

Planning Statement

**Chambers Farm Town Road Higham
Rochester Kent ME3 8ER**

**Erection of an extension to the existing
packhouse/cold-store building**



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For: W B Chambers Farms Ltd

Project reference: PR4544

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been submitted in support of an application for the following development at Chambers Farm Town Road Higham Rochester Kent ME3 8ER (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'):

Erection of an extension to the existing packhouse/cold-store building

- 1.2 The proposed development affects the following Land Registry title(s):

Title Number	Description	Owner
TT19952	Land on the south side of Two Gates Hill, Higham, Rochester	The applicant

- 1.3 The application is accompanied by the following plans and documents:
- Application Form
 - Planning Statement
 - BNG Metric (JW Biodiversity Management)
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Gain Plan (JW Biodiversity Management)
 - Chambers Farm West Baseline (JW Biodiversity Management)
 - Chambers Farm West Proposed (JW Biodiversity Management)
 - Drawing nos.
 - 4544.01 Site Location Plan
 - 4544.02 Existing Block Plan
 - 4544.03 Existing Ground Floor Plan
 - 4544.04 Existing First Floor Plan
 - 4544.05 Existing Elevations
 - 4544.06 Proposed Block Plan
 - 4544.07 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - 4544.08 Proposed Elevations 1 of 2
 - 4544.09 Proposed Elevations 2 of 2

2 Site Context

- 2.1 The application site is located within Chambers Farm (formerly known as Little Mockbeggar Farm) to the west of the B2000 Town Road some 170m south of its junction with Two Gates Hill. The land falls generally towards the south. The site is located at the very eastern boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt, but has

no other designation. The site's boundary with Town Road is also the boundary of Gravesham District with Medway Council's area.

- 2.2 WB Chambers Farms Ltd have leased 28.4ha of land at Mockbeggar, Higham on a 15 year long-lease and in 2014 they purchased some additional 16ha of land on the west side of Town Road which includes the current application site, giving a total of 44.4ha of land. The applicants have also leased and currently farm, land at Southfleet and land at Sutton at Hone and other land within Swale Borough all of which is serviced from this site. In addition, the applicants have significant areas of owned and rented land in the Maidstone area. The applicant's holdings and business are managed from their base at Oakdene Farm in Langley near Maidstone. Since the original building was erected in 2020 they have taken on a further 20Ha of land at Cooling and Dillywood Lane as well as 55 Ha Lynsted growing stone fruit and top fruit which will be serviced at this site. Cold storage capacity is in short supply and the farms already increased production and crops coming from new plantings in the next years is necessitating the investment.
- 2.3 The land at Chambers Farm and nearby at Mockbeggar, which is located to the north-east of the junction with Town Road/Two Gates Hill/Bunters Hill Road, are farmed intensively for strawberry, raspberry, blackberry and rhubarb production a significant proportion of which is undertaken using polytunnels for cultivation. Land at Cooling and Dillywood are also intensive soft fruit.
- 2.4 The farmstead currently comprises a recently enlarged cold store/packhouse on its western side with an extensive yard area to its east and a security building/chemical store and irrigation tanks are located on the eastern side of the yard. The Farmstead is adjoined to the west and north by polytunnels under cultivation and to the south by further polytunnels and a number of mobile home units that accommodate the applicant's workers.

3 Relevant History

- 3.1 The following records are understood to be relevant to the Site:

Planning Applications (13)

- [***REVISED PLANS*** Erection of general purposes agricultural storage/cold store building and hard surface yard area.](#)

Ref. No: 20160071 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Application for the approval of condition 4 attached to planning permission reference no. 20160071 relating to the landscaping scheme.](#)

Ref. No: 20160704 | Status: Permitted

- [Application for Listed Building Consent for the erection of a general purpose agricultural equipment and livestock support supplies storage unit.](#)

Ref. No: 20170921 | Status: Application Withdrawn

- [Use of the land for the storage of x20 seasonal agricultural workers caravans during the winter months \(October-March in any one calendar year\).](#)
Ref. No: 20181125 | Status: Application Withdrawn
- [Application for Lawful Development Certificate for the proposed use of land for the stationing of x20 seasonal agricultural workers caravans.](#)
Ref. No: 20181130 | Status: Application Withdrawn
- [Application for Certificate of Lawful Development in respect of retention of polytunnels.](#)
Ref. No: 20191007 | Status: Certificate Granted
- [Use of the land for the stationing of 4 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers all year round; the stationing of 15 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers from 01 March to 31 October and the unoccupied storage of the 15 caravans over winter \(part retrospective\)](#)
Ref. No: 20200143 | Status: Granted Temporary Permission
- [Use of land for the stationing of x28 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers, 8 caravans to be occupied all year round with 20 occupied in main season.](#)
Ref. No: 20201290 | Status: Granted Temporary Permission
- [Erection of general purpose agricultural storage building.](#)
Ref. No: 20210645 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Erection of extension to existing storage/cold store/warehouse building.](#)
Ref. No: 20211530 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Use of land for the stationing of 20 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers.](#)
Ref. No: 20230678 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Widening of an existing access to a Classified Road including alterations to the fencing.](#)
Ref. No: 20250213 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Installation of solar panels to the roofs of the existing security/storage building and extended section of the existing warehouse/coldstore building, of the Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(as amended\) - Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J.](#)
Ref. No: 20250594 | Status: No Decision Notice (Deemed Approval)

4 Proposed Development

4.1 The application entails the following elements:

- Erection of an extension to the existing warehouse/cold-store building

- 4.2 The proposed extension would be located to the west side of the existing packhouse/cold-store. The proposed extension would be approximately 40m in depth, 40m long, 7.6m to eaves and 10.9m to the ridge. It would be clad externally in green profiled metal sheeting on the walls and roof. Solar panels would be placed on the roof.
- 4.3 The proposed use of the building would be to increase the available space within the existing building for the storage, processing, packing and onward distribution of the produce generated on both the holding and from the applicant's other holdings across North Kent. The production from Chambers farmed land has significantly increased in the last few years and is set to increase further with new plantings. There is not enough space in the packing area and stores to accommodate the increased volumes of fruit and packing machinery.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Court of Appeal has clarified that for a decision maker this means establishing whether a proposal is in accordance with the development plan as a whole. The question of compliance with one policy should not dictate the outcome of a proposal in the absence of considering compliance with all other relevant policies. Decision makers are therefore tasked with identifying and understanding all relevant policies and material considerations in order to reach a properly informed planning judgment on a proposal, and to avoid an irrational or vulnerable decision that may be subject to criticism in a public law challenge.
- 5.2 Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') reiterates what is said in Section 38(6), whilst paragraph 12 of the Framework is clear that the development plan is the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.3 Paragraph 39 of the Framework encourages local planning authorities to approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. It also encourages working proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area, adding that decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- 5.4 Annex 1 of the Framework confirms that for the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the Framework. It adds that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework, with greater weight being given to those policies that are closer to the policies in the Framework.

Development Plan

- 5.5 It is understood that the Development Plan for the area within which the Site is located comprises the following documents:
- Core Strategy 2014
 - Local Plan First Review 1998 (Saved Policies)
- 5.6 In the Development Plan, the following policies are considered most relevant in the determination of this application:

Core Strategy

CS02 Scale and Distribution of Development
 CS07 Economy Employment and Skills
 CS11 Transport
 CS19 Development and Design Principles

Local Plan First Review 1998 (Saved Policies)

None relevant

Other Material Considerations

The Framework NPPF 2024 (as updated February 2024)

- 5.7 In summary, the following paragraphs are considered most relevant as additional material considerations in the determination of this application:
- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 7-8 | Achieving sustainable development |
| 11-12 | Decision making & presumption in favour |
| 39 | Positive and creative decision making |
| 88-89 | Supporting a prosperous rural economy |
| 131, 135 & 139 | Design |
| 142-143, 153-154 | Green Belt |
| 187, 189-190, 192-193 | Natural Environment and Biodiversity |

6 Planning Assessment

Key Issues

6.1 The following are considered to be the key issues in the assessment of this application:

- Green Belt
- Character and appearance
- Impact on residential amenity
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Green Belt

6.2 In terms of the impact of the development on the purposes of the Green Belt set out at paragraph 143 of the Framework, it is apparent that:

- a. It will not add to the sprawl of a large built up area.
- b. It will not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- c. It will have a very limited impact on the countryside in terms of encroachment due to the existing activity and nearby structures (existing and approved).
- d. It will not have any impact on the setting and special character of a historic town.
- e. It will not have any impact on urban regeneration because this development needs to be located in the countryside.

6.3 The proposed extension to the existing packhouse/cold-store building is required in direct support of the existing agricultural operations on the holding and across other holdings operated by the applicant. The production from Chambers farmed land has significantly increased in the last few years and is set to increase further with new plantings. There is not enough space in the packing area and stores to accommodate the increased volumes of fruit and packing machinery. As such, it is considered to be appropriate development when considered against the requirements of paragraph 154 of the Framework.

6.4 Given this, it is not necessary to consider the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt. This has been recently re-considered and re-confirmed by the High Court in *Mole Valley District Council v Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government and Maragret Meloney* in a judgement issued on 15 August 2025. Citation no. [2025] EWHC 2127 (Admin).

Character and Appearance

6.5 The proposed structure is an extension to an existing building which forms part of the group of existing functional buildings on the farmstead. The extension will

encroach onto an area of land currently used for polytunnel conservation but is located on the west side of the existing building away from public vantage points.

- 6.6 Externally, the extension will use materials that reflect the existing buildings (green coloured profile metal sheeting) and will be provided with solar panels to complement the existing and approved solar panels on the other buildings in the group.
- 6.7 The surrounding landscape has no specific national landscape designation and the proposed extension will be typical of modern agricultural buildings in its appearance and will not appear as a discordant or alien feature in the surrounding landscape.
- 6.8 In addition, the existing well established tree screen along Town Road will also assist in effectively screening the extension. This is illustrated below in the two Google Maps images (dating from October 2024), that show the boundary looking southwards and then northwards in the direction of Cliffe Woods.



Southbound



Northbound

- 6.9 The extension will also have no impact on any nearby Public Rights of Way as public footpath NS149 is located some 160m to the west of the site of the proposed extension, with intervening polytunnels.
- 6.10 The proposed extension will not affect the setting of 'Mockbeggar' a Grade II listed building which is located in excess of 290m north of the proposed building, due to the degree of separation, existing topography and the intervening landscape features.

Impact on residential amenity

- 6.11 The proposed development or any additional activity associated with the building as extended (if it occurs) will have no impact on residential amenity, the nearest dwellings (1 & 2 School Cottages approximately 180m to the south east) and separated from the site by Town Road and its existing screening.

Ecology and BNG

- 6.12 The extension will be to an existing building within the existing yard area of the Farmstead that has been progressively developed and updated since 2020 as the applicant's business requirements and production have developed and changed.
- 6.13 The extension will take place on land currently partially under polytunnel cultivation.
- 6.14 A tree/hedgerow screen to the west of the existing packhouse/cold-store has been removed since 2022. The proposed development would have resulted in its removal in any event. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken which has indicated that there is no requirement for additional species specific surveys.
- 6.15 A BNG metric has also been completed which indicates that a 15.35% increase in Habitat Units and 10.36% in Hedgerow Units. This is to be provided on site and will ensure that the Statutory requirements are met. The Metric is supported by a baseline habitat plan and a post-development habitat plan.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The development is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and therefore constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 7.2 it is not necessary to consider impact on openness.

- 7.3 The proposed extension will not result in unacceptable harm to the character and visual amenity of the surrounding area, the amenity of any nearby residential properties and it will not result in harm to the setting of the nearby Grade II designated heritage asset 'Mockbeggar.'
- 7.4 In consideration of all relevant development plan policies and material considerations therefore, this application should be viewed positively by the authority and it is respectfully requested that this submission is approved.