

DRAFT

Cheneys Farm Barns, Thong Lane, Shorne, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4AD.

Planning, Design and Access Statement.

Description

The application site comprises two adjoining barns which were built originally for agricultural use and became redundant. The barns are now used for the storage of building materials and goods associated with the applicant's building contracting business. The company has materials delivered to the barns which is then collected daily by the employees on their way to each job and materials returned after the day's work in the afternoon.

To the front of the barns is a concrete access road and apron and loose stone surface to the north and south of the access road. A loose stone road runs down the north side of the barns.

The site boundaries are partly hedged with evergreen leylandii hedging, part post and rail fencing, part hawthorn hedging and to the north side, the boundary fenced with a 1.8 metre close boarded fence.

The southern barn has a concrete frame with timber truss roof and is clad in big 6 corrugated asbestos cement sheeting. The northern barn has a steel frame with part brick walls to the front elevation and is clad in metal profile sheeting. Both barns have concrete floors, power, lighting and mains water.

To the rear, the west side of the barns is the former grain dryer fan building and large radius ducting leads from this building to both barns.

To the front and south side of the southern barn there is a brick and corrugated sheet clad side barn which is open to the main barn. Under the proposal set out in this application, the side barn and rear dryer shed and ducting are to be demolished and cleared from the site.

The Proposal

This application seeks approval for the demolition of the southern barn and for the erection of a new barn which will have a steel frame and will be erected on the same site as the current barn and to the same overall height. An infill section will link the northern barn to the new barn which will be hidden from view other than from the front and rear. There is a gap between the two barns at present which extends part of the depth of the buildings although there is a gap between the buildings at the rear which is awkward to get to and therefore has become an area at risk of vermin nesting. Enclosing this area has no additional visual impact and enables the barns to be used more effectively. The southern barn is currently clad in asbestos cement sheeting will be carefully removed and disposed of at an appropriately licensed tip. The new steel framed barn will have a portal frame which will enable a mezzanine floor to be installed to be used as offices by the applicant.

The barn elevations are to be clad in black stained timber weatherboarding and will have metal profile roof sheeting.

Full height glazing is proposed to the east side of the replacement southern barn about in the place of the current loading door opening. Timber doors will be installed which will be closed over the glazing for security reasons and hinged and held back to both sides of the

opening during the day. A pedestrian door will also be formed to the east frontage which will lead to the ground floor reception and staircase to the proposed first floor office used by BB Contracts Ltd. To the west end of the southern barn a window to the first-floor offices will be installed above new loading doors which give access to ground floor warehouse storage. This warehouse storage area will be handling the delivery and dispatch of small and less frequently used materials items used by the business.

The northern barn will remain much the same as now other than having a pedestrian door on the east side and having the current metal profile cladding replaced with black stained weatherboarding.

Car parking for staff and visitor cars will be along the northern side of the building. Some additional parking for visitors, including a disabled parking bay, will be to the front of the buildings. The works vans are to be parked at the front of the barns when collecting or delivering materials. Employees generally take the vans home so these will rarely be left on site overnight.

It is proposed that a roadway in Type 1 crushed limestone, will be created along the west side of the barns and up the south side in order that a van delivering the west side doors can continue back around and return to the parking area. The stone finish proposed will enable rainwater to drain through the road finish. The same finish will be used for the parking area and road on the north side of the barns.

The parking areas to the front will be on the existing stone/concrete apron.

New hedges are to be planted along the front and side boundaries to form a native mixed hedge include Maple, Holly, Beech, Hawthorn, Chestnut and Hornbeam.

Along the northern boundary where there is car parking and track to the rear of the barns, there isn't the space for a new hedge to be established. In this area trellis will be erected along the line of the boundary fence and climbing plants, including Common Jasmine and Passionflower will be planted.

The existing evergreen leylandii hedge along the east boundary is to be retained initially with the hedge extended across the width of the west boundary, along the north and south boundaries as shown on the drawings. Once the new native hedge is established, the leylandii hedge to the west boundary will be removed and the native hedge planted in its place. The existing hawthorn hedge along the east boundary will be retained and gapped up and left to grow to in height and 1.2-1.4 metres in width. All hedges will be allowed to grow in height to about 2.5-3 metres to form effective screening of the site.

There are new planting areas shown on the plan of the site to the front and by the parking area which will be planted with fruit trees to provide flowers for nectar/pollen and fruit for insects and wildlife.

Access from Thong Lane

The current access into the site will be retained with the gate set back from the road to allow vehicles to pull off the road if the gate is closed.

Design

The height, shape and bulk of the barns will remain as they are now other than the removal of the side barn on the south side, the drying shed and pipework to the west side and that the gap between the current barns will be infilled.

Dark stained weatherboarding to the elevations will improve the appearance of the buildings and is appropriate with the Conservation Area, dark stained weatherboarding is a traditional material used on farm buildings in Thong and throughout Kent.

The southern barn will have a mezzanine floor to accommodate the administration offices for BB Contractors so windows and rooflights will provide natural light reducing the requirement for electric lighting as much as possible. Windows to have metal frames painted black.

Loading doors and pedestrian doors will be vertical timber boarding stained black. The opening timber doors to the front will be held back with metal door latches.

Exterior

Photographs of the parts of the barns that are to be demolished and removed off the site.



Ventilation ducting and dryer plant room to be demolished or removed.



Lean-to barn to south side of the barn above is to be demolished.

Concrete apron to the front of the barns and loose stone entrance drive and hard standing at the front of the site to be retained.



General other exterior photographs of the barns as existing.



West end of north barn.



East end of both barns.

Access

The barns are accessed from Thong Lane either from the A2 roundabout at Cobham via Halfpence Lane into Thong Lane or via the A226, Gravesend Road into Thong Lane. Delivery vehicles are advised to use Thong Lane from the Gravesend Road. This is the route used also by Baylis Landscape Contractors for their vans and lorries. The site itself is virtually level.

The mezzanine floor offices will be accessed via an internal staircase with a second escape staircase in the event of an emergency at the west end.

Transport

A report prepared by Nick Culhane and submitted with this application details the transport aspects associated with the proposal to use part of one of the barns as offices.

Sufficient car and van parking can be provided on site.

Ecology

An ecology report prepared by KB Ecology is submitted. This shows that although new planting is proposed to enhance the bio-diversity onsite as far as possible, some off site bio-diversity is required.

Planning

The barns were originally constructed for agricultural use and were used for the storage and drying of cereals. The barns became surplus to agricultural requirements and were sold on the open market and purchased by the applicant.

In 2018, application 20181280 for a change of use from agricultural use to a B8 (Storage and Distribution) use and continuance of a further agricultural building and land for B8 (Storage and Distribution) use was approved.

This previous application was for a change of use for both buildings to Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) use.

Gravesham Borough Councils relevant planning documents include Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Adopted in 2014.

Policies within the Local Plan Core Strategy of relevance include :

1. Policy CS01-Sustainable Development, paragraph 4.1.6 which states that planning applications which accord with the development plan policies will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
Paragraph 4.1.7 follows on from this stating that "When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in this Core Strategy. It will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area."

4.5. Under paragraph 5.1.1, the Local Plan notes that Gravesham suffers from a significant number of people travelling outside the Borough for employment. The business is an active contributor to the Borough's employment numbers. If they are unable to utilise this site for the proposed use; while it would not result in unemployment, the operation will remain split

between the office and administration functions undertaken from an office in Rochester and the delivery, collection and storage of building materials and equipment from this site. That's not an ideal situation for the business which is seeking to make it's operations more efficient and competitive and based at one site.

Gravesham Borough Council recognize in paragraph 5.1.5 that jobs can be delivered from a range of sectors, and to ensure sufficient provision in B Class employment including B8 Storage and Distribution.

Policy CS20 from the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) establishes the Council's strategic approach to heritage and generally accords with national planning policy. This accords a high priority to the preservation, protection and enhancement of heritage and the historic environment, particularly where they are at risk or under threat. Proposals that enhance significance are supported where they contribute to the distinct identity of the Borough, including its rural Conservation Areas. 'Saved' policies from the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) are dated and it is recognised that they do not fully accord with the NPPF (2021) and should be accorded lesser weight, depending on their consistency with national planning policy.

The site is within the Thong Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal mentions that there is one major set of working (modern) farm buildings within Thong along with remnants of former small holdings, some of which have continued in agricultural use.

The appraisal describes various views towards the village mentioning that an approach from the south along Thong Lane where hedges and trees obscure views of the village whereas approach from the north the open fields skirt the extensive woodland of Shorne Woods with open land running up to various gardens and paddocks to the houses on the east side of the road. On the west side, the village buildings and enclosures are seen as strung out with varying degrees of complexity and attractiveness. Overall, from the west, the village is seen as being in isolation despite being virtually on the edge of Gravesham's suburbs.

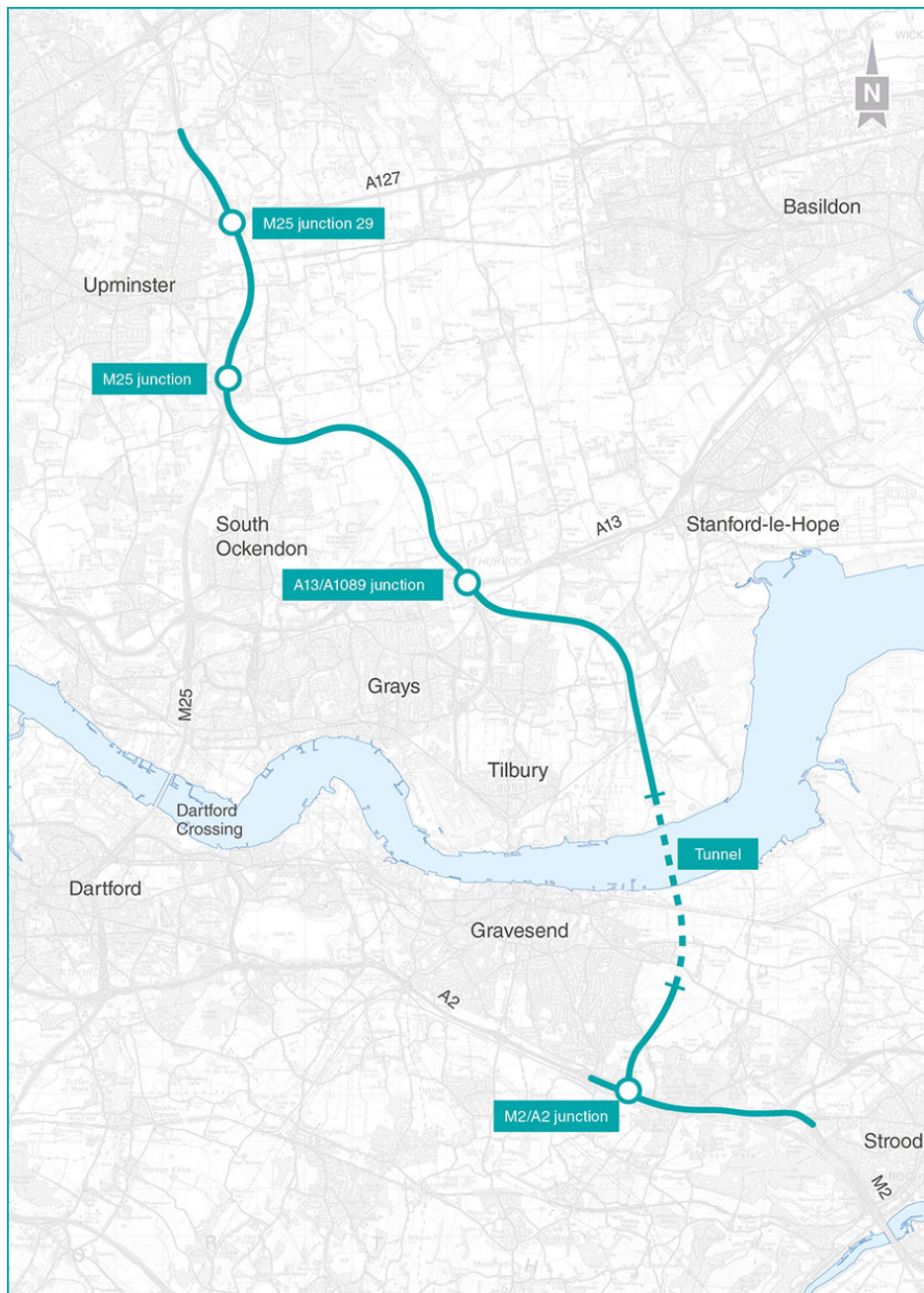
The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the barns in the following way "as adding little quality to Thong's character. While continued agricultural use is of course appropriate and to be supported here the opportunity to improve the conservation area contribution of the road frontage of the site should be taken if and when it arises" Later in the appraisal these barns are described as negative features within the Conservation Area so the alterations to the cladding are intended to improve the appearance and new hedging and tree planting will eventually screen and soften the appearance of the site.

Tall pylons and electricity lines which pass by the northern side of the village are described as very obtrusive and detract from the wider setting. The outskirts of suburban Gravesend which are very visible from the village also detract from the setting.

The agricultural use came to a natural end. When the buildings become redundant planning was granted for the building contractors business storage.

Other significant changes to the village setting will come about due to the construction of the proposed link road between the A2 and Third Thames Crossing which will be about 100 metres to the west of the site of the barns and within a cutting. Gravesham Borough Council's statement on the impacts of the proposed Third Crossing and the link road to the A2 describes the effects of the proposed link road to be significant on Cheney's Farm and on various houses close by in the settlement of Thong.

A map of the new road and tunnel route taken from the National Highways web site is shown below.



A planning application for this road and tunnel has been submitted and will take some time to work through to a decision however, the Department of Transport are actively pursuing the purchase of the land required to build this road and other areas of land to form compensatory land for bio-diversity enhancement so it is very likely to go ahead so there will be significant construction noise, traffic and disturbance to the village during the construction of the new cutting for the link road.

Gravesham's Local Plan is outdated. The Core Strategy 2014 includes relevant Policies.

Sustainable Development, CS01.

Scale and Distribution of Development, CS02

Economy, Employment and Skills, CS07

Transport, CS11

National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

The above Framework provides to Local Planning Authorities the framework within which locally prepared planning documents can provide sufficient housing and business premises and by which Local Planning Authorities can prepare their planning documents in line with the Government's direction that sustainable development should be approved. This latest NPPF was published in December 2023 and is therefore the most relevant and UpToDate planning document under which this application should be determined.

Section 2, Achieving sustainable development.

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

In this case this proposal will enable the business to locate its administrative activities with the re-built barn which has effectively the same bulk and height as the existing building. The administrative activities will result in some additional car movements to this site, however, overall, there will be less travel required by the business staff between this existing storage site and the administrative offices. With staff located on the same site as the materials storage there will be more efficient use of the materials, less ordering of materials and tools because the staff placing the order don't know what is in the stores, more control and management of the storage facility and more interest in maintaining this facility in good repair and appearance. The business will spend less money on vehicle travel, office accommodation in the form of rent, rates and maintenance and be able to continue to expand and take on more staff working from one location where the management of the business will enable successful direction of staff to new contract work. For this business locating the storage and office functions at the same location has significant benefits.

The barns are already in business use so the addition of mezzanine offices has very limited additional impact.

The proposal to re-clad the barns in dark stained timber and to add some glazing to the ends of the barns will result in the buildings being far more appropriate within the Conservation Area.

Section 11, Making effective use of land.

As mentioned above the barns and site are in commercial use as storage for the Building Contacting Business. By re-developing one of the barns so it can accommodate a mezzanine floor whilst maintaining the same size and bulk and by bringing more of the business to use the barns, this makes more effective use of these buildings as well as being good for the business.

Section 12, Achieving well designed and beautiful places, Section 25 Conserving the natural environment.

As mentioned, the barns are to be re-clad in dark stained timber weatherboard, the site is to be tidied up and planted with new hedges and new tree planting. Bat and swift boxes are to be installed which all help to improve and enhance this site.

Section 13, Protecting the Green Belt.

The plans show that the work on the barns will not have any additional impact on the Green Belt.

Section 16, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The site is within the Thong Conservation Area. It has been referred to in the Conservation Area Appraisal as having a negative impact. There is the opportunity to improve this part of the Conservation Area as set out in this statement.

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