

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 08/06/2026 9:01 PM from [REDACTED]

Application Summary

Address:	Abbey Farm Barn Church Street Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7LS
Proposal:	Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed; Change of use of an agricultural building into five holiday let accommodation units, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R.
Case Officer:	Mrs Alison Webster

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Name:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]
Address:	[REDACTED] Abbey Farm Cottages Rochester

Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

Comments:	I wish to formally object to the application seeking change of use under permitted development rights. My objection is founded principally on the significant and unresolved impacts on heritage assets, the Conservation Area, landscape character, biodiversity and protected species. These concerns are particularly compelling because they have already been examined by an independent Planning Inspector who dismissed the previous proposal under Appeal Ref. APP/K2230/W/24/3356605 on 18 September 2025. This proposal is of particular concern for the following reasons: 1. Previous Refusal and Dismissed Appeal The proposal, or one materially similar, has already been the subject of a planning application which was refused, subsequently appealed, and dismissed. No substantive changes appear to have been made that would overcome the reasons for refusal or the conclusions reached by the Inspector. Re-submission of an essentially identical scheme undermines the planning process and should carry significant weight in the determination of this application. The Inspector's findings remain highly relevant and material to the determination of this application. 2. Harm to the Conservation Area The site lies within a designated Conservation Area, where there is a statutory duty to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. The cumulative impact of: Intensified use, increased comings and goings of short-stay visitors, associated domestic paraphernalia & servicing, refuse storage, and parking
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pressures, would cause demonstrable harm to the rural and historic character of the Conservation Area. Permitted development rights do not override the duty to protect heritage assets, and this proposal fails to meet that test.

3. Harm to the setting of St Mary's Church

The nearby Grade I listed St Mary's Church is one of the most important heritage assets in the locality. The Planning Inspector involved in the appeal decision confirmed that the site lies within the setting of the church and that the church is clearly visible from the site. The setting of a listed building is not confined to immediately adjacent land but includes the wider surroundings in which its significance is experienced and understood.

The rural agricultural landscape surrounding St Mary's Church forms part of its historic setting. The conversion of a farm building into a commercial holiday accommodation complex would introduce an urbanising and domestic influence into that setting. The Inspector found that the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the listed church and would result in harm to designated heritage assets.

4. Harm to the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area

The site lies within the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area. The Inspector identified this landscape as being characterised by open marsh landscapes, limited development, a strong sense of remoteness, extensive views & distinctive rural character. The introduction of holiday accommodation represents far more than a simple reuse of a building. It would create a permanent leisure destination within an otherwise quiet rural landscape.

5. Significant Ecological Concerns and Protected Species

In addition to the formal findings within the appeal decision, including the roosting value for bats, the area surrounding Abbey Farm supports a rich and diverse range of wildlife which reflects the ecological importance of the wider Hoo Peninsula and North Kent Marshes landscape. Species regularly observed in the immediate vicinity include: Bats, Little Owls, Barn Owls, Kestrels, Woodpeckers, Cuckoos and various farmland and marshland bird species.

The existing barn and surrounding agricultural environment provide opportunities for roosting, nesting, hunting and foraging. Agricultural buildings such as this are well known to support bats, owls and nesting birds.

The proposed conversion would inevitably increase: Human activity, noise, artificial lighting, vehicle movements, general disturbance. These changes may adversely affect protected species and their habitats.

6. Proximity to Internationally Important Wildlife Sites

The Inspector confirmed that the site lies within the Zone of Influence of the:

- Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar Site.

These internationally important designations exist because of the significance of the bird populations they support. While the previous appeal was dismissed on other grounds, the Inspector nevertheless acknowledged the sensitivity of the location and the need for mitigation regarding recreational impacts. This further demonstrates the ecological sensitivity of the area.

Given the planning history of refusal and dismissed appeal, the scale and intensity of the proposal, its location within a Conservation Area, and the resulting harm to character, amenity and wildlife, I strongly urge the Local Planning Authority to refuse prior approval for this development.

Kind regards