

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Application Site:	2 Vale Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent.
Proposal:	Proposed Change of Use of part of existing industrial site (B2) to Hand Car Wash Facility (sui generis)
Local Planning Authority:	Gravesham Borough Council

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application seeking permission for the change of use of a defined parcel of land to create a hand car wash facility at 2 Vale Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent.

The application relates to 573 square metres of land within a substantially larger commercial site extending to approximately 9,881 square metres.

The proposal seeks to bring a currently vacant and under-utilised section of land back into productive commercial use through the establishment of a professionally operated hand car wash facility.

The applicant operates a number of successful hand car wash facilities across the region, including a long-established facility located on the A2 near Bluewater, which has been successfully operated for over 20 years. This demonstrates the applicant's experience in managing car wash facilities in a responsible and compliant manner.

2. Site Location and Surrounding Context

The application site is located at: 2 Vale Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent.

The site lies within an established urban commercial area of Northfleet, positioned close to key transport routes including the A2 and A226, which provide strategic connections throughout the Gravesham area and wider Kent region.

The wider land parcel extends to approximately 9,881 sq.m, with the planning application relating to a clearly defined 573 sq.m area within the larger site.

The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of:

- commercial and employment premises
- industrial and storage uses
- roadside and vehicle-related businesses
- residential areas within the wider urban environment of Northfleet.

Given the commercial nature of surrounding land uses and the site's location within an established urban area, the proposed hand car wash facility is considered compatible with the surrounding environment.

The site benefits a road site position and excellent accessibility via and the existing access off Vale Road which currently serve the larger commercial site, making it well suited to serve passing motorists and local residents.

3. Site Description and History

The application site forms part of a larger commercial land parcel extending to approximately 9,881 sq.m, with the proposal relating to a 573 sq.m parcel of land.

Historically the site has supported vehicle-related uses, including:

- a petrol filling station
- an associated vehicle wash facility
- later use as a used car sales area.

The site therefore has a well-established history of vehicle-related activity.

The wider site benefits from planning permission for residential development, however the redevelopment of the site has not progressed due to viability constraints. As a result the landowner has experienced difficulty in securing a purchaser for housing redevelopment and the site has remained vacant and underutilised.

The proposed development therefore represents an appropriate commercial use that ensures the site does not remain unused.

4. Planning History and Planning Status

The wider site at 2 Vale Road benefits from an existing planning permission for residential redevelopment.

Whilst the principle of residential development has therefore previously been accepted in planning terms, the redevelopment of the site has not progressed. The landowner has experienced difficulty in bringing forward the residential scheme due to viability constraints and wider market conditions, which has resulted in the site remaining vacant.

The current proposal does not prejudice the ability for the wider site to come forward for redevelopment in the future. Instead, it represents a pragmatic and appropriate use of a small portion of the wider land parcel, ensuring that the land does not remain unused while longer-term redevelopment opportunities are explored.

The development would therefore support the continued productive use of the site without compromising the potential for future redevelopment.

5. Brownfield Land Justification

The application site forms part of previously developed land (brownfield land) as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.

The NPPF defines previously developed land as land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure and associated infrastructure.

The site clearly satisfies this definition given its historic use as:

- a petrol filling station
- a vehicle washing facility
- a used car sales & Vehicle storage.

The land contains existing hardstanding and associated infrastructure, and the proposal makes effective use of these established site conditions.

The development represents an efficient reuse of previously developed land and aligns strongly with national planning objectives encouraging the redevelopment and reuse of brownfield land before undeveloped sites.

Importantly, the proposal does not involve significant permanent built development and instead utilises the site's existing surfaces and infrastructure, ensuring the environmental impact of the development remains limited.

6. The Proposed Development

The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of a defined parcel of land measuring approximately 573 sq.m to a hand car wash facility.

The proposed facility will include:

- vehicle washing bays
- internal circulation space for vehicles
- a designated vehicle drying area
- operational staff space
- drainage and environmental management infrastructure.

In order to facilitate the operation of the car wash, the development will include the installation of lightweight tensile fabric canopy structures.

Three canopies are proposed, each measuring approximately 5 metres by 8 metres.

The canopies will be positioned as follows:

- Two canopy structures will cover the primary vehicle washing bays
- One canopy structure will cover the vehicle drying area

The canopies will provide weather protection for both staff and vehicles during the washing and drying process, improving operational efficiency while ensuring activities remain contained within the defined wash areas.

The structures are lightweight in nature and typical of those used in professionally operated car wash facilities. Their scale and design ensure they remain visually unobtrusive within the wider commercial setting.

The site is already securely fenced, providing a clearly defined operational area suitable for the proposed use.

7. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and promotes sustainable development.

The proposal aligns with several key objectives of the NPPF.

Supporting Economic Growth

The NPPF places significant weight on supporting economic growth and enabling sustainable business development.

The proposed hand car wash facility represents a small-scale commercial enterprise which will support employment and provide a useful service to motorists in the area.

Making Effective Use of Land

The NPPF encourages the effective reuse of previously developed land.

The proposal directly supports this objective by bringing a currently vacant parcel of brownfield land back into productive use.

Environmental Protection

The proposal incorporates robust drainage and pollution control infrastructure to ensure wash water is appropriately treated prior to discharge.

Local Planning Policy

The proposal has been assessed against the adopted development plan including the **Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development

This policy promotes development that supports sustainable economic activity while making efficient use of land and infrastructure.

The proposal brings vacant land back into productive use while utilising existing access and infrastructure.

Policy CS02 – Economic Development

Policy CS02 supports employment generating uses within appropriate locations.

The proposed car wash facility will create employment opportunities and contribute to the local service economy.

Policy CS11 – Transport

The proposal utilises existing vehicular access onto Vale Road, meaning no new highway access is required.

Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Policy CS19 seeks well designed development that integrates with its surroundings.

The proposal achieves this through modest structures, limited built form and appropriate environmental safeguards.

8. Access and Movement

Vehicular access will utilise the existing access point serving the wider commercial site from Vale Road.

No additional access points are proposed.

Internal circulation within the car wash area allows vehicles to enter, queue, be washed, and exit safely.

Traffic generation associated with the use is expected to be modest and consistent with the site's historic vehicle-related uses.

9. Design Considerations

The development involves limited built form, with the majority of the site remaining as operational hardstanding.

The proposed tensile fabric canopy structures are modest in scale and typical of car wash operations.

Key design considerations include:

- maintaining an organised site layout
- ensuring operations remain contained within the site boundary
- providing weather protection through the canopy structures
- maintaining a visually unobtrusive appearance.

The design approach ensures the development integrates appropriately within the surrounding commercial environment.

10. Drainage and Environmental Management

A detailed drainage plan accompanies the application.

This includes:

- installation of an Aco Drain system around the wash area
- drainage through a silt trap

- treatment via a three-stage vehicle wash separator tank

Following treatment, water will discharge into the existing sewer network via an on-site foul water manhole.

11. Noise and Environmental Impact

A Noise Assessment Report accompanies the planning application.

Typical noise sources include:

- pressure washing equipment
- vehicle movements.

Consideration has been given to the potential noise effects of the proposed hand car wash operation on nearby residential occupiers. The principal item of plant associated with the use is the car wash pump, which has a measured operational noise level of 76.6 dB at source. The nearest residential receptor is situated 25.6metres from the pump location. Applying standard distance attenuation principles for a point source in an external environment, the predicted noise level at the nearest dwelling would reduce to approximately 48 dB. This has been considered against the measured background noise level at the site of 51.8 dB. As such, the predicted operational noise from the pump would be below the existing background sound level at the nearest residential property.

In BS 4142 terms, this indicates that the specific sound from the development is unlikely to result in an adverse impact on residential amenity, particularly given the commercial context of the wider site and surrounding area. The proposal is therefore not expected to give rise to unacceptable noise disturbance and is considered to accord with the core environmental protection objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to ensure that development is appropriate for its location and that existing and future users are not exposed to unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

The assessment confirms that noise levels associated with the development will remain within acceptable limits.

12. Licensing and Regulatory Compliance

The applicant will obtain all relevant licences and approvals required for the operation of the car wash facility.

This includes any consents required by water and environmental authorities relating to drainage and discharge associated with vehicle washing operations.

13. Planning Balance

When assessed against the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, the proposed development delivers a number of clear planning benefits.

- The proposal would bring a currently vacant parcel of previously developed land back into productive use, which is strongly supported by national planning policy encouraging the efficient use of brownfield land.
- The development supports local economic activity and employment opportunities, contributing positively to the local economy.
- the proposal represents a logical continuation of the site's historic vehicle-related uses, which have previously included a petrol filling station and vehicle washing facility.
- The development makes use of existing access infrastructure, ensuring that there is no requirement for additional access onto Vale Road.
- The proposal incorporates robust environmental protection measures, including a drainage system designed to capture and treat wash water prior to discharge.
- The proposed tensile canopy structures are modest in scale and visually unobtrusive, ensuring the development integrates appropriately within the surrounding commercial environment.

When considered collectively the proposal represents sustainable development and the benefits clearly outweigh any limited impacts associated with the development.

14. Conclusion

This application seeks permission for the change of use of a 573 sq.m parcel of land to a hand car wash facility at 2 Vale Road, Northfleet, Gravesend.

The proposal:

- reuses a vacant parcel of previously developed land
- reflects the historic vehicle-related use of the site
- utilises existing access infrastructure
- incorporates appropriate drainage and environmental safeguards
- introduces lightweight canopy structures necessary for the operation of the facility.

The development aligns with both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.

For the reasons set out within this statement, the development represents sustainable development and planning permission is respectfully requested.