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<b>Wouldham</b> Burham Eccles Wouldham	<b>571384 164249</b>	<b>01.12.2004</b>	<b>TM/04/04154/RD</b>
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Proposal:	Revised landscaping and boundary treatment for plots 29-38 submitted pursuant to condition 2 of consent ref. TM/99/01428/OA (Residential development and school playing field)
Location:	Land South Of School And East Of High Street Wouldham Rochester Kent
Applicant:	Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd

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### **1. Description:**

- 1.1 This is a part retrospective application for revised landscaping and boundary treatment along the eastern boundary adjacent to the Parish Council Allotments. The applicant is seeking to retain the rear fences as built to plots 34-38, whilst also proposing to re-align the rear fences to plots 29-33 to match those at plots 34-38. The alteration to the fence line results in the landscaping buffer adjacent to the PC allotment being omitted.
- 1.2 The applicant has offered as compensation an ex gratia payment of £5,000 to the PC towards environmental improvements in Wouldham.

### **2. The Site:**

- 2.1 The application site lies within the rural settlement confines of Wouldham and to the east lies the Parish Council allotment, which is enclosed by wire mesh fencing. This adjacent land lies outside the rural settlement confines and within the Strategic Gap. The site forms part of the Pilgrims Reach housing development, which is now occupied.

### **3. Planning History (most relevant):**

- 3.1 TM/02/01658/RD    Approved 13.08.2002  
Revised hedging details on eastern boundary.
- 3.2 TM/01/03013/RD    Approved 28.01.2002  
Hedging details on eastern boundary.
- 3.3 TM/01/00031/RM    Approved 27.04.2001  
Reserved matters for 111 dwellings.
- 3.4 TM/99/01428/OA    Approved 15.12.2000  
Residential development and school playing field.

#### **4. Consultees:**

- 4.1 PC: The applicants have offered to pay the PC the sum of £5,000 in compensation for not providing the buffer strip that was originally planned for the above development.
- 4.1.1 The PC intends to spend the money on a teenage shelter on the Recreation Ground, for the youth of the village, together with a number of bench seats, also around the Recreation Ground, for the older inhabitants. This will benefit all the inhabitants of the village.
- 4.2 Private Reps: 22/0X/2S/1R. Two letters received supporting the application and one objecting to the application.
- The letters of support relate to retaining the fences as positioned, as the residents were unaware that the fences had been positioned in the wrong place and have spent time and effort landscaping their gardens;
  - The letter of objection relates to the loss of the hedgerow and harm to the visual amenity of the locality and the nature conservation interests of the site.

#### **5. Determining Issues:**

- 5.1 The main issue to be considered is whether the development harms the visual amenity of the locality.
- 5.2 The southern end of the eastern boundary was to have been planted with a landscape buffer, and this would have formed part of structural landscaping along the eastern boundary of the whole of the Pilgrims Reach development. The intention of the structural landscaping was to soften views of the residential development when seen from the east and from Pilgrims Way. The land to the east of plots 29-38 adjoins the recently created Parish Council allotments, which are enclosed by wire mesh fencing but there is also some self sown landscaping along the boundary with plots 29-38.
- 5.3 The repositioning of the rear boundary fences adjacent to the allotments significantly reduces to the ability to provide the landscape buffer, as the gap in places is very small and therefore the applicant has sought to omit this planting. This results in the southern end of the residential development being more visually prominent than originally envisaged. However, as mentioned above, the inside boundaries of the allotment have some hedging and landscaping, which helps to partly soften the residential development from distant views.
- 5.4 Whilst this is not an ideal solution, the applicant is also offering to make an ex gratia payment to the Parish Council to provide off-site environmental improvements. The Parish Council has stated that it intends to use the payment to provide a teenage shelter and benches on the recreation ground.

5.5 The provision of off site environmental improvements to the village is to be welcomed and in the context of the overall benefit for the village, is something that can be approximately considered to offset the omission of the landscape buffer. It is also to be hoped that over time, the vegetation within and around the allotments will mature to add to its softening effect.

5.6 In light of the above considerations and on balance, I am satisfied that the proposed off site contribution will be adequate compensation for the omission of the landscape buffer between plots 29-38 and the PC allotment. Therefore, I find these details acceptable.

**6. Recommendation:**

6.1 **Approve Details** as detailed by letters dated the 10 March 2005, 9 March 2005, 1 December 2004 and the 29 November 2004 and by plans SK01 and SK02

Contact: Aaron Hill