



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250213

Location: Little Mockbeggar Farm Town Road Higham Rochester

Description: Widening of an existing access to a Classified Road including alterations to the fencing.

Applicant: WB Chambers Farms Ltd

Site Visit Date: 24.04.25

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form
01 – Site Location Plan
02 – Existing Block Plan
03 – Proposed Block Plan
04 – Existing and Proposed Fence Elevations
Planning Statement
Small Sites BNG Metric
Aerial Image
Transportation Letter

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20230678	Use of land for the stationing of 20 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers.	Permitted	14.09.2023
20211530	Erection of extension to existing storage/cold store/packhouse building.	Permitted	16.03.2022
20210645	Erection of general purpose agricultural storage building.	Permitted	15.07.2021
20201290	Use of land for the stationing of x28 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers, 8 caravans to be occupied all year round with 20 occupied in main season.	Temporary Permission	08.03.2021
20200143	Use of the land for the stationing of 4 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers all year round; the stationing of 15 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers from 01 March to 31 October and the unoccupied storage of the 15 caravans over winter (part retrospective)	Temporary Permission	06.04.2020
20191007	Application for Certificate of Lawful Development in respect of retention of polytunnels.	Certificate Granted	14.01.2020
20160071	Erection of general purposes agricultural storage/cold store building and hard surface yard area.	Permitted	27.05.2016

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS07 – Economy and Employment Skills
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 6 – Building a Strong, Competitive Economy
- Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Other Relevant Guidance

- Kent County Council Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2023)
- Gravesham Driveway Dropped Kerb Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)
- Gravesham Front Driveway Design Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Parish Council

No comments received.

Ward Councillors

Cllr Pearton -

As Ward Councillor, I have viewed the site and spoken with the owners. It is of my opinion, that widening the existing access would actually improve vehicles entering and exiting the site from Town Road and from a health & safety aspect would be safer for traffic using the B2000.(Town Road). Therefore, I do not have any concerns at this moment in time providing the application meets the requirements of the Highways Authority and is adhered to by the Applicants.

KCC Highways

I note that the existing access is to be widened and details have been provided to demonstrate how the alterations will be a betterment of the existing access. Any fence or vegetation should be kept to a maximum of 0.9 metres, to ensure they do not impede visibility at the point of access.

Consequently, I refer to the above planning application and confirm that provided the following requirements are secured by condition or planning obligation, then I would raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority:-

- Use of a bound surface for the first 5.5 metres of the access from the edge of the highway.
- Provision of measures to prevent the discharge of surface water onto the highway.
- Any gates to open away from the highway and to be set back a minimum of 10 metres from the back of the highway.

Planning permission does not convey any approval for construction of any alterations to the vehicular crossing, or any other works within the highway for which a statutory licence must be obtained. Applicants should contact Kent County Council - Highways and Transportation (web: www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport.aspx or telephone: 03000 418181) in order to obtain the necessary Application Pack.

It is important to note that Local Planning Authority (LPA) permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

KCC Biodiversity

SUMMARY: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION RECEIVED

No ecological information, other than the BNG metric, has been supplied with this application. However, we are satisfied that subject to the implementation of sensitive working methods, any adverse impacts to protected species can be reasonably avoided.

This is due to the small scale of the proposals which seek to widen an existing access track, and due to the limited value of onsite habitats for biodiversity. The submitted BNG assessment has demonstrated a net gain of 0.005 habitat units through offsite scrub creation.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A small sites metric calculation has been submitted which demonstrates that a net gain of 0.005 area habitat units (+20.83%) is achievable onsite, in addition to a net gain of 0.0141 hedgerow units (+19.56%). This is largely through the creation of new scrub and hedgerow habitat.

The submitted metric currently presents with an error in the area calculations as the baseline habitat area (324m²), does not match the post-development habitat area (379m²). This is from the creation of the offsite scrub habitat. Post-determination, the baseline habitat type for the offsite scrub planting area will need to be included to ensure that the final net gain outcomes are accurate and that there are no area errors. We consider that a net gain will still be achievable within this area.

As the onsite baseline habitat areas are correct, we do not require this information prior to determination, however a finalised version of the metric with correct habitat areas will be required in order to inform the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP), as referenced below.

Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP)

To ensure successful establishment and retention of the proposed biodiversity enhancements through appropriate long-term management and monitoring, we advise that a condition for a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) is attached to any approved planning permission. This shall align with the habitat creation measures as proposed within the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment. Due to the small size of the site there are limited opportunities for providing additional enhancements (e.g. bird boxes or bat boxes).

Suggested Condition

Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include full details of biodiversity enhancements which shall include locations of new hedgerow and mixed scrub planting, specifications of species included within new habitat creation, management measures and the details of the individual, body or organisation(s) responsible for implementation of the plan.

The approved plan shall be implemented as described and retained thereafter.

Reason: In accordance with paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024.

NESTING BIRD INFORMATIVE:

The site contains one hedgerow that is due to be removed and replanted. All wild birds and their nests are protected from harm under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As such, any works which may result in impacts to nesting birds should be conducted outside of the core nesting season which is March through August (inclusive) or under ecological supervision. A suitable exclusion zone should be established around any active bird nest in the event one is discovered during works.

KCC Heritage

No comments received.

Southern Gas

No comments received.

Neighbouring properties

Given the relatively isolated nature of the site, 0 surrounding properties were consulted by letter. A site notice was placed on 24th April 2025 and the final date for comments to be submitted ended on 16th May 2025. 0 comments were received from members of the public.

Officer's Analysis

Principle of Development

Paragraphs 153-160 of the NPPF (2024) address proposals which would affect the Green Belt. It seeks to ensure that inappropriate development in the Green Belt would not be approved except in very special circumstance.

The relevant exception to this policy is as follows:

h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

i. mineral extraction;

ii. engineering operations;

iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The proposal to alter the access arrangement would be considered an engineering operation. As such where it would preserve the openness and does not conflict the purposes of including land within it, it would be considered appropriate in the Green Belt.

In this case, the access is existing. The proposed changes represent a minor widening of the access, using materials to match the existing hard surfacing, replacing soft landscaping and repositioning existing fencing. This minor change clearly would preserve the openness of the green belt, given the limited change and does not conflict with the purposes of land within it. This development is therefore considered appropriate in the Green Belt. However, all other materials considerations should be given within the assessment. In this case the following matters should be considered:

- Landscape Character
- Design, Character and Appearance
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Parking and highways
- Biodiversity

Landscape, Design, Character and Appearance

The proposed development should comply with the requirements of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024) in terms of design, character and appearance. It requires new development to take into account the existing character of the area and to ensure that the density of new housing development does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated. The application site is located in the Higham Arable Farmland Landscape Character Area and as such, Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 is also relevant.

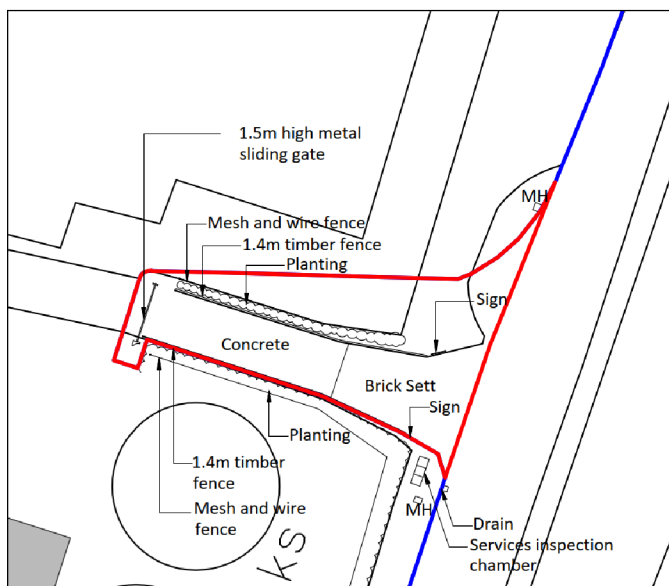
In relation to the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area, the LCA states that the overall condition of the landscape is poor and that it has moderate sensitivity. It recommends that the landscape elements in poor condition should be restored, whilst safeguarding the character area as a prominent landscape feature within the wider landscape.

The application site lies is part of Little Mockbeggar Farm, which is used for soft fruit production under polytunnels, exclusively growing strawberries. It also has planning consent for the stationing of 20 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers.

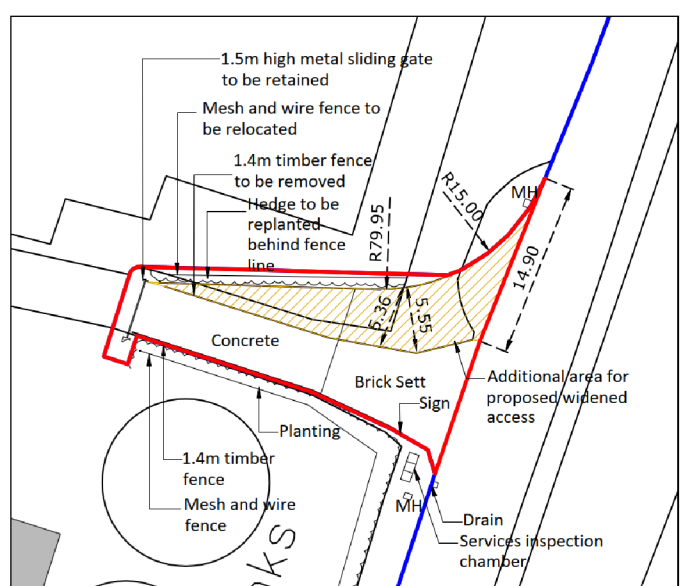
This application relates to the widening of one of the existing vehicular accesses to the site, as shown in the image below taken on 24th April 2025.



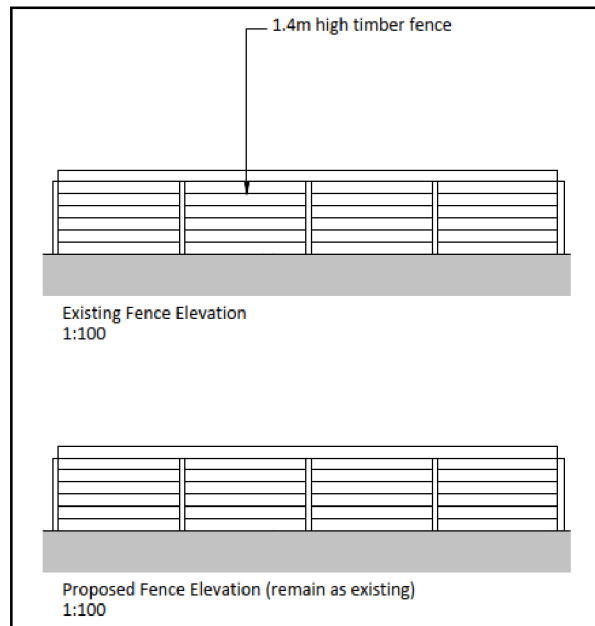
The below plans (Not to scale) show the existing access layout, compared with the proposed and the existing and proposed fencing.



Existing (Not to Scale)



Proposed (Not to Scale)



The proposed changes would result in a small section of the existing access being widened. The existing hedging, and fence would be removed and relocated along the new northern side of the access. The full extent of the fencing as proposed is unclear from the plans provided. However, its general position is clear and in design terms it would be acceptable. The plans show that the front edge of the drive would use brick set and the back edge would be concrete as per the existing. Overall, the widening of the associated relocated fencing would be visually appropriate in its design, with little significant change in appearance.

Overall, provided that further planting and the replacement of the existing hedging is controlled by condition, it is considered that the proposed development would not be significantly detrimental to visual amenity or landscape character and would be in line with the requirements of Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

The proposal is compliant with Policies CS14, CS15 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, September 2014 and paragraphs 135 of the NPPF (2024) in terms of design, character and appearance.

In respect of landscape character the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, September 2014 and Section 15 of the NPPF (2024)

Neighbouring Amenity

It is important that any development safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties and land. 0 neighbours were consulted on this application given the relatively isolated position of the site. However members of the public were invited to comment and a site notice placed near the site. 0 comments from members of the public were received.

Given the minor nature of the change and that there are no residential properties in close proximity to the area of proposed development, it is considered that the scheme would not result in any harm to the residential amenity of any neighbouring properties.

As such the proposal would be compliant with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Parking and Highways

The proposed scheme would create a wider access for vehicles from this section of Town Road (B2000). The transport statement provided with the application states the changes will improve access, road

safety and permit two-way traffic at this access, reducing vehicles waiting on the road. KCC Highways were consulted on the scheme and indicate that the details provided do demonstrate how the alterations will be a betterment of the existing access. They raised no objections subject to conditions as follows:

- Use of a bound surface for the first 5.5 metres of the access from the edge of the highway.
- Provision of measures to prevent the discharge of surface water onto the highway.
- Any gates to open away from the highway and to be set back a minimum of 10 metres from the back of the highway.

They also note that fence or vegetation should be kept to a maximum of 0.9m to ensure they do not impede visibility at the point of access.

Safe vehicle access would therefore be maintained, in accordance with paragraphs 109 to 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Local Plan First Review (1994) and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 subject to further details of cycle parking provision.

Biodiversity

Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021 and supporting Statutory Instruments Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now mandatory for most development. The legislation requires a minimum 10% gain in biodiversity from applicable development either onsite, offsite or a combination of both.

BNG provided under the mandatory requirements offsite and significant BNG onsite must be secured by a legal agreement for 30 years under an approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

There are strict legal requirements in terms of what an application must contain in relation to BNG before it can be accepted as valid. This is set out in Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application and other information.

However, certain applications are exempt from the BNG regulations (the Biodiversity Gain Requirements Exemptions) Regulations 2024) including householder applications and include:

- Householder development as defined within article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- Development granted planning permission by a development order under section 59. This includes permitted development rights.
- Development subject to the de minimis exemption - development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m by 5m) of habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.
- Self-build and custom build development - development which:
 - consists of no more than 9 dwellings, and
 - is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and
 - consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

KCC Biodiversity have commented on this application advising that the 10% Net Gain can be achieved. Although there are some errors in the calculations, they advise that this can be corrected as part of the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan condition which should be included if approved. They note that the baseline habitat type for the offside scrub planting area will need to be included to ensure that the final net gain outcomes are accrual and that there are no area errors. However, the net gain is achievable on site.

Conclusion

The proposed development complies with all relevant national and local planning policies, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

The recommendation is to approve the development.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Lisa Fisher	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	9 th July 2025	Dated:	9 th July 2025