

Joint Opening Statement on behalf of both parishes. – 1st December 2025

Sevington Inland Border Facility (SIBF) Planning Inquiry 2nd December 2025.

Sevington with Finberry Parish Council & Mersham Parish Council

Sevington with Finberry Parish Council and Mersham Parish Council appreciate the recent efforts to engage with us, and having reviewed the documentation, we provide the following joint opening statement.

Aesthetics & Appearance

Both parish councils remain concerned that the aesthetics of the site—its built form, boundary treatments, and overall presentation—are wholly inappropriate for this rural landscape. The current fencing, structures, and layout would not be acceptable were this a fresh application today, whether on greenfield or brownfield land.

The Applicant's proposals do not address aesthetics beyond retaining what is already installed, basing justification on the precedent they themselves have created. This cannot be considered compliant with either national or local planning policy.

The stark, prison-style perimeter fencing dominates public footpaths and bridleways. With the original landscaping buffer having failed or non-existent, this harsh boundary now stands entirely exposed and must be redesigned or fully screened.

Noise

Noise issues remain unresolved and continue to affect both parishes.

Residents in Church Road Sevington report that the well documented noise issues are far from resolved, whilst Mersham villagers experience similar persistent operational noise both day and night from the site and noise from accelerating HGV's on Junction 10a.

Recent documentation provided by the applicant relies heavily on theoretical modelling and provides no meaningful investigation of the real-world situation. To date, no residents report having been approached by an appointed noise consultant to understand the issues at hand.

Both parish councils therefore insist that the proposed condition relating to noise is improved to require that the noise assessment submitted is independent and includes consultation with affected parties and the parish councils in its preparation. This is with the aim to better resolve noise issues once and for all.

Landscaping & Buffer Zones

Whilst we support the proposed landscaping conditions, they do not go far enough.

The original buffer between the IBF and Mersham was never properly established. Most planting has died due to inadequate maintenance, leaving the village directly exposed visually and acoustically.

The story is similar for Sevington, with landscaping and screening being sparse and where planted, much has died and not replaced until in the recent weeks.

Enhanced landscaping must therefore:

- Help address the aesthetic failures described above

- Re-establish a meaningful green buffer using appropriate species

- Include long-term maintenance commitments

- Recognise and protect the well-documented and discussed Mersham Village Wall as a formal demarcated boundary requiring legal safeguarding

Lighting

We support the lighting condition but note that lighting impacts must be assessed not only for current usage, but also for increased or reduced future activity.

The facility operates at what appears to be a fraction of its designed capacity, yet is illuminated throughout the night. This light pollution affects both parishes, their wildlife, and dark skies.

A stricter, scenario-based lighting strategy is required and whilst Mersham has reported some significant improvement in this area, the proposals need to be formalised whilst considering how lighting impact can continue to be minimised during the aforementioned different usage scenarios.

Traffic & Junction 10A

Both parishes have concerns relating to the Junction 10A mitigation proposals.

The modelling relies heavily on improved HGV lane discipline which will result in slower moving HGV's, reducing the effectiveness of the mitigations whilst increasing accident risk. A more appropriate design solution is needed, along with clear consultation opportunities.

Both Mersham and Sevington also continues to experience:

- Misrouted HGVs entering the village of Mersham and Church Road in Sevington which is unsuitable for HGV's

- The entrance off Kingsford street being used for operational support access including tankers. This brings heavy vehicles through Mersham village unnecessarily.

These issues must be explicitly addressed and eliminated through enforceable routing conditions.

Litter & Environmental Management

We support the condition relating to litter and note that the site's litter problem is persistent and widespread.

Windblown waste accumulates along footpaths, hedgerows, and the wider landscape. Additional bins, regular litter-picking schedules, and proper perimeter maintenance are essential.

Sevington have reported recent improvements around the site entrance which we hope will be maintained.

Other Matters

We support the future reinstatement of AE639 and the S106 proposals relating to St Mary's Church as required within the Ashford Borough Councils CIL Statement of compliance.

We support the introduction of Archaeology information boards, provided both parish councils approve the final content and additional locations are included.

Drainage issues raised, particularly at the site entrance and along footpaths have not been addressed and require attention.

Sevington parish council supports residents request that the site should discontinue using the name "Sevington". This has been considered to increase ongoing harm to the identity of the historic settlement and re-branding should be considered as part of the permanent transition. In support of this, attention is drawn to the name change of the previously proposed site from Sevington Park to Stour Park following public consultation.

In Conclusion

Many of these issues are long-standing, well-documented, and continue to affect the daily lives of residents in both parishes. While we recognise the work that has gone into the recent submissions, they remain incomplete and do not yet demonstrate that these matters will be resolved once the planning decision is made.

Both parishes therefore request that each of these concerns be fully reflected in binding, enforceable planning conditions—conditions that deliver real mitigation rather than a repeat of the diluted, symbolic actions which have led us to be here today.