

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————

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10th April 2025

Application ref 20240812

Land At New Green Farm Lower Road Shorne Gravesend Kent

Erection of agricultural workers dwelling for the farm's manager, including the provision of all associated landscaping, biodiversity enhancements and drainage infrastructure.

The Parish Council has to **OBJECT STRONGLY** to this further application, which is effectively a resubmission of previous applications Refs 20210970 and 20221334, both of which were refused permission, and the latter case was also dismissed at Appeal (Ref APP/K2230/W/23/3319080).

Although the Appeal Inspector at that time stated that a true farm manager's residence might be permissible, we question whether a 4-bedroom, 4-bathroom house (not 2 as stated in point 6.7 of the Planning, Design and Access statement) is needed and appropriate for this purpose. In that context it is noted that once again it is proposed that the house will be occupied by the MD, plus a Director (and their family), of AC Goatham, who spend much of their time at the Flanders Farm headquarters, rather than being ordinary agricultural worker employees or "rural workers" on low wages/without transport of their own. The isolated location is not Sustainable as vehicle journeys are required for every off-site function such as work, schools, shops, supermarkets etc.

The property is located in the Green Belt and Higham Arable Landscape Area where it will impact on openness, compounding the adverse effects of other existing and proposed future development on the overall site. The Appeal Inspector agreed that the proposal for a house on farmland was inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The house is now smaller and less bulky, and has been relocated to be nearer the barn and proposed seasonal worker accommodation. However, it is still the case that there will be significant landscape impact and that Grade 1, best productive agricultural farmland is being sacrificed for this purpose when existing suitable housing is/has been available locally, including two properties that were immediately adjacent to the farmland. Also, a greater area of farmland than just the defined application site will be lost due to replacement habitat requirements.

The primary reason for this application appears to local residents to be obtaining a residential building plot at agricultural land prices. The Applicant is inconsiderate of the detriment to the openness of the Green Belt and local landscape, and the annoyance to be caused to existing local residents.

Deficiencies in submitted plans/documents, and other concerns:

- Planning, Design and Access statement: As previously, this document mostly discusses the top fruit industry and Company internal operational matters in general rather than just addressing planning issues.
- Refuse bin storage location: This needs to be identified on plans in the environs of the proposed house, it only has a brief mention in point 7.8 of the Planning, Design and Access Statement. It needs to be clarified whether refuse lorries will come to the house to collect them or whether the bins will need to be brought down the driveway or to the Lower Higham Road.
- Cycle storage: There needs to be cycle storage identified/provided.
- EV charging point: As a new dwelling, an EV charging point needs to be provided and identified on the plans.
- Exterior lighting plan: The proposed house introduces light pollution in an area presently dark. A lighting plan is needed, with exterior lighting controlled and minimised through standard Conditions.
- Boundary treatments: We could not find a document or plan detailing the proposed fencing or other boundary treatment except for a mention in point 6.9 of the Planning, Design and Access Statement. Clearly, these could prevent the claimed oversight views from the ground floor of the house to the assorted farm buildings.
- Planting plan: Similarly, we could not find a planting plan for the garden or driveway areas, or the ecological mitigation area. Tall trees or shrubs could prevent the claimed oversight views from both levels of the house to the assorted farm buildings so must be prevented by Condition.
- Lack of other suitable properties locally: Previously the applicant submitted details of properties that had been available locally and why they were unsuitable but this has not been updated and re-provided. We are aware of several excellent properties that have been available in the interim since the previous application that are immediately adjacent to the relevant farmland yet these seem to have also been passed over for consideration.
- Setting a precedent: This application, if permitted, could set a precedent for similar building development at other small/multi-site farms in the wider area.
- Timeline: We note that the application was received on 6th September 2024 but not validated until 21st March 2025. As a result, the Parish Council was unaware of its existence until recently.

“Without prejudice” suggested Conditions:

- Preservation of Sightlines: Trees, shrubs and hedges could prevent the claimed oversight views from both floors of the house to the assorted farm buildings so must be height restricted by Condition.
- Boundary treatments and planting plan: Details of these need to be provided.
- Controls on exterior lighting: Standard clauses to prevent/reduce light pollution should be attached.
- Permitted development rights should be withdrawn: In view of the damage to the landscape that the proposed house would cause, we request that permitted development rights should be withdrawn. In particular, no changes should be made to the roof as that would draw greater attention to the property, which will anyway be visible from the nearby footpath. We note that the garden does not contain any other structures, not even a small shed for necessary garden storage.
- Agricultural tie required: As the proposed house is applied for on the basis that it is essential for agricultural purposes, a long and strong Agricultural Tie should be attached.

Summary:

The Parish Council continues to **OBJECT STRONGLY** to this and the Applicant’s other various proposals due to their cumulative and significant adverse impacts on openness of the Green Belt, local landscape and views from higher ground, and loss of productive farmland.