

Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250727

Location: Atlas Truck And Plant Ltd Highview Longfield Road Longfield

Description: Erection of part retrospective/proposed new south/east and south/west boundary fences and planting.

Applicant: Atlas Truck And Plant Ltd

Site Visit Date: 01.10.25

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form;
Drawing No. 1925.WD.01 – Topographical Site Plan and Sections;
Drawing No. 1925.WD.02 – Site Location Plan and Block Plan;
Drawing No. 1925.WD.03 – Fence Front Elevations South West from Longfield Hill; and
Drawing No. 1925.WD.04 – Fence Elevations – Proposed.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20190826	Application for the approval of condition 12 of planning permission reference number 20151244 in relation to the cladding of the workshop.	Approval of details	11.10.2019
20190654	Application for the Variation of condition 8 attached to planning permission reference no. 20151244 for the retrospective planning consent for the storage of vehicles, trucks and heavy good vehicles, their maintenance and repair and distribution to the UK and global markets (sui generis) retention of maintenance and repair building, ancillary portacabin office, staff restroom and toilet together with two storage containers for small tools, plant and spare vehicle parts, boundary landscaping, and hardstandings; to allow the wording of the condition to be changed to (Within 6 months of the date of this permission a scheme shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority for the relocation/removal of existing containers on the site; the details as approved by this condition shall then be implemented within 3 months following the approval of the scheme and shall thereafter be fully adhered to for the duration of this permission. For the avoidance of doubt, no more than two containers shall be stacked and no materials or machinery shall be stored on the roof of a container at any time).	Permitted	19.08.2019

20190597	Application for the approval of conditions 8 and 13 of planning permission reference number 20151244 relating to details of the relocation/removal of existing containers and lighting.	Approval of details	02.08.2019
20151244	Retrospective planning consent for the storage of vehicles, trucks and heavy good vehicles, their maintenance and repair and distribution to the UK and global markets (sui generis) retention of maintenance and repair building, ancillary portacabin office, staff restroom and toilet together with two storage containers for small tools, plant and spare vehicle parts, boundary landscaping, and hardstandings.	Permitted	24.08.2018

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020
- Gravesham Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

KCC Highways and Transportation

Thank you for your consultation in relation to the above planning application, which I note is partly retrospective. I have the following comments to make with respect to highway matters :-

Visibility splays have been submitted, to demonstrate that adequate visibility can still be maintained from the access, with the fence in situ. It is accepted that the visibility from the neighbouring properties will be no worse than the existing situation.

Consequently, I can confirm that provided the following requirements are secured by condition or planning obligation, then I would raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority:-

Provision and maintenance of the visibility splays shown on the submitted plans, with no obstructions over 1.05 metres above carriageway level within the splays, prior to the use of the site commencing.

It is important to note that Local Planning Authority (LPA) permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

Any changes to or affecting the public highway in Kent require the formal agreement of the Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and it should not be assumed that this will be a given because LPA planning permission has been granted.

For this reason, anyone considering works which may affect the public highway, including any highway-owned street furniture or landscape assets such as grass, shrubs and trees, is advised to engage with KCC Highways and Transportation at an early stage in the design process.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens and near the highway that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the public highway.

Some of this highway land is owned by Kent County Council whilst some is owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have 'highway rights' over the topsoil.

Works on private land may also affect the public highway. These include works to cellars, to retaining walls which support the highway or land above the highway, and to balconies, signs or other structures which project over the highway. Such works also require the approval of the Highway Authority.

Kent County Council has now introduced a pre-application advice service in addition to a full formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. Further details are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process. Further details on this are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/apply-for-a-dropped-kerb/dropped-kerb-contractor-information>

Once planning approval for any development has been granted by the LPA, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that before development commences, all necessary highway approvals and consents have been obtained, and that the limits of the highway boundary have been clearly established, since failure to do so may result in enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority.

The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under the relevant legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Further guidance for applicants, including information about how to clarify the highway boundary and links

to application forms for vehicular crossings and other highway matters, may be found on Kent County Council's website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

Alternatively, KCC Highways and Transportation may be contacted by telephone: 03000 418181.

Dickens Protection Society

The Dickens Protection Society were not consulted on this application, but have provided the following comments:

The Society notes the site is in an area where Green Belt policies apply and questions if this is a legitimate use of the building. The fence 2.5m high and close boarded is likely to be visually intrusive, impacting on the openness of the Green Belt.

KCC Highways and Transportation

No comments received.

KCC Biodiversity

No comments received.

Southeastern

No comments received.

Meopham Parish Council

No comments received.

Local Ward Councillors

No comments received.

Neighbouring properties

Two surrounding properties were consulted, a site notice was displayed on 20.08.25 and no representations were received. The overall consultation period expired on 12.09.25.

Site Description and Context

As evidenced within the planning history section above, the site has an extensive planning history.

The application site fronts the north-eastern side of Longfield Road. To the west and south of the site is a detached bungalow 'Highview', to the east is detached dwelling 'Copley'. At the rear of the site, the land level drops steeply to the railway line below. On the opposite side of Longfield Road, there are fields.

The site lies within the Green Belt and the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area.

This part retrospective application proposes the erection of new boundary treatments and planting. Some of the works are retrospective, as a high boundary wall constructed of concrete panels and steel posts have

already been constructed along the boundary facing Copley and the boundary fronting Longfield Road.
This can be seen in the photos below:

Site Photos taken on the Site Visit (01.10.25)



Site Photos from Previous Applications showing the former appearance of the boundary treatments



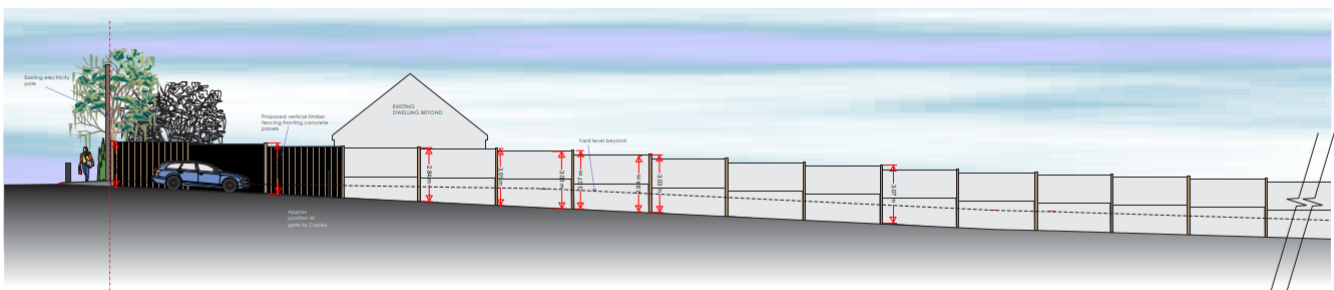




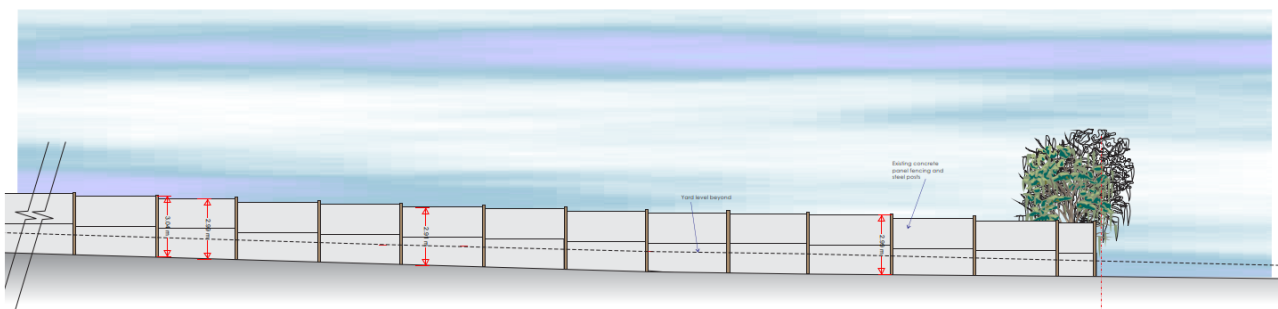
Proposed Development

The height of the proposed boundary treatment varies from approx. 2.00m facing Longfield Road - approx. 3.00m facing Copley.

The proposed development and case officer measurements are indicated on the plans below. It is proposed that the existing concrete wall is retained, with a new proposed vertical timber fence to be constructed in front of the wall, part way along the south eastern boundary facing Copley:

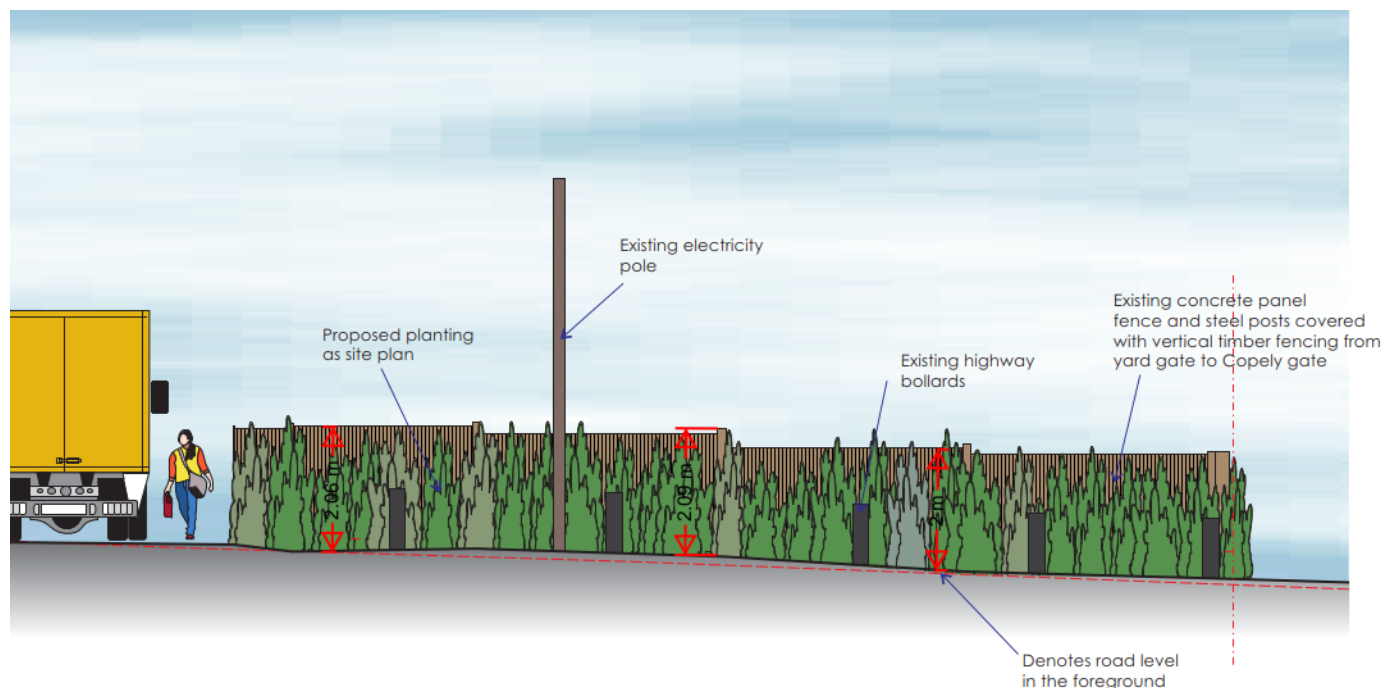


Proposed Side Elevation - 1:50 SOUTH EAST FROM COPELY PART TO THE FRONT SHOWING PROPOSED COVER FENCING TO COPELY ACCESS

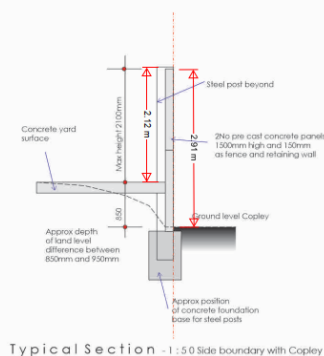


Proposed Side Elevation - 1:50 SOUTH EAST FROM COPELY PART TO THE REAR

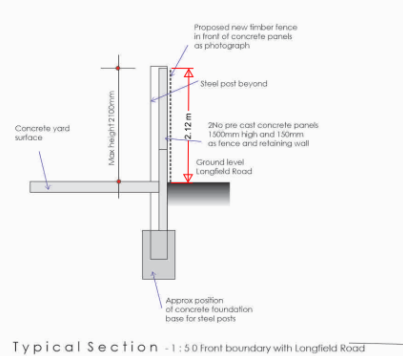
In addition, along the front elevation facing Longfield Road, there is proposed fencing in front of the existing concrete wall, along with a lawn area and planting of native *Fagus sylvatica*.



PHOTOGRAPH OF PROPOSED NEW FENCE



Typical Section - 1:5.0 Side boundary with Copley



Typical Section - 1:5.0 Front boundary with Longfield Road

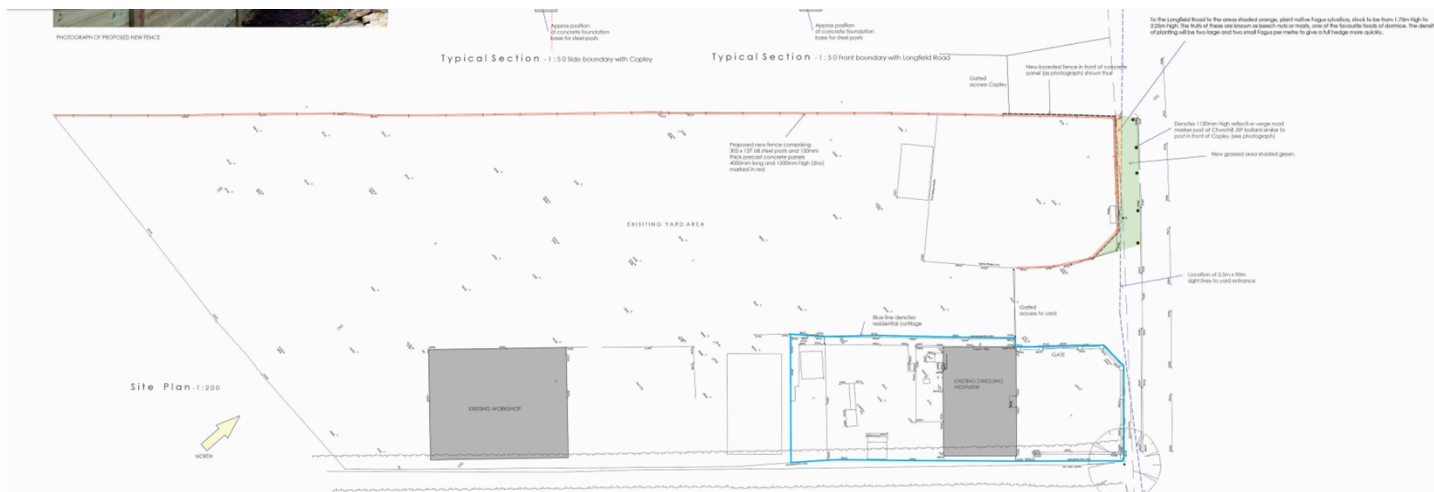
04/20



PHOTOGRAPH OF PROPOSED NEW FENCE



PHOTOGRAPH OF A FENCE WITH FAGUS SYLVATICA PLANTED IN FRONT (WINTER PHOTO IN SUMMER GREEN)



Principle of the Development

The application site is located within the Green Belt, as defined by the Local Plan, and as such Policy CS02 (LPCS) is relevant. Development in the urban area is prioritised as the sustainable location for development. In the rural area, Policy CS02 states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the policies map. Development outside those settlements, i.e. in the Green Belt, will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the LPCS.

The principle issues in determining this application are;

- Green Belt;
- The effect on the character and appearance of the area and landscape;
- Residential Amenity;
- Parking and Highways; and
- Biodiversity.

Officer's Analysis

Green Belt

Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024), with the Green Belt serving five purposes (paragraph 143):

- 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.*

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2024) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Footnote 55 includes the caveat; *Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not (my emphasis) inappropriate.* An assessment on whether the site falls under previously developed land or grey belt land shall be considered in the relevant section of this report. Beforehand, consideration of whether the proposed development is inappropriate must be made.

A Local Planning Authority should regard development as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless it falls within the specified exceptions of paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF (2024). Paragraph 155 is not relevant to this proposal. There is not a demonstrable unmet need for the development proposed and as such, the remaining parts of paragraph 155 do not need to be considered. Paragraph 154 is set out below:

154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

e) limited infilling in villages;

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- i. mineral extraction;
- ii. engineering operations;
- iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The plan documents have not explicitly set out what exception (if any) the proposal would fall under. It is considered that only exception (g) of paragraph 154 would be relevant.

The consideration of exception (g) shall now be made. This exception also requires an assessment of openness:

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposed boundary treatments by virtue of height and hard, impermeable materials is considered to cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

As per the Government guidance (paragraph 013 Reference ID: 64-013-20250225):

Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume*
- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation*

It is noted that the former appearance of the site consisted of a palisade fence fronting Longfield Road, and a brick built staggered wall along the shared boundary with Copley. Notwithstanding this, the new

development is considered to be significantly more harmful. It would be at a greater height, with no permeability which would reduce the remaining openness of the site, resulting in the visual openness of the Green Belt being eroded. Additionally, the extent of the works would encroach on the open appearance of the wider surrounding area and as such, in spatial terms there would be a harmful loss of openness- which would be permanent.

Permanent loss of openness - Openness and permanence are the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. The application site currently has an authorised use; for the storage of vehicles, trucks and heavy good vehicles, their maintenance and repair and distribution to the UK and global markets, with associated structures used in conjunction with the use of the land. The introduction of the significant built form would permanently and irrevocably harm the Green Belt through loss of openness.

Encroachment of the countryside - The stated national purpose of the Green Belt at paragraph 143 (c) of the NPPF (2024) is to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. The urbanising features of the development would adversely affect the open nature of the Green Belt and would result in an encroachment on the countryside.

Reference back to paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2024) informs us that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Consideration of Very Special Circumstances

No specific arguments have been explicitly put forward by the applicant in relation to the assessment of 'very special circumstances'.

Final Balancing of Inappropriateness in the Green Belt

The proposal would constitute inappropriate and harmful development in the Green Belt and paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2024) states that substantial weight should be given to this.

The development does not fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024). No very special circumstances have been put forward to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or any other identified harm and therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy CS01 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (Protecting Green Belt Land).

Design, Character and Appearance, and Impact on the Landscape

The property is situated within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. Relevant Policy considerations include paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024, which aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy CS12 (LPCS) (2014) seeks to protect the green infrastructure within the Borough and states at 5.7.26 the overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced.

Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) (2014) states that new development will be visually attractive and locally distinctive. It should also conserve and enhance the character of the local built and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding area. Moreover, Section 12 (Achieving well- designed places) of the NPPF (2024) sets out that the creation of high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It states developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character.

The Design For Gravesham Design Code (2024) is a strategic document that sets out Gravesham's vision and expectation for quality place-making, corresponding to existing character and the wider context. At 5.14.3, the code sets out that *'The design of thresholds and boundary treatments contribute to the character of the street or space. Poor quality thresholds and boundary treatments erode street character and quality and can create environments that feel unsafe'*.

As aforementioned above, the boundary treatment would front Longfield Road and extend the full length of the shared boundary with Copley. Properties along this part of Longfield Road incorporate boundary treatments of varying materials including fencing, hedging and brick/stone walls. However, it should be noted the extent of these boundary treatments, including height, are much less than what is proposed as part of this application. In addition, it is clear that the dominant feature within the locality is its verdant character and the open fields and hedgerows. As set out by the photos above, the boundary treatment for this site previously consisted of a palisade fence fronting Longfield Road, along with a red brick staggered wall facing Copley. Although the palisade fence is not considered to be the most desirable form of boundary treatment, it did offer some permeability. In addition, the brick wall facing Copley complimented the brick boundary treatment boundary treatment of both Copley and Highview. The boundary treatment proposed within this application would result a vast expanse of concrete wall at significant height, facing Copley, which is not appropriate for, or characteristic of the rural area. It is noted that some fencing and planting is proposed in front of the wall facing Longfield Road, along with fencing partly along the shared boundary with Copley, however this is not considered to mitigate the detrimental impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area and the Landscape Character Area itself. An Inspector for a 2024 dismissed appeal for a high boundary treatment at Cheyne Walk (APP/K2230/D/23/3328299) ascertained the development *would introduce an incongruous and harsh urban element which would be at odds with the comparatively rural feel* of the area. As found on the site visit, the proposed boundary treatment is imposing and would be a very prominent incongruous addition within the local vicinity, and is not consistent with the materials and height of other enclosures. Furthermore, it would have a severely harmful and detrimental impact upon the open and rural character of the area.

Therefore, the proposed development would have a severely harmful and detrimental impact on the open character of the local area and the landscape. In addition, the extent of wall/fence would be incongruous and would result in a harmful urbanising feature which would negatively impact the appearance of the site, the local vicinity and the landscape. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CS19 and CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014), and Sections 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024.)

Residential Amenity

No neighbour responses were received as a result of the consultation carried out for this application. As set out within Policy CS19 of the LPCS (2014), new development will be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties. In the context of this application, neighbouring amenity is considered in terms of whether development would cause a sense of enclosure, loss of light, loss of privacy or loss of outlook.

The proposed development is considered to detrimentally impact the neighbouring amenity or properties Highview and Copley. In particular, the impact on Copley is considered to be severe. The boundary treatment is high, imposing and unrelenting, spanning the length of the shared boundary with Copley. It is considered to be an unneighbourly and overbearing form of development causing a sense of enclosure and impacting outlook. As evidenced by the below photo, Copley is sited on a lower land level than the application site which further compounds the harm.



Therefore, the development would have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity and is considered to be an unneighbourly and overbearing form of development causing a sense of enclosure and impacting outlook, due to the design, siting and scale of the proposal. As such, the proposal fails to safeguard the amenity of surrounding properties contrary to Policy CS19 (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2024).

Parking and Highways

KCC Highways have been consulted on the proposal and do not object on highways ground. However, it is requested that the following condition be added to the decision notice if planning permission were to be forthcoming:

Provision and maintenance of the visibility splays shown on the submitted plans, with no obstructions over 1.05 metres above carriageway level within the splays, prior to the use of the site commencing.

As such, if planning permission were to be granted for the proposal, the above condition could be added to the decision notice.

Biodiversity

Unfortunately, most of the works being applied for are retrospective and it is unclear if biodiversity was lost when the boundary treatments were installed. It is positive, in terms of biodiversity, that some planting is proposed. However, this is inadequate to outweigh the aforementioned harm outlined in this report above.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been fully considered and is contrary to local and national planning policy.

The development does not fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024). No very special circumstances have been put forward to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or any other identified harm and therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy CS01 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (Protecting Green Belt Land).

The proposed development would have a severely harmful and detrimental impact on the open character of the local area and the landscape. In addition, the extent of wall/fence would be incongruous and would result in a harmful urbanising feature which would negatively impact the appearance of the site, the local vicinity and the landscape. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CS19 and CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014), and Sections 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024.)

The development would have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity and is considered to be an unneighbourly and overbearing form of development causing a sense of enclosure and impacting outlook, due to the design, siting and scale of the proposal. As such, the proposal fails to safeguard the amenity of surrounding properties contrary to Policy CS19 (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2024).

Recommendation

Refusal

(For detailed reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Lucy Hankin	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	L Hankin	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	7th October 2025	Dated:	8th October 2025