S, GRAVESEND

14 December	10am	Nativity Service
21 December	6pm	Nine lessons and carols
24 December	4pm	Christingle
	11pm	Christmas Communion
25 December	10am	Family Communion

ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

24 December	3.30pm	Family Mass
	6pm	Family Mass
	11.30pm	Carols with Midnight Mass
25 December	8.30am	Family Mass
	10.30am	Family Mass

ST KATHERINE'S, SHORNE

24 December	7.30pm	Mass
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ST MARY'S, GRAVESEND

15 December	6.30pm	Carols by Candlelight
24 December	4pm	Christingle
	11.30pm	Midnight Communion
25 December	10am	Worship at the Crib
28 December	10am	Morning Worship

ST PETER & ST PAUL, MILTON, GRAVESEND

22 November	11am	Christmas Fayre
7 December	10am	Christingle Service
21 December	6.30pm	Carols by candlelight
24 December	4.30pm	First Communion of Christmas
25 December	10am	Christmas morning