



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250840

Location: Brookers Farm, Luddesdown Road, Luddesdown, Gravesend DA13 0XE

Description: Retention/installation of 59 wine tanks and grape presses.

Applicant: Mr Steve Chappell, Vineyard Farms Ltd

Site Visit Date: 10 October 2025

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Planning Statement
Biodiversity Net Gain Statement
Drawing no. DHA/36436/01 (site location plan)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/02 (existing site layout plan)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/03 (existing elevations)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/04 (existing elevations)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/05 (proposed site layout plan)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/06 (proposed elevations)
Drawing no. DHA/36436/07 (proposed elevations)

Relevant Planning History

20251150	Application to determine if prior approval is required for the installation of a surfaced pathway for agricultural use at Brookers Farm, Luddesdown in accordance with Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.	Prior approval granted	10.12.2025
20251092	Application for a Proposed Lawful Development Certificate; to create additional ground floor space within existing building for new storage area for wine shop; conversion of existing staff room into storage/wine tasting room; creating internal doorways connecting the wine shop with the adjacent tasting rooms; reconfiguring and replacing ground floor toilets with installation	Certificate Granted	09.12.2025

of new external windows on side elevation. Creation of first floor mezzanine floor space for new wine tasting room.

20251012	Erection of a temporary marquee and shipping container to house a pop-up pub for a period of 6 months.	Granted Temporary Permission	02.12.2025
20250934	Advertisement Consent for non-Illuminated fascia sign for Cellar Door Shop.	Permitted	17.11.2025
20250839	Application for an Existing Lawful Development Certificate for the continued use of part of the agricultural building as a small wine shop (Cellar Door) and vineyard/farm Offices in association with the existing agricultural operations.	Certificate Granted	15.10.2025
20240091	Engineering works to construct a formal car parking area for Vineyard Farms Ltd office, winery and vineyard workers, and other users of Brookers Farm.	Permitted	05.04.2024
20240039	Prior notification under Part 3, Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the change of use from an agricultural building to a flexible use as offices and off licence (Use Class E).	Refused	02.04.2024
20240021	Prior notification under Class B of Part 6 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the addition of 9 additional fermentation tanks to existing 41 already in place.	Prior approval not required	09.02.2024
20231145	Prior notification under Part 3 Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the installation of 9 additional Wine Fermentation and Storage Tanks.	Refused	03.01.2024
20231116	Retrospective application for the	Permitted	11.01.2024

necessary engineering operational works to construct a track to service an associated compost/storage area.

20231110	Engineering works to construct a formal car parking area for Vineyard Farms Ltd office, and winery and vineyard workers; and other users of Brookers Farm.	Application Refused	22.12.2023
20230454	Application for retrospective temporary consent for the erection of 41 wine fermentation and storage tanks	Granted Temporary Permission	22.06.2023
20230181	Engineering works to construct a formal car parking area for Vineyard Farms Ltd office, and winery and vineyard workers.	Application Refused	24.05.2023
20210607	Retrospective application for erection of two storage/fermentation tanks.	Granted Temporary Permission	23.07.2021
19880177	Erection of two agricultural buildings to form grain store, workshop/general purposes building.	Permitted	23.05.1988

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS07 – Economy, Employment and Skills
- CS11 - Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on the 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 4 – Decision-making
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design for Gravesham: Design Code (2024);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021-2026
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Medway Council

I refer to your letter of consultation regarding the above and would inform you that the Council RAISES NO OBJECTION to it.

1 Subject to Gravesham Borough Council being satisfied with this further clarification, it is recommended that a condition be included on any permission to require a logistics management plan to help limit the impact of HGV use on the grounds of safety and amenity, to include the following:

- o No HGV movements during school arrival and departure hours (8:15 to 9:15 and 15:00 to 16:00 or time to be agreed)
- o Delivery management (timings to ensuring HGVs do not meet along Warren Road and Bush Road)
- o Vehicle types used
- o Details of expected deliveries and movements generated by the site
- o Driver awareness of rural roads, school presence and speed limits
- o Routing

2 Whilst 2 HGV trips per week, rising to 3-5 at peak times, would have a very limited impact on the local highway network, it is recommended that further clarity on HGV movements be sought before a decision is made, bearing in mind that most wine tanks are already in place and the much greater level and varied type (including larger, articulated lorries) of HGV movements already being experienced through Bush Road, Cuxton and the highway, pedestrian and amenity concerns raised by this.

Your attention is drawn to the following informative(s) :-

1 This response is to the letter dated 7 January 2026 from Gravesham Borough Council, their reference 20250840.

Cuxton Parish Council

Cuxton Parish council, feel compelled to make a representation on this planning application, due to its unquestionable impacts on the village of Cuxton.

The tanks in question are serviced by rigid and articulated HGV vehicles, suited to motorways and A-roads. However, due to the height restrictions of the railway bridge on Cobhambury Road, the only access for high-sided vehicles, to the site, is via Bush road and Warren Road in Cuxton. This application is therefore

of direct relevance to the residents of Cuxton, as well as those of Luddesdown.

Bush Road is a central village route, with a notorious junction to the A228. It has signage to demonstrate the lack of suitability for HGVs and is flanked with parked cars and traffic calming chicanes. It also passes two schools that are attended by over 600 students, over 70% of whom are driven into the village each day, creating two significant spikes in both vehicle and vulnerable pedestrian congestion, every weekday.

Bush Road eventually becomes Warren Road, a rural track weaving through the complex topography of designated and highly protected National Landscapes, which becomes gridlocked for hours every time there is an issue on the nearby M2.

We have already seen that the size of the vehicles servicing Brookers Farm is damaging trees and critically eroding verges, (which in turn is further destabilising adjacent trees). Broken branches and dislodged flint currently litter the road surface, which itself is being continuously riven into a patchwork of potholes. The consequence of this is that vehicles trying to avoid the rocks and potholes are creating further erosion of the banks, many of which house hedgerows vital to local wildlife.

The record of 'retrospective' applications has facilitated a surreptitious 'creep' in the number of these tanks, and accordingly, in the number of attending vehicle movements. Additionally, the somewhat fluid assertion that the tanks were, or will be, temporary is of little comfort as this application, if granted, will provide permanent licence for an additional 50 tanks, over the 9 currently permitted. (The fact that so many extra tanks are already in situ, and so quickly, demonstrates both a startling capacity for growth and a curious regard for regulation.)

A two-way link count, from ATC equipment installed at the junction of Bush Road and the A228 in June of 2024, shows a daily total of 11 articulated HGV movements. Recent monitoring has shown peaks of up to 36 movements a day, an unsurprising but concerning increase.

We will of course be continuing to discuss these figures and trends with the Road Safety Engineering Department of Medway Council, along with Medway's senior leaders, councillors and our MP, but we would urge a measured and cohesive response to this application, incorporating input from both Medway and Gravesham authorities given the cross-boundary nature of this issue.

Naturally, Cuxton Parish Council are keen to avoid the continual increase in HGV movements as this is unsustainable, both through our village environment and the surrounding National Landscapes, so we respectfully request that this application is denied.

Luddesdown Parish Council

Luddesdown Parish Council has considered the application for the above property and wishes to make the following comments:

- LPC object specifically to the increased production capacity in the centre of the village with the associated noise.
- LPC are concerned regarding the increased traffic on the local single-track country roads particularly HGVs collecting the finished wine.
- The Parish Council would request that if GBC is minded to grant approval, that a condition be applied for the hours to be restricted for when the machinery can be used.

Kent Downs National Landscape

Thank you for your recent consultation on the above. The following comments are on behalf of the Kent Downs National Landscape (NL) team and as such are at an officer level and do not necessarily represent the comments of the whole Kent Downs NL partnership. The legal context of our response and list of National Landscape/AONB guidance is set out at Appendix 1 below.

National Planning Policy

The application site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape. The application therefore needs to be tested against the purpose of the designation, to conserve and enhance natural beauty and the way that this purpose is represented in national and local policy. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, requires that local authorities 'must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' in making decisions that affect the designated area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 189 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.

NPPF paragraph 11 explains the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-making this means that proposals in accordance with the development plan should be approved. Part d says that where there are no relevant development plan policies or the relevant ones are out of date then permission should be granted unless:

- "i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed⁷; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination "

National Landscapes are listed in footnote 7 and the most relevant policies in the Framework are paragraphs 189 and 190. A court of appeal case¹ confirms that, if a proposal causes harm to a National Landscape sufficient to refuse planning permission if there were no other considerations, then the presumption in favour (or 'tilted balance' expressed in ii) above should be disengaged. The decision-maker should therefore conduct a normal planning balancing exercise, applying appropriate weight to each consideration, to come to a decision. This will of course include giving great weight to the National Landscape as required by NPPF paragraph 189.

The national PPG revised in 2019 provides additional guidance on new development in National Parks and AONBs (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721). This specifies that 'all development within nationally protected landscapes needs to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality'.

Major Development

In the event that the decision-maker concludes that development is 'major' in terms of its impact on the National Landscape, paragraph 190 of the NPPF states that "Planning permission should be refused for major development⁶⁷ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

Footnote 67 states: "For the purposes of paragraphs 189 and 190, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined".

Local Planning Policy

Adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy policy CS12 seeks to conserve, restore and enhance the landscape character of the Borough and requires that the greatest weight is given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs AONB and its setting.

Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, local authorities are required to prepare an AONB Management Plan which must “formulate the policies for the management of the AONB and for carrying out their functions in relation to it”. The Kent Downs National Landscape team produces a Management Plan on behalf of the local authorities within the National Landscape. The Kent Downs Management Plan, Third Revision 2021 to 2026 has been adopted by all the local authorities in the Kent Downs, including Gravesham Borough Council. The Management Plan sets out the policy for the conservation, enhancement and management of the National Landscape in a series of aims, actions and Principles.

The national Planning Policy Guidance, 2019, confirms that Management Plans can be a material consideration when assessing planning applications (Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 8-040-20190721) and this view is confirmed in previous appeal decisions, including APP/U2235/W/19/3232201, Cossington Fields Farm North, Bell Lane, Boxley, Maidstone where at paragraph 5 of the Inspectorate’s decision letter it is stated that “I am mindful of the policies contained within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (2014-2019) requiring development to conserve and enhance natural beauty of AONB to which I attach substantial weight.” The decision can be downloaded at:
<https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?caseid=3232201>

The following principles from the Management Plan are considered to be of particular relevance to the application:

MMP2 The Kent Downs AONB is a material consideration in plan making and decision taking, and so local authorities will give a high priority to the AONB Management Plan vision, aims, principles and actions in Local Plans, development management decisions, planning enforcement cases and in taking forward their other relevant functions.

SD1 Ensure that policies, plans, projects and net gain investments affecting the Kent Downs AONB take a landscape led approach are long term, framed by the Sustainable Development Goals appropriate to the Kent Downs, cross cutting and recurrent themes, the vision, aims and principles of the AONB Management Plan.

SD2 The local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the Kent Downs AONB will be conserved and enhanced in the design, scale, siting, landscaping and materials of new development, redevelopment and infrastructure and will be pursued through the application of appropriate design guidance and position statements.

SD3 Ensure that development and changes to land use and land management cumulatively conserve and enhance the character and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB rather than detracting from it.

SD7 New projects, proposals and programmes shall conserve and enhance tranquillity and where possible dark night skies.

SD8 Ensure proposals, projects and programmes do not negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the Kent Downs AONB.

SD9 The particular historic and locally distinctive character of rural settlements and buildings of the Kent Downs AONB will be maintained and strengthened. The use of sustainably sourced locally-derived materials for restoration and conversion work will be encouraged. New developments will be expected to

apply appropriate design guidance and to be complementary to local character in form, siting, scale, contribution to settlement pattern and choice of materials.

LLC1 The protection, conservation and enhancement of special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB will be supported and pursued.

FL5 Farm diversification activities will be supported if they help achieve the vision, aims and principles of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

FL7 Proposals for conversion from agricultural land to leisure use and the creation of both agricultural and non-agricultural structures must demonstrate that there will be no individual or cumulative negative impact on the landscape character and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB.

Landscape Character

The site lies within the Cobham sub-area of the West Kent Downs Character Area as identified in the Landscape Assessment of the Kent Downs AONB, updated in 2020. Within this landscape character area, key characteristics are identified as a dip-slope landform of dry valleys running roughly north-south, interspersed with broad undulating ridges and plateaux, extensive blocks of woodland, as well as strips of woodland on valley sides, luxuriant hedgerows and (in places) parkland trees add to the sense of enclosure and of a well-treed landscape. Arable agriculture is the predominant land use, with some pasture. Fields vary in shape and size, but are generally hedged. A strongly historic landscape, much of which has seen relatively little landscape change, historic settlements and churches are linked by a network of ancient lanes, within a setting of fields, woodland and historic parkland. Main roads are limited to the periphery, and the lanes which run through it are generally narrow, quiet and lined with trees or hedges. Some are sunken, particularly where they cut through valley sides.

Landscape Management Recommendations include:

- Manage arable areas to encourage a diversity of pollen and seed rich habitats, hedgerow replanting and field margins to enhance the structure of the landscape and improve habitat connectivity. Encourage continued management and support for long term farm-based arable reversion projects to allow species richness of the grasslands to develop further. Promote new hedgerows and roadside trees from existing hedge stock.
- Manage hedgerows, including alongside roads, encouraging replanting rather than repair where they have become gappy.
- Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impact on views, with compensation achieved for any lost qualities.
- Use the existing and valued landscape characteristics and qualities to design new tree establishment as part of climate change mitigation.

Impacts on the Kent Downs National Landscape

The application seeks consent for the permanent retention of existing tanks at Brookers Farm and the installation of some additional tanks, that would be mainly located to the south of the winery building in a location where there currently aren't any installed, but within a compound area which has an existing hardstanding and closely related to the existing winery building and tanks, rather than extending out into the open countryside.

The existing tanks are relatively large structures, although no higher than the existing winery building which screens views of them from the west. The existing tanks and proposed new ones would be partially visible from Cutter Ridge Road which rises above the site to the east however, as existing vegetative screening on the bank between Cutter Ridge Road and the application site is limited. The tanks have an industrial appearance, partly as a result of their utilitarian form and metal finish and we would strongly recommend that a landscaping scheme is made conditional of any planning permission issued that requires the planting

of trees on the land between the application site and Cutters Ridge to the immediate east and south of the tanks. This would be entirely in keeping with the local landscape character by establishing a wooded shaw, where such features are commonly found and would help ensure that the natural beauty of the KDNL is conserved and enhanced.

1 Monkhill Limited vs Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Waverley Borough Council Case No: C1/2019/1955/QBACF

Dickens Country Protection Society

27 October 2025

Thank you for your letter of 8th October concerning the above. Further to the Society's letter of 14th September 2025, the Society notes that under ref GR/2023/0454 the first 44 tanks were granted temporary consent. A further 9 tanks were deemed permitted development. The Society would question if the manufacturing of wine can be considered agriculture. Clearly the growing of grapes is agriculture and the gathering of grapes is together with the extracting and storage of the juice.

The Society would question if the manufacture of wine on this scale could be considered agriculture. It does not have to take place where the grapes are grown. What is going on in Luddesdown is not a cottage industry.

Green Belt and National Landscape Policies are not irrelevant; neither is the impact of heavy goods vehicles on narrow country roads with the resultant damage to banks and verges. The proposal to build a large Winery in Medway (planning application MC/21/2328) was refused and the subsequent appeal dismissed. Something similar should not happen in Luddesdown by stealth.

Considering application GR/2025/0840, the tanks in question are masked on one side by existing farm buildings and on relatively low ground, following the grant of temporary planning consent; the Society would not oppose this being made permanent subject to conditions for the introduction of additional landscaping to provide adequate screening. Any extension to the tankage or further industrial plant should be subject to planning consent.

14 September 2025

The Society would wish to comment that the site is in an area where Green Belt Policies apply and the North Downs National Landscape. What is proposed is industrial plant and could be visually intrusive. The plant has been well sited but needs to be screened from the wider area and a comprehensive landscaping scheme is required.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by site notice, press notice and individual letters to five neighbouring dwellings. 30 letters of objection have been received (some are from the same addresses). The main concerns are:

- The comment that the tanks have no effect on local landscape character lacks the support of a Local Visual Impact Assessment
- Engineering works mean the current situation was not the starting point
- This application does not improve the social and environmental conditions of the area
- This application does not conserve, restore or enhance landscape character: it positively detracts.
- Taken with other applications this might constitute major development
- Does not contribute to or enhance the natural, local environment.
- Clear views of the site from the National Landscape
- AONB unit comments from previous applications
- Millington case does not relate to this site
- The winery is already inappropriate for its setting

- Out of character/scale/appears industrial
- Loss of habitats
- Questionable employment benefits
- Piecemeal and misleading planning approach
- Cumulative harm to the area
- A permanent consent will mean the farm will never return to its original form
- Vineyard farms have said they will set up at another location and approving this application would allow them to renege on this
- Granting permission for a large industrial scale facility would change the designation as a small scale agricultural service
- Increase in HGV traffic. Medway are considering banning HGVs through Cuxton which means all HGVs will come through Luddesdown
- Damage to verges and trees from HGVs
- Safety concerns to pedestrians/cyclists/horse riders
- Increased amount of lorries during school time is dangerous
- Lorries constantly having to back up to pass one another
- Damage to chalk features, night pollinators and other wildlife
- Noise at night from bottling, beeping from reversing lorries/forklifts
- Loss of tranquillity was mentioned in the dismissed appeal
- Security lighting/light pollution
- Applications are submitted retrospectively/on going disregard for planning legislation
- The scale of the business is unsustainable in a rural location
- No social or environmental benefits
- Lack of consideration to sites outside of the AONB
- Harvest is overnight and are unsociable hours
- Grapes from Essex are being processed at this location
- Industrial appearance as can be seen by the carpark and ultra brightly lit barrier
- The traffic assessment needs to be revisited
- Luddesdown Road is liable to flooding
- 'No HGVs' signs are ignored
- Traffic from Silverhand employees

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the retention/installation of 59 wine tanks and grape presses. The plan below shows the position of the proposed tanks:



Currently there is a permission for 9 tanks under a prior approval application (20240021) but only five were installed, an expired temporary permission for 2 tanks (20210607) and a temporary consent for 41 tanks which expires on 22 June 2026 (20230454) but only 40 were installed. Therefore, currently, 50 tanks have a permission. There are 47 tanks currently on site and this application seeks a further 12 tanks which makes a total of 59.

Principle

Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF (2024) relate to supporting a prosperous rural economy. The development and diversification of agricultural rural businesses should be enabled, and it should be recognised that proposals to meet local business needs may be required in such areas, in locations that are not well served by public transport. It will be important, however, to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).

Policy CS07 of the Core Strategy 2014 also supports proposals that promote the appropriate expansion and diversification of the rural area economy. Policy CS02 supports development outside rural settlements, including proposals to diversify and maintain the rural economy, where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in this plan.

This proposal is located in the countryside, outside any rural settlement, and in the Green Belt. The site relates to the business of Vineyard Farms Ltd, which is an organic vineyard with over 1,200 acres of vineyards, woodland and pastureland. They have a growth plan to invest up to £60m in infrastructure and vineyards, creating over 150 permanent new jobs for local people. Their UK estate is the largest single organic vineyard in the UK with 800 acres under vine, with a plan to grow to over 1,000 by 2027. The remainder of the estate comprises woodland and meadows and is managed under the Higher Tier

Stewardship Scheme.

The growing of grapes for wine is an agricultural use and the storage and processing of these is ancillary to this. The only permanent consent for tanks on the site is for nine; the remainder were permitted under temporary consents. This was because there was an appeal pending a decision against Medway Council's refusal of a winery in Upper Bush. If that had been successful the operation would have eventually moved there. The application was dismissed at appeal and now the applicants are seeking a permanent consent for the tanks they have and an additional 12.

National and local policy is generally supportive of such rural business development and expansion, subject to compatibility with policies for protecting the Green Belt and other policies in the development plan.

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Appropriateness of development in the Green Belt
- Character and appearance of the surrounding area
- Residential amenity
- Ecological impact
- Highways and parking.

Whether the proposal comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 143 of NPPF (2024) sets out five purposes for including land within Green Belts:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 153 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 states:

Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 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 proposed development relates to the existing agricultural use. The tanks therefore fall under exception (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry.

Whilst the application is not for a building or extension to the building, the tanks are located directly adjacent to the existing farm building and are associated with the existing agricultural use and therefore have been treated as an exception (in line with the previous application for two tanks approved under reference 20210607 and the 41 tanks approved under reference 20230454).

As the tanks are deemed an exception there is no requirement to consider openness and very special circumstances.

Design, Character and Appearance

The site is located in the Green Belt, within the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL) and in the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area as defined in the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy policies map and this must be the starting point for determining this application.

National Landscape

The site is located within the Kent Downs National Landscape and therefore account should be taken of paragraph 187 of the NPPF and the principles and objectives of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan, Third Revision 2021 to 2026. The Management Plan is adopted by all the local authorities in Kent as their policy for the management of the National Landscape and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The national PPG confirms that National Landscape Management Plans can be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Para. 189 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection.

The site lies within the Cobham sub-area of the West Kent Downs Character Area as identified in the Landscape Assessment of the Kent Downs AONB, updated in 2020. Within this landscape character area, key characteristics are identified as a dip-slope landform of dry valleys running roughly north-south, interspersed with broad undulating ridges and plateaux, extensive blocks of woodland, as well as strips of woodland on valley sides, luxuriant hedgerows and (in places) parkland trees add to the sense of enclosure and of a well-treed landscape. Arable agriculture is the predominant land use, with some pasture. Fields vary in shape and size but are generally hedged. A strongly historic landscape, much of which has seen

relatively little landscape change, historic settlements and churches are linked by a network of ancient lanes, within a setting of fields, woodland and historic parkland. Main roads are limited to the periphery, and the lanes which run through it are generally narrow, quiet and lined with trees or hedges. Some are sunken, particularly where they cut through valley sides.

Landscape Management Recommendations include:

- Manage arable areas to encourage a diversity of pollen and seed rich habitats, hedgerow replanting and field margins to enhance the structure of the landscape and improve habitat connectivity. Encourage continued management and support for long term farm-based arable reversion projects to allow species richness of the grasslands to develop further. Promote new hedgerows and roadside trees from existing hedge stock.
- Manage hedgerows, including alongside roads, encouraging replanting rather than repair where they have become gappy.
- Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impact on views, with compensation achieved for any lost qualities.
- Use the existing and valued landscape characteristics and qualities to design new tree establishment as part of climate change mitigation.

The application seeks consent for the permanent retention of existing tanks at Brookers Farm and the installation of some additional tanks, that would be mainly located to the south of the winery building in a location where there currently aren't any installed, but within a compound area which has an existing hardstanding and closely related to the existing winery building and tanks, rather than extending out into the open countryside.

The existing tanks are relatively large structures, although no higher than the existing winery building which screens views of them from the west. The existing tanks and proposed new ones would be partially visible from Cutter Ridge Road which rises above the site to the east however, as existing vegetative screening on the bank between Cutter Ridge Road and the application site is limited. The tanks have an industrial appearance, partly as a result of their utilitarian form and metal finish and it is recommended that a landscaping scheme is made conditional of any planning permission issued that requires the planting of trees on the land between the application site and Cutters Ride to the immediate east and south of the tanks. This would be entirely in keeping with the local landscape character by establishing a wooded shaw, where such features are commonly found and would help ensure that the natural beauty of the KDNL is conserved and enhanced.

Landscape Character Area

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 seeks to conserve protected and valued landscapes.

The site is also located within the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area where the key characteristics are a very undulating topography with farmland used as arable and pasture. The guidelines are to conserve, protect and maintain its character. The tanks are located close to the building to the north, east and south. The majority of the tanks are already in situ and are between the building and a retaining wall. Whilst they are visible, they do not impact on the wider landscape as they are located within the existing farmyard in a relatively small area close to existing built form.

Design and Character

The tanks are to be located close to the existing building. Whilst some will be visible from Luddesdown Road they will be over 35m away and partially screened by a building to the west and vegetation. Notwithstanding this, the tanks are of a design that is not out of character with the use of the site as a winery which falls within an agricultural use. The site is partially restricted by the topography of the land to the east and the road to the west and therefore the development is contained. The tanks are more visible from Cutter Ridge Road to the east however, due to their location close to the main agricultural building at a



lower level than this road, and planting that has started to mature the views are slightly obscured:

View from Luddesdown Road (June 2023):



View from Luddesdown Road (October 2025):



View from Cutter Ridge Road (June 2023):





Tanks to the north of the building (October 2025):



A condition is recommended for a landscaping scheme to be submitted given the location within the National Landscape. This was not included on the previous consent as this was a temporary permission granted partly to allow time to see how much vegetation grows. Now a permanent consent is sought, given the additional number of tanks now proposed to surround three sides of the building, a landscaping scheme is necessary to mitigate and soften the appearance of the site as suggested by the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Unit.

Subject to this condition the development accords with policies CS12 and CS19 of Gravesham Core Strategy (LPCS) 2014 which requires new development to be fit for purpose, will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding local area and policies MMP2, SD1, SD2, SD3, SD7, SD8, SD9, LLC1, FL5 and FL7 of the Kent Downs National Landscape Plan.

Amenity

Development should not cause demonstrable harm to the amenity of any existing residents or property such that it will materially harm their living conditions. Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires new development to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024) which requires the amenity of existing residents to be protected.

The tanks are located behind a building close to a retaining wall. There are no properties within close proximity to the tanks, the nearest being over 40m away (with the building in between). The tanks will therefore have no detrimental impact on these neighbours in terms of loss of outlook, privacy, sunlight or daylight. Objections have been raised regarding the noise of vehicles and harvesting overnight however, this relates to the lawful use of the land which is agricultural and therefore cannot be controlled by condition.

As such, the proposal would comply with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024).

Ecology and Biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

In England, BNG is mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

A biodiversity net gain statement has been submitted with the application. This concludes that, as there is no habitat on site, the baseline is zero and the site is exempt from BNG requirements.

Parking and Highways

The application site is well within the Gravesham area, however due to the rural location, traffic from the site may arrive and depart through Medway. Luddesdown Road leads to Warren Road to the east, changing to Bush Road which leads to the A228 via a T-junction in Cuxton. On this basis the views of Medway Council were sought on the application.

A number of objections from local residents and Parish Councils have been received relating to highway safety and the traffic seemingly caused by the business. This is not a straightforward situation as the use is agricultural and therefore has not changed in planning terms. The site is located along narrow country lanes which are not suitable for HGVs however the business has right of access to their site. The grapes have to be harvested and taken to a processing plant which results in vehicular movements to the site. If the processing plant was elsewhere there would be the same or more vehicular movements to that location instead which would most likely, due to the constraints on roads in Cobham, use the same roads as currently.

The applicant has supplied a Transport Assessment with the application however it is noted this relates only to the tanks and not to the operation as a whole.

The submissions say that grapes from the surrounding land are brought to the site at harvest using tractors and trailers, an existing lawful agricultural operation with no associated HGV movements. The grapes are then pressed on site and distilled into various wine vats, with a low number of HGV visits over the year to deliver bottles, labels, yeast and other products. Once the wines are made, they are bottled and labelled in the adjacent building and packed for distribution via 26 tonne rigid body HGV's. They say that the total number of HGV movements associated with all 59 tanks is approximately 104 HGV movements (52 arrivals/52 departures) per year equivalent to 8 HGV trips per month or two per week. During peak times HGV movements may be more frequent (August/September harvest and December) whereby weekly movements may increase to 3 – 5 movements per week but consequently reduce during quieter months.

The submissions also refer to a fall-back position and the baseline level of HGV trips that any established agricultural use of the farm would generate. If the tanks were not allowed, then all produce would need to be transported off site, which they say would ultimately increase total HGV movements, with planning permission not being required for this.

The submissions say that HGV movements associated with wine distribution would be scheduled outside of the network peak hours to minimise impacts on the operation of the local highway network (0800-0900 and 1700-1800) and outside of night-time hours (2300-0700) for the amenity of the residents in the local villages. However, they note that the movements and timings associated with the agricultural operation of harvesting and other agricultural uses would not be controlled in this manner as it would impact seasonal harvesting, saying most fruit transport takes place internally, with any on local roads being within the lawful agricultural use of the land.

The submissions also note that the application for a new winery and visitors centre, see Medway Council planning reference MC/21/2328, was refused and dismissed at appeal, *'the Planning Inspector concluded that there were no highways grounds for refusal with particular reference to Bush Road. That proposal anticipated to generate up to 12 HGV and coach trips per day, and the Inspector concluded that these movements could be accommodated along Bush Road without adversely affecting traffic flow of traffic or*

highway safety. In comparison, the current proposals are considered to have a negligible impact'.

The submissions conclude that 'Trip generation forecasts have been based on information provided by the client and informed by operational knowledge of the existing site. It has been demonstrated that the 59 tanks when fully operational have the capacity to generate approximately 2 HGV trips per week, and a likely peak of 3-5 movements per week during peak harvest and in December. The winery generates a maximum of 6 daily staff vehicle trips. It is not considered that this represents a 'severe' residual impact with reference to Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework'.

The site is in the rural hamlet of Luddesdown. Due to the rural nature, limited road widths, heights under railway bridges and geometry of local roads, the submissions say that all HGV vehicles associated with the tanks use/will use the existing vehicle routing strategy when entering or leaving the site, this being along Luddesdown Road leading to Warren Road and into Medway to the east, then along Bush Road on to the A228 via a T-junction in Cuxton.

Bush Road is a central village route in Cuxton and includes access to two schools as well as to local shops and services, with high levels of on-street parking in places. The school use creates two significant spikes in both vehicle and vulnerable pedestrian congestion in term time. Bush Road becomes Warren Road to the west, a rural lane which cannot accommodate large vehicles passing each other and has limited and unofficial passing places, vehicles having to reverse along the road to find suitable places to pass. Along part of the route the carriageway is also used by a public right of way, such that pedestrian safety is also a consideration. This route is also used if there are issues on the nearby A2/M2, causing further congestion and safety concerns.

A two-way link count from ATC equipment installed at the junction of Bush Road and the A228 in June 2024 showed a daily total of 11 articulated HGV movements, with recent monitoring showing peaks of up to 36 HGV movements a day, although these are not all associated with the current site. As stated above, the submitted Transport Statement assesses the highway impacts of all 59 tanks saying they will generate approximately 2 HGV trips per week, rising to 3-5 at peak times. This very low number in itself is not considered to create a detrimental impact on the local highway network.

However, bearing in mind that many of the tanks are already in place, it is understood from local observations that a much greater number of vehicles which may be associated with the winery site than the Transport Statement suggests are already travelling through Cuxton, including larger articulated HGVs rather than just the 26 tonne rigid body HGVs referred to in the current submissions. It is recognised that these movements may be in connection with general agricultural use of the land which does not require planning permission, and may not just be for Brookers Farm activities.

In order to help mitigate the impact of the vehicular movements on Warren Road, Bush Road and Cuxton Road, particularly at school time a condition is recommended requiring that a logistic management plan is submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.

Subject to this condition the proposed development is considered to accord with policy CS11 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014.

Conclusion

The proposed storage tanks, subject to conditions, meet the Green Belt exceptions and will have no significant impact on the Kent Downs National Landscape, surrounding landscape character, neighbouring amenities, parking or highway safety and therefore accord with the above-mentioned policies and are recommended for approval.

Recommendation:

Permit

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Alison Webster	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	5 February 2026	Dated:	6th February 2026