

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Filborough Farm, Lower Higham Road, Chalk, DA12 2NY.

Former Agricultural Barns. Proposed conversion and alterations.

Introduction

Filborough Farm is located to the east of the settlement of Chalk and on the south side of the Lower Higham Road.

The farmstead previously comprised the farmhouse, an oak framed barn, a steel framed, steel sheeted farm barn and a further timber barn together with the farmland.

Most of the farmland has been sold away over the years as has the Grade II Listed oak framed barn next to the house which has been converted to a dwelling and is in separate ownership to the remaining farmhouse and farm buildings.

The remaining land comprises one field to the south of the barn which is in arable production and is rented to a local farmer.

The steel framed barn and timber barn were in agricultural use until sold at the end of last year and are currently unused as the farmer leasing the land has his own farm buildings elsewhere. The remaining farmland is not sufficient to be enable a farming business to be sustained here.

Within the immediate area there is a commercial yard, a row of terraced houses, some individual houses in good sized plots to the east and along Church Lane and an authorised traveller site.

The village of Chalk is about 400 metres to the west.

Proposed development.

This application is for alterations to and the redevelopment of the steel frame, steel clad barn and the timber barn to create three new dwellings. The steel frame barn will create one four-bedroom dwelling and the timber barn can be redeveloped to form one pair of semi-detached dwellings. The height of the roof of the steel barn is proposed to be increased in height to enable accommodation to be provided on the first floor. The roof will be finished in slate. The timber frame barn is proposed to be extended by adding a floor and a pitched roof and again the roof will be finished again finished in slate.

The external wall finishes will be weatherboard in black stain or preferably a fire rated weatherboard with a black finish such as Supertech weatherboarding . Web site link- Supertech™ - BENX A1 Fire Rated Supertech Weatherboard Cladding.

Building Control have to consider the implications when timber weatherboarding is used and are resisting the used of timber cladding, even fire treated timber. However, if

timber cladding is required due to the setting being close to listed buildings, then Building Control are likely to accept timber cladding. Another option is to use a fire rated cladding such as Bench Supertech Weatherboard cladding or a fibre cement weatherboard cladding such as Cladco wood grain fibre cement cladding.
<https://www.cladco.co.uk/3-66m-fibre-cement-click-cladding-woodgrain>

As mentioned, both barns are to have natural slate roofs which will add contrast and interest and be aesthetically pleasing in this setting close to the nearby listed buildings, the farmhouse and converted oak framed barn, both of which have clay tiles. Clay and slate roofs are traditionally found around farmsteads in this area of Kent, often with some building have clay tiles and others having slate within the same group of farm buildings. Both clay and slate roofs are found at East Court Farm, Church Lane, Chalk and at Queens Court, Queens Farm Road, Chalk.

The steel frame barn will provide four bedrooms and the two attached dwellings within the timber barn, provide 3 bedrooms to each dwelling.

Currently the access from the Lower Higham Road turns to the left after the steel barn and passed about 5 metres to the south side of the timber barn. This drive will be relocated to the south of the current alignment and within the uncultivated area of field headland enabling the provision of good sized, south facing gardens to each of the proposed dwellings.

Private gardens and parking areas will be provided to the south of the dwellings.

The drive surface will be finished in gravel to improve the drive appearance.

The barns are no-longer required for agricultural purposes now and new used are necessary. Being located close to the farmhouse and oak barn, commercial uses are not appropriate with the increased traffic that such used would require. A change to residential use enables the buildings to be retained in their current settings, although with amendments to them to enable the redevelopment to be viable and justifiable.

Once the works are completed, the barns will enhance the setting of the listed buildings.

Planning history

- **Repairs to timber windows to the front and side elevations including splicing in matching timber to frames. Replacement of windows to rear elevation with uPVC frames of the same design and profile as the existing windows, demolition of an internal wall between the kitchen and WC and kitchen and pantry with bricking up of the door opening to the toilet. Rewiring of the house. Removal of the existing bathroom suite and replacing with a new bathroom suite.** 

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 20260014 | Received: Wed 07 Jan 2026 | Validated: Wed 07 Jan 2026 | Status: Pending Consideration

- **Application for Listed Building Consent; Repairs to timber windows to the front and side elevations including splicing in matching timber to frames. Replacement of windows to rear elevation with uPVC frames of the same design and profile as the existing windows, demolition of an internal wall between the kitchen and WC and kitchen and pantry with bricking up of the door opening to the toilet. Rewiring of the house. Removal of the existing bathroom suite and replacing with a new bathroom suite.** 

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 20260015 | Received: Wed 07 Jan 2026 | Validated: Wed 07 Jan 2026 | Status: Pending Consideration

- **Application for determination as to whether prior approval is required for the proposed change of use of the existing agricultural buildings to a 3no. bedroom dwelling and associated operational development (Class Q(a)).**

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 20160573 | Received: Fri 03 Jun 2016 | Validated: Fri 03 Jun 2016 | Status: Unknown

- **Use of land for the stationing of two caravans.**

Land Adjoining Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 20030593 | Received: Mon 07 Jul 2003 | Validated: Mon 07 Jul 2003 | Status: Application Refused

- **The replacement of the two windows at ground floor and one at first floor level on the west elevation, one window at ground floor and two at first floor level on the north elevation and two windows at ground floor and three at first floor level on the south elevation and painting of the exterior stonework on the north and east elevations with white Sandtex exterior paint.**

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY

Ref. No: 20000677 | Received: Tue 19 Sep 2000 | Validated: Tue 19 Sep 2000 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Application for Listed Building Consent for the reconstruction and conversion of the barn into a detached four bedroom dwelling and reinstatement of demolished outbuilding attached to western elevation of barn for garaging and a study**

Filborough Farm Barn Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 19990063 | Received: Wed 03 Feb 1999 | Validated: Wed 03 Feb 1999 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Reconstruction and conversion of barn into a detached four bedroom dwelling and reinstatement of demolished outbuilding attached to western elevation of barn for garaging and a study.**

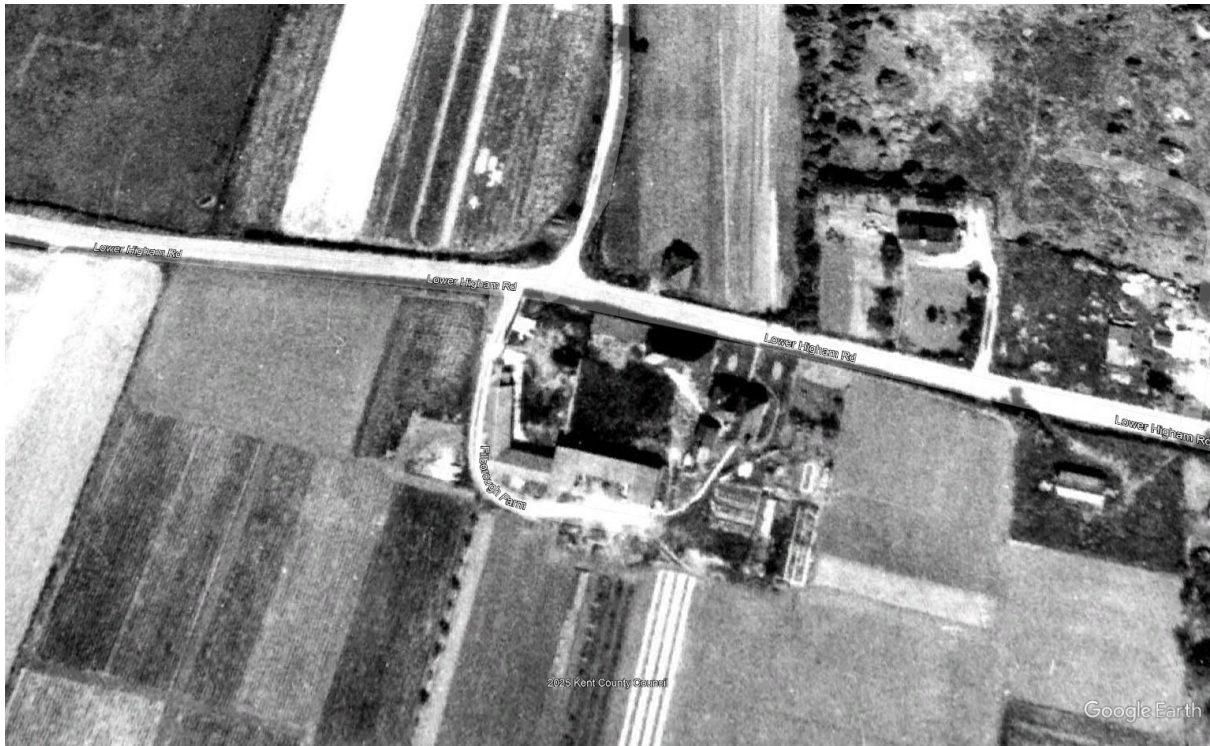
Filborough Farm Barn Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 19990064 | Received: Wed 03 Feb 1999 | Validated: Wed 03 Feb 1999 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Application for Listed Building Consent for alterations to an existing access requiring the partial demolition of an existing boundary wall**

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 19780358 | Received: Fri 14 Apr 1978 | Validated: Fri 14 Apr 1978 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of a general purpose store.**

Filborough Farm Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NY
Ref. No: 19780312 | Received: Thu 30 Mar 1978 | Validated: Sat 01 Apr 1978 | Status: Application Permitted



The aerial image above shows the timber barn and adjacent to it, an L shaped tradition farm building which was replaced by the steel framed farm building sometime before 1990.

The positioning of the buildings originally is a traditional, loose courtyard arrangement. The 1940 aerial photograph shows another farm building to the west of the access drive into the farm from the Lower Higham Road and other buildings on land to the south of the drive and of the current timber barn.



Planning Policies

The NPPF December 2024 says that when considering applications that affect Heritage Assets the planning authority should:

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
 - b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
 - c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

220. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

221. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

During the course of researching the history of the farm, we came across an article relating to the Granary dating back to 1980. The Granary, which is located on the north side of the Lower Higham Road and is not part of this application, hadn't been used for 40 years and the owner at the time was trying to find an economic use for the Granary as the building had been vandalised and £15,000 needed to be spent to carry out works to it.

The owner had been in discussion with Gravesham Borough Council, suggesting that a garden centre or garden nursery would provide an economic use. No solution was found. Whilst the Granary remains, it is vulnerable having no economic use and being isolated from the farm. The works to these farm buildings, alongside restoration of Filborough Farmhouse and return to occupation of this house, plus the existing residential use of the converted oak framed barn, contribute to the security of the Granary by natural observation/ interest from the residents and by there being more people around which will help protect the Granary from vandalism.

The farm is within the Metropolitan Greenbelt with the restrictions associated with Greenbelt land being a consideration. There is more on this later in this statement.

154. 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;

55 Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate.

44 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.) Other forms of development,

provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are: mineral extraction; engineering operations; local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location; the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply: a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed 56, c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework

The adopted Local Plan currently comprises the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) together with a set of saved policies from the earlier 1994 Local Plan.

The Local Plan is under review, specifically a partial review of the 2014 Core Strategy, alongside preparation of Site Allocations, Gravesend and Development Management Policies documents. The Local Plan Partial Review is at the Regulation 18 consultation stages and will then progress towards the next formal stages of plan-making.

Guidance Documents National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.11 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG; ref: 18a-018-20190723; updated July 2019) provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF. 2.12 NPPG notes that public benefits can be heritage based for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. The guidance goes on to note that examples of heritage based public benefits include: • Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting; • Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and • Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation. Historic England Guidance 2.13 This report has been informed by the following additional guidance: • Historic England: Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision Taking (2015) Sets out the process for understanding and assessing heritage significance at the outset of design. Advises applicants to consider a site's historic,

Historic England Advice Note 12 – Statements of Heritage Significance (2019) Advises how to prepare proportionate heritage significance statements to inform planning decisions. Stresses that significance should be understood before design work

progresses and that the level of detail provided should match the asset's importance and the scale of impact.

This application for planning and listed building approval is based on the likelihood that the barns are considered to be curtilage listed. Both barns are not listed.

The site shows the progression in farmyard development from the traditional oak framed barn, brick and timber narrow buildings which may have been stabling, to the more modern steel frame, steel clad barn although this is actually very dated compared to modern steel frame buildings which tend to be much larger and taller with large clear spans.

On the north side of the main road there is a timber framed and weatherboarded former granary building which is also Grade II listed. This was once part of the holding.

Agricultural buildings that have last been used for agricultural purposes previously normally have permitted rights to be converted to other uses including residential use. However, permitted rights were removed at the time when planning consent was granted for the conversion of the barn next to the farmhouse, hence planning approval being required. In addition, alterations to these barns would require planning consent and would not be covered under permitted rights.

The alterations proposed will retain the layout and setting of the former farmyard buildings, whilst enabling the buildings to have a viable future use. The changes will enhance the look of the steel framed barn in particular which is located near to the converted former farm barn. The changes will improve the aesthetics of these barns, vastly improving the setting of the group of buildings and enhancing the look of the site which includes two Grade II Listed Buildings. The external materials proposed are traditional materials found in a farmyard setting.

These barns are more recent than the Listed Buildings and are not of any architectural significance, although as referred to above, they do indicate the evolution of the farm and the changes that occur due to financial drivers and modernisation of farm equipment which drive the requirement for larger farm buildings. It is understood that the farm comprised around 800 acres at one time going back several hundred years.

The barns are set away from the Lower Higham Road and are only visible from a long distance from houses to the west, in the settlement of Chalk and house to the south from Church Lane at various points, again from some distance away.

The series of images below show the barns from various vantage points.



View from Castle Lane. Barns visible, but at great distance. Limited vantage points along this lane.



View from Church Lane. Roof to the farmhouse is just visible. The road verge has hedges along the eastern side for most of the length of the road.



View from the Lower Higham Road towards the access drive. Just the side of the steel barn is visible as the barn is screened by existing walls and landscaping.



Another view from the Lower Higham Road.

Under permitted development rights, the barns would be able to be converted from agricultural to residential use via Part Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. This planning legislation also allows farm buildings to be extended to the rear over existing hard surfaces by 4 metres.

However, permitted development rights were removed when planning approval was granted for the conversion of the nearby oak framed barn, planning application 19990063. The works proposed, which include raising the height of the building in the case of the timber barn and adding a pitched roof as well as adding a pitched roof to the steel frame barn would, in any case require planning approval.

The appearance of both barns will be greatly improved by the alterations proposed and by cladding the barns in black stained weatherboard and adding pitched roofs with natural slate as the roof covering.

The barns are not required for farming operations any longer as explained earlier in this statement.

Historic England support appropriate sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads and their buildings through the planning and design process.

The advice states that “Traditional farmsteads and buildings are assets which make an important contribution to landscape character and local distinctiveness. They do so through a diversity of uses which are of benefit to local communities and economies. Without appropriate uses to fund their long-term maintenance and repair, they will disappear from the landscape. Whilst poor adaptation poses a threat, new commercial, residential or other uses that enhance their historic character and significance are to be encouraged”

“The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places good design, enhancement of local distinctiveness and conservation of the historic environment at the heart of sustainable development in rural areas (paragraphs 7-8, 55-64, 126-141). For instance, paragraph 64 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area; and paragraph 126 stresses the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place.”

As outlined above, the farm and its buildings have evolved over the centuries by responding to changes in farming practices as can be shown by the demolition of a traditional narrow farm building which at one time adjoined the timber barn, remnants of the brick gable remain, and by this building being replaced with the steel framed barn more suited to advances in mechanical equipment and storing produce such as grain on site.

Neither the timber barn, nor the steel barn are of great age or significance. They form part of a more significant and historic group of farm buildings that include an oak framed farmhouse of some considerable age. The farmhouse has undergone considerable changes during its time including being extended and being repaired with brick walls after being damaged by fire. Farmsteads evolve through time and change to meet changes in farming methods and technologies.

There are records that indicate the farm's history goes back to 1220 and possibly earlier.

Summary

The NPPF 2025 includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS01 also requires that the council looks positively at sustainable development proposals.

The NPPF says that councils should avoid granting consent for isolated development. In this case there are other dwellings in the immediate area including a row of terraced houses, a pair of semidetached houses, the farmhouse, and existing converted barn and a mobile home site slightly to the east of the farm. The village of Chalk offers day-to-day facilities including a doctor's surgery, convenience store, café, dental care, hairdresser is a short walk away. A more extensive range of shops is found at the Lion Roundabout parade.

The NPPF supports securing the future of heritage assets by granting consent for sustainable planning uses. The barns form part of a group of former farm buildings, with a barn already converted to residential use. The barns are not required for agricultural use.

The NPPF supports the provision of sufficient land to meet new housing requirements and the use of brown field sites and disused buildings.

This site should be considered as previously developed land. The definition for Grey Belt fits this site. "For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

The proposed development will have little visual impact as the barns are set back from the Lower Higham Road and are a good distance from other residential buildings and public vantage points, except for the farmhouse and converted barn. There is sufficient distance between the existing buildings and application site and the design of the buildings takes into account the location of these existing residential properties and

avoids overlooking windows, overlooking private gardens and parking of vehicles close to these properties. The farmhouse will remain in the applicant's ownership.

The barns already exist along with the access drive and area of hard standing in front of both barns. In front of the doors to the steel barn there is a concrete ramp which will have been used for parking machinery outside the barn. In front of the timber barn there is a stone surfaced area used for machinery to stand, change over cultivation tools, load seed etc.

KCC Parking Standards require two parking spaces per dwelling. Two spaces are provided. Planning policies require that electric vehicle charging is provided. Pod Point 7.4kV vehicle chargers will be installed for each dwelling.

The conversion/ redevelopment and extension of these barns enables three new homes to be created in a sustainable location which make an important contribution to housing provision. Currently Gravesham Borough Council can show only 3 years housing supply so are unable to demonstrate 5 years deliverable housing and is in the process of consulting on a New Local Plan which includes significant development of Green Belt and high quality agricultural land in villages further from the town centre of Gravesend than this site including Meopham, Sole Street and Higham. The settlement of Istead Rise is also to be extended by the development of agricultural land.

The development of these existing buildings provides new housing in a location closer to the centre of Gravesend than the other developments mentioned and within walking distance or cycling distance of a range of local facilities in Chalk which are not found in some of the larger settlements such as Higham as an example. Public transport, regular buses to the town centre and to other centres such as Strood and Rochester are available in Chalk.

Regarding alternative uses, the steel barn might be considered suitable for commercial uses. However as there are no toilets or drainage or water supply, no heating, no insulation, no windows and limited power supply upgrading this building is prohibitively expensive. The timber barn will require investment to enable it to be used for other purposes and the low rents that might be achieved from storage uses, which is all that is likely, will make the unviable. Without a future use it's likely this will lead to the loss of the timber barn and continued pressure to convert the steel barn to residential use.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A report was prepared earlier this year and before the recent changes to the legislation which now mean that sites of less than 0.2 hectares (2000 sq metres) are not required to show 10% biodiversity net gain improvement. The site area within the red line totals 1344 square metres.

Design

The design and external materials are traditional materials reflecting materials found in farmyard settings in this area of Kent. The design will enhance the setting of the listed buildings within this farmyard setting and the materials and details of the design, landscaping and extent of the proposed changes to the two redundant barns are in-keeping with the setting of the listed farmhouse and listed barn. These changes will greatly improve the visual appearance of the site, provide the economic return that enables the barns appearance and conditions to be updated whilst retaining the setting and character of the site. This development enables landscape and biodiversity enhancements to be undertaken inline with

We submit the Preliminary Ecology Report as this covers other relevant matters including whether bats are likely to be present. The garden plan shows new hedges and new planting and was put together to meet the BNG uplift and so is still relevant to this application although the 10% BNG uplift is not.

In addition, it is proposed that bat and bird boxes are erected on the buildings once building works are completed. We ask that ecology upgrades are the subject of a planning condition.

Potential ground contamination.

We request that this is the subject of a planning condition. The area around the barns is clear and tidy with no surface evidence of contamination, however, a report with some testing may be required which we request is dealt with by way of a condition.

Surface water drainage.

The drive and hard surfaces are to be porous. Rainwater from roofs will be taken to soakaways within the gardens. Foul drainage will be taken to individual private treatment works such as Klargester biodisk systems which treat the waste enabling treated water to be drained via land drainpipes into the ground.

Drive

The access drive is currently an unmade stone track. The position of the drive to the south of the barns will be altered so a new track will be created. We suggest the track surface is gravel contained by kerb edging and Hex pave or similar retainer and ground reinforcement grid. As per the photograph below.

Where the drive meets the Lower Higham Road, this part of the drive to be surfaced using porous block paving or similar permeable finish to prevent stone being shed on to the road.



Access

The converted buildings will have level access with reception rooms, kitchen and toilet facilities on the ground floor.

The location is accessible by car, by bus and by foot from Chalk. People walk along the Lower Higham Road regularly currently. As an alternative access is possible via the public foot paths that run directly opposite the farm entrance to the canal footpath into Gravesend. Church Lane can be used to get to the Rochester Road. Busses run along the Rochester Road between Gravesend, Higham and the Medway Towns and into the village of Chalk.

There are shopping and other day to day facilities including a dentist and doctors' surgery within a short walkable distance of the farm as described above.

There are mainline railway stations in Gravesend and at Higham with commuter services to London and to the Kent Coast and regular bus services.

END