

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————

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30th July 2025.

Application ref 20250643

New Green Farm Lower Road Shorne Gravesend Kent

Erection of a cold store building.

The Parish Council has to **OBJECT STRONGLY** to this application.

Previous application ref 20240020 for Prior Approval of a much smaller building is noted, for which it was deemed that Prior Approval was not required. The building previously proposed however had a total built area of only 956sqm and maximum height of 12m.

The present proposal is for a total built area more than three and a half times the previous size and taller, having overall 3,595sqm of built floor area (counting in the external electricity substation and two chiller units). In addition, there is a roof overhang along both sides, and four “cat ladders” to the roof voids also increasing the total area. The maximum height will now be 14m. This completely different proposal greatly exceeds what would be reasonably expected in association with an individual small farm unit.

We question the actual need and appropriateness of the proposal for the relatively small area of land being farmed, as well as it causing adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the Higham Arable Landscape Area. This is especially as the proposed building will be highly visible in the landscape, particularly from residential dwellings on higher ground close nearby.

We consider this to be a disproportionately large, near Industrial Application more suited to an Industrial Estate rather than removing high-grade agricultural land from food production.

If permitted, the application would irrevocably alter the nature of the area and could lead to proliferation of additional Industrial buildings being co-located. That aspect needs to be considered

at this point in time, as the applicant had previously mentioned additional cold storage buildings and a packing plant despite those facilities already being available at the Company headquarters nearby at Flanders Farm.

Plans and documents submitted:

- No additional hardstanding is shown or suggested however it seems likely that this would be required to ensure safe vehicle operations, this should be shown on the plans and factored into the extent of the built area being proposed.
- No additional contiguous land is shown as being farmed.
- Based on previous plans submitted for other applications, the cold store may be being located on tenanted land rather than land in the ownership of the applicant.
- It is not made clear on all the plans and extracts that Public Footpath NS156, running south-west to north-east, is immediately west of the suggested location of the cold store building and that associated vehicles will be crossing the footpath in a manner likely to result in conflict with members of the public. The KCC Public Rights of Way Team should be asked for their input unless this has already been solicited.
- We also note application Ref 20240812 for an agricultural workers dwelling (which was awaiting determination and has recently been permitted). This is not shown on the currently submitted plans or mentioned in the text of the supporting documents.

Supporting Planning Statement:

- Note this uses both Acres and Hectares (1 Acre = 0.405 Hectare) so the areas quoted are confusing: New Green Farm is stated to be 67.5 hectares owned plus 17.28 hectares tenanted, a total of 84.78 hectares.
- At the same time, it is stated that an “Aldi Orchard” of 200 Acres is to be planted “on New Green Farm”, that is 81 hectares. It is not clear whether this is additional contiguous land or double counting of existing land as the location is unclear.
- The proposed building can store 14,145 apple bins. It is also unclear why the total annual production from the farm would all need to be accommodated in long-term storage. It would not all be picked at exactly the same time and it would be expected that much would be transferred almost immediately for processing and packing then delivery to retail outlets.
- Once the apples have been placed into storage bins they could be transported and stored anywhere within a reasonable distance, hence we do not accept that there needs to be any cold storage located on the farm itself, let alone at such a massive scale.
- Immediate versus delayed transport makes no difference to the number of bins and vehicle movements that are actually required.
- In Point 8.13 the applicant states that the site is currently an unused field, however it was formerly in full arable production.

Noise assessment:

- The noise assessment has several deficiencies.
- The assessment only considers one residential location, at The Red House (incorrectly called “Kennel House” in the documents). While that is the nearest residential property it would

be shielded from noise emanating from the refrigeration units/chiller fans by the building itself, however other residential properties that are only 600-700m away, and are more likely to be subjected to noise propagation, have not been considered.

- The noise level from two fans working simultaneously has been underestimated. Two 89dBA sources together produce 92dBA, possible causing beating, and the sound would propagate further than shown including due to reflection off the rear wall of the building.
- The noise from vehicle reversing beeps can travel long distances and can be particularly intrusive for nearby residents.
- Accordingly there is concern about ambient noise levels, especially in summer and at night.

Biodiversity Gain Plan:

- Two bird boxes and an invertebrate feature are proposed, it is considered that more could be done in these respects.
- Otherwise the plans are satisfactory and welcome
- A planting plan must however also be submitted.

Other points:

- Public Footpath NS156 – There will be further adverse Impact on the ambience, physical condition and user safety of Public Footpath NS156.
- Landscaping – It is considered that more could and should be done to shield the proposed buildings from view and to soften the appearance.
- Building access routes - The noise documentation claims that the building would only be accessed from the east side however there are doors on both sides. The access route needs to be clarified and if necessary/appropriate restricted by Condition.
- Increased traffic volumes, road access routes - We are opposed to any increase in traffic to and from the site as access, especially for HGV's, along Lower Higham/Gravesend Road is not good. We disagree with the statement in Point 8.3 of the supporting Planning Statement that New Green Farm is "well connected to the surrounding road network". We particularly object to the suggestion that Green Farm Lane, which is mostly single lane and has a 7.5T weight limit, can provide access.

Other suggested "Without Prejudice" Conditions:

- Hours of working – Working hours, and therefore noise emission, should be restricted, especially in summer months.
- Safety of Public Footpath NS156 - Measures are needed to ensure the safety of users of the Public Footpath NS156 and its condition as the applicant is proposing to move further large and heavy machinery across the line of the footpath. The Footpath width (as a previous track) must be maintained and the provision of permanent safety fencing/signage should be considered.
- Vehicle movements to and from the site - Vehicle sizes, numbers and permitted access routes, especially as regards HGV's, should be limited and controlled.
- Signage and advertising banners – these should all be restricted and controlled.

- Only on-site production to be stored – The cold store should only be used to store apples grown in the contiguous New Green Farm orchards, it cannot be used to store fruit transported from another site/sites.
- Light pollution – the proposal is for an area that is presently completely dark. A detailed lighting plan needs to be submitted. Any external lighting needs to be minimal, of low light intensity and properly controlled so as to minimise nuisance and disturbance.