

Planning Application 20260649 – Land North of The Drove Way, Istead Rise

Proposal: Up to 100 residential dwellings

STRONG OBJECTION – CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

I wish to strongly object to planning application 20260649 for up to 100 new homes on Green Belt land to the rear of The Drove Way, Istead Rise.

My principal objection is the cumulative impact of this proposal when considered alongside other existing and proposed developments in and around Istead Rise.

I am concerned that the village is being considered as a series of individual planning applications rather than as one community with finite roads, infrastructure, services and environmental capacity.

Cumulative development is the real issue

While I understand that each planning application must be considered on its own merits, the impact of development does not occur in isolation.

If one development adds 100 homes, another adds 50, another 100 and another 150, the residents of Istead Rise do not experience these as separate developments. They experience the combined increase in population, traffic, vehicles, parking, school demand, GP demand, drainage and pressure on local services. This is particularly important in Istead Rise because the village has limited infrastructure and limited options for movement in and out of the area. There are already other proposals for development on Green Belt land around Istead Rise. The emerging Gravesham Local Plan also identifies a number of sites for potential housing development in and around the settlement.

It is therefore essential that the Planning Authority considers the total amount of development being proposed for this relatively small village and its surrounding area, rather than simply asking whether this particular development can theoretically be accommodated on its own.

Otherwise, there is a real risk of development being approved incrementally until the cumulative impact becomes unacceptable.

Highway capacity is already under pressure

Traffic is perhaps the clearest example of why cumulative impact matters.

Istead Rise has only two principal routes in and out of the village – the A227 and New Barn Road. The A227 is already heavily trafficked, serving Istead Rise as well as providing an important connection between surrounding villages. Congestion is a regular occurrence, particularly during peak times and school runs.

Traffic can already become extremely slow-moving, and there are existing concerns regarding near misses and road safety.

Adding up to 100 homes to this network will inevitably result in additional vehicle movements. If other developments are also approved, the number of additional journeys will increase substantially.

The question should therefore not simply be: “Can the road accommodate the traffic from this development?”

It should be: “Can the existing road network safely and effectively accommodate the cumulative traffic generated by all the existing and proposed development in and around Istead Rise?”

I do not believe that question can be answered satisfactorily without a comprehensive cumulative assessment.

The A2 and Dartford Crossing make the situation even more serious

The local road network is also particularly vulnerable to traffic problems originating elsewhere.

When incidents or congestion occur on the A2, particularly London-bound, traffic quickly builds up and can have a significant knock-on effect on the surrounding local roads.

Similarly, congestion around the Dartford Crossing and Bluewater can result in traffic being displaced onto local routes.

This means that the A227 and surrounding roads are not operating in isolation. They are already affected by problems on the wider strategic road network.

When these roads are already heavily congested, there is very little spare capacity to absorb additional traffic.

Adding hundreds of additional households through multiple developments would make the situation considerably worse and could make the village increasingly vulnerable to gridlock whenever there is an incident on the wider road network.

Car dependency cannot be ignored

Istead Rise does not have a sufficiently comprehensive public transport network to allow residents to rely on buses instead of cars for everyday life.

Bus services are limited and do not provide a realistic alternative for many journeys, particularly outside peak daytime hours and at weekends.

As a consequence, residents are heavily dependent on private vehicles for work, education, shopping, medical appointments and other essential journeys.

Every additional housing development therefore has the potential to generate a significant number of additional vehicle movements. The cumulative effect of several developments is likely to be substantial.

Parking is already a problem

The impact does not stop once vehicles leave the main roads. Parking within Istead Rise is already becoming increasingly difficult.

Many households have multiple vehicles, and not all vehicles can be accommodated on existing driveways. As a result, more vehicles are being parked on residential roads. This reduces available road space and can make roads more difficult to navigate for residents, deliveries, refuse vehicles and emergency services. Each additional housing development adds to this pressure.

It is therefore not sufficient to consider whether the proposed development provides the required number of parking spaces within its own boundary. The Council should also consider whether the cumulative increase in vehicle ownership across all proposed developments will result in additional pressure on existing residential roads.

Schools and healthcare services

The cumulative effect will also be felt by local public services. Schools in the surrounding area already have limited capacity, while GP services are under significant pressure and obtaining appointments can be difficult. Every new development increases the number of residents requiring these services.

When considered individually, the additional demand from one development may appear manageable. However, when multiple developments are added together, the resulting demand could be considerable.

The same applies to hospital services. Residents rely heavily on Darent Valley Hospital, but travelling to the hospital can already be difficult because of congestion on the surrounding road network. Delays can result in people being late for or missing appointments. An increasing population without corresponding investment in healthcare and transport infrastructure will inevitably increase pressure on existing services.

Green Belt loss is also cumulative

The cumulative impact is not limited to roads and services. Multiple proposals for housing development around Istead Rise are also resulting in increasing pressure to release and develop Green Belt land. Each individual application may seek to justify the loss of its particular parcel of land. However, the overall result is the gradual erosion of the countryside surrounding the village. This has consequences for the character, appearance and setting of Istead Rise.

Once these areas of open countryside have been developed, they cannot be restored to their original condition.

The Council should therefore consider whether approving this proposal, alongside other development proposals, would contribute to an unacceptable pattern of outward expansion and urbanisation of the village.

Drainage and flood risk

There is also a cumulative environmental concern regarding drainage. Developing previously undeveloped land introduces additional buildings, roads, driveways and other impermeable surfaces. This can increase surface-water run-off and place additional pressure on existing drainage infrastructure.

When multiple areas of Green Belt and greenfield land are developed within the same locality, the combined effect on drainage and surface-water management needs to be properly understood. It would be inappropriate to consider drainage impacts solely within the boundary of this individual application if neighbouring developments are simultaneously increasing hardstanding and surface-water run-off within the same catchment.

The village has a finite capacity

There must ultimately be a point at which the cumulative level of development is considered too great for the infrastructure and character of a settlement.

I am concerned that Istead Rise is approaching, or may already have reached, that point. The village cannot reasonably be expected to absorb development indefinitely while relying on the same roads, the same limited public transport, the same schools, the same GP services and the same wider highway network.

The fact that individual developments may be technically capable of being constructed does not necessarily mean that the village has the capacity to accommodate their combined effects.

Request to the Planning Authority

I therefore respectfully ask Gravesham Borough Council to undertake a proper assessment of the cumulative impact of application 20260649 alongside all other existing, committed and proposed housing developments in and around Istead Rise. This assessment should specifically consider:

- The cumulative increase in vehicle movements.
- Capacity and safety of the A227 and New Barn Road.
- The effect of congestion and incidents on the A2 and Dartford Crossing.
- Cumulative parking demand.
- Availability and capacity of local schools.
- Capacity of GP and healthcare services.
- Access to Darent Valley Hospital.
- The adequacy of public transport.
- Cumulative drainage and surface-water impacts.
- Flood risk.
- The cumulative loss of Green Belt and countryside.
- The effect of development on the character and setting of Istead Rise.
- Whether the existing infrastructure can genuinely support the overall level of proposed growth.

I strongly object to this application because I believe it represents another significant step in the expansion of Istead Rise without sufficient consideration of the combined consequences of development already taking place or being proposed around the village.

The Planning Authority must look at the bigger picture.

One development may appear manageable when viewed in isolation. Multiple developments in a small village with constrained infrastructure can create an entirely different situation.

I therefore ask that application 20260649 be refused unless the Council can demonstrate that the cumulative impact of this proposal, together with other development in and around Istead Rise, would not result in unacceptable harm to

highway safety, traffic congestion, local services, parking, drainage, flood risk, the Green Belt or the character and quality of life of the existing community.