



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240812

Location: Land At New Green Farm Lower Road Shorne

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

Applicant: Mr R Goatham, AC Goatham & Son

Site Visit Date: Desktop assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form

Drawing no. 010 Rev B (Site Location Plan)

Drawing no. 020 Rev B (Existing Block Plan)

Drawing no. 030 Rev B (Proposed Block Plan)

Drawing no. 060 Rev C (Proposed Floor Plans)

Drawing no. 070 Rev C (Proposed Elevations)

Drawing no. 072 Rev B (Proposed Elevations Height Comparison)

Drawing no. 080 Rev B (Associated Views from Living Areas)

Drawing no. 081 Rev A (Associated Views from Master Bedroom)

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (January 2025)

BNG Metric

Biodiversity Gain Plan (19 February 2025)

Superseded:

~~Drawing no. 060 Rev B (Proposed Floor Plans)~~

~~Drawing no. 070 Rev B (Proposed Elevations)~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20240020	Determination as to whether prior approval is required for the erection of a cold store.	Granted	29.01.2024
20221334	Construction of agricultural worker dwelling, including the provision of all associated landscaping, biodiversity enhancements and drainage infrastructure	Refused	13.02.2023
20210970	Erection of a 4 bedroom detached dwelling to provide accommodation for the farm manager and their family, with associated landscaping, biodiversity enhancements and drainage infrastructure.	Refused Dismissed at appeal	26.09.2022 28.02.2024
20210275	Application for change of use of land for the over winter storage of caravans and the provision of associated	Permitted	14.05.2021

	operational development following the approval of the Certificate of Lawfulness 20200457.		
20200457	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposal of six caravans for seasonal agricultural workers	Granted	21.07.2020
20190164	Construction of an aggregate access track and upgrading of the existing access to create a concrete bell mouth, with associated gates and fencing	Permitted	10.04.2019
20181247	Determination as to whether prior approval is required for the erection of a new agricultural building to provide storage for machinery and farm equipment	Not required	02.01.2019

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Design and Development Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C10 – Agricultural Dwellings
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

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 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 (amended 2020)
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Planning Guidance Note 6 Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways (2009)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Green Belt (2025)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Housing Needs of Different Groups (2021)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

External Consultees

KCC Flood and Water Management

As Lead Local Flood Authority, Kent County Council are required to provide technical advice and guidance on the surface water drainage strategies, designs and maintenance arrangement put forward by developers to any new major development. According to the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, major development is defined in planning as any development involving any one or more of the following:

- a) The winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits;
- b) Waste development;
- c) The provision of dwelling houses where:
 - i. The number of dwelling houses to be provided is ten or more; or
 - ii. The development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectares or more and it is not known whether the development falls within sub-paragraph (c) (i);
- d) The provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or
- e) Development carried out on a site having an area of one hectare or more.

The application under the above reference number therefore falls outside the definition of major development and also falls outside of KCC's remit as statutory consultee.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Following my assessment of Fire and Rescue Service emergency access provisions for application number 20240812, I would like to make the following observations.

Applicants should be aware that, in the event of planning permission being granted, the Fire and Rescue Service would require the access route, hardstanding and turning facilities onsite to meet the requirements of Approved Document B, Volume 1:2019, Table 13.1.

KCC PROW

I can confirm that I do not have any objections to the above planning application at land at New Green Farm. Public Right of Way Footpath NS156 lays to the south of the site and should be unaffected by the application. I enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network map showing the line of the path for your information.

The granting of planning permission confers no other permission or consent on the applicant. It is therefore important to advise the applicant that no works can be undertaken on a Public Right of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority. In cases of doubt the applicant should be advised to contact this office before commencing any works that may affect the Public Right of Way. Should any temporary closures be required to ensure public safety then this office will deal on the basis that:

- The applicant pays for the administration costs.
- The duration of the closure is kept to a minimum.
- Alternative routes will be provided for the duration of the closure.
- A minimum of six weeks notice is required to process any applications for temporary closures.

This means that the Public Right of Way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed (this includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases) or the surface disturbed. There must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future and no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without consent.

Shorne Parish Council

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.

KCC Heritage

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, based on existing Historic Environment Record data for the area, the previous arable cultivation of this field, and the relatively limited extent of the proposed works, I consider it unlikely that these proposals would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

KCC Biodiversity

We advise that sufficient information has been provided to determine the planning application.

Protected/Notable Species

We are satisfied with the results of the ecological reports which have confirmed that there is potential for badgers, breeding birds and foraging bats within the site. We are satisfied that there is no requirement for further surveys to be carried out and any impacts can be avoided through a precautionary mitigation approach.

If planning permission is granted we recommend that the following condition is included:

Prior to and during construction the precautionary mitigation for badgers, breeding birds and bats within section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Greenspace Ecological Solutions; January 2025) must be implemented as detailed.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning applications for major development (unless exempt^{1,2}) submitted on or after 12th February 2024 in England, will have to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. It is a requirement for minor applications, unless exempt, submitted on or after the 2nd April 2024.

Having reviewed submitted information, we consider this application to fall under mandatory biodiversity net gain so that mandatory biodiversity net gain of 10% will apply.

Any application which is required to achieve a 10% BNG must submit the following information as a minimum:

- confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition;
- the pre-development biodiversity value(s), either on the date of application or earlier proposed date (as appropriate);
- where the applicant proposes to use an earlier date, this proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date;
- the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or proposed earlier date) including the publication date of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value;
- a statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of application (or earlier proposed date), that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value ('degradation'), and where they have;
- a statement to the effect that these activities have been carried out;
- the date immediately before these activities were carried out;
- the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on this date;
- the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations, and
- any available supporting evidence of this;
- a description of any irreplaceable habitat (as set out in column 1 of the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date); and
- plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or earlier proposed date), including any irreplaceable habitat (if applicable).

We advise that sufficient information has been provided with regard to mandated BNG.

The metric has detailed that through habitat creation within the adjacent intensively managed orchard a BNG of over 10% can be achieved and we agree with this conclusion.

The metric has detailed that to achieve a 10% the intensive orchard will be cleared and managed as a

arable game bird mix; however, we note that the submitted site plan does not demonstrate that areas of the orchard will be cleared to implement this. We advise that a BNG can still be achieved through the enhancement of the intensive orchard within the wider blueline boundary to the creation of a traditional orchard. It is our understanding that if an area less than 0.1 hectare of intensive orchard is turned in to a traditional orchard a BNG of over 10% can be achieved. However, we advise that exactly how the BNG will be achieved can be provided via the biodiversity gain plan if planning permission is granted.

If planning permission is granted, local planning authorities are encouraged to use suggested paragraphs for Biodiversity Gain Information on the written decision notice which are available to download here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663251d969098ded31fca800/BNG_Decision_Notice_Text.odt. The applicant should submit a biodiversity gain plan form along with supporting information once planning permission has been granted to demonstrate in more detail how the proposed biodiversity net gain will be delivered.

If habitat creation/enhancement within the blueline boundary is to be implemented to achieve a BNG for habitats, we advise that the following conditions are included within the decision notice:

In addition the following condition wording is recommended if planning permission is granted:

HMMP CONDITION: With the submission of the Biodiversity Gain Plan a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), must be submitted to the LPA for written approval and must include the following:

- (a) a non-technical summary;
- (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- (e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

HMMP MONITORING REPORTS: Monitoring reports shall be submitted to the local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

We highlight that where habitat creation is carried out within the blueline boundary there is a need for the works to be legally secured either through a legal agreement or a conservation covenant.

Ecological Enhancements

Under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 and paragraphs 186 and 193 of the NPPF 2024 biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. In addition to BNG we advise that ecological enhancement features must also be incorporated in to the site. If planning permission is granted we recommend that an ecological enhancement plan is included. Enhancements include bat and bird boxes within the site and buildings, insect hotels or log piles within the site and the inclusion of planting to benefit pollinators with the ground level planters. We suggest the following:

Within 3 months of works commencing within the site an ecological enhancement plan must be submitted to the LPA for written approval. The plan must demonstrate how the site will enhance biodiversity through

the inclusion of ecological enhancement features within the buildings and site. The plan must be implemented as approved.

Lighting

Lighting can have a negative impact on bats (and other nocturnal species) and therefore any lighting must be designed to minimise light spill.

We recommend that if planning permission is granted the lighting condition has the following requirements:

- Be designed following best practice guidance within Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night'
- Downward facing and on motion sensors
- Site plan showing the location and types of lighting and details of light spill.

Dickens Country Protection Society

The Society wishes to register an objection to the application.

- a) The site is in an area within which Green Belt Policies apply where new residential development would not normally be permitted. The site is in the open countryside remote from other development except for recently introduced agricultural buildings.
- b) The introduction of a residential use in this location would impact on the openness of the Green Belt and attract residential paraphernalia.
- c) The Society is not convinced that the type of agriculture being practised on the site warrants a farm manager on the site. The Society is also not convinced that such a grand house is necessary.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 9 properties, and on site. The overall consultation period expired on 25 April 2025.

Two letters of objection were received with the following comments:

- This third application is essentially the same design of an unnecessary and unwelcome attempt at breaking the rules with regards to building a house on Green Belt and agricultural land, eroding this beautiful land.
- The previous concerns remain and this proposal remains a threat and would set a dangerous precedent for even more housing to be built on this farmland.
- There are currently several alternative properties available that would provide suitable accommodation within the area and would prevent devastating the Green Belt.
- The property would have limited vision in most directions.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted about this application. Councillor Leslie Pearton responded with the following comments:

As Ward Councillor, I am writing with regard to the above Planning Application. You may be aware that this has already been refused twice (20221334 and 20210970) on the grounds of green belt intrusion.

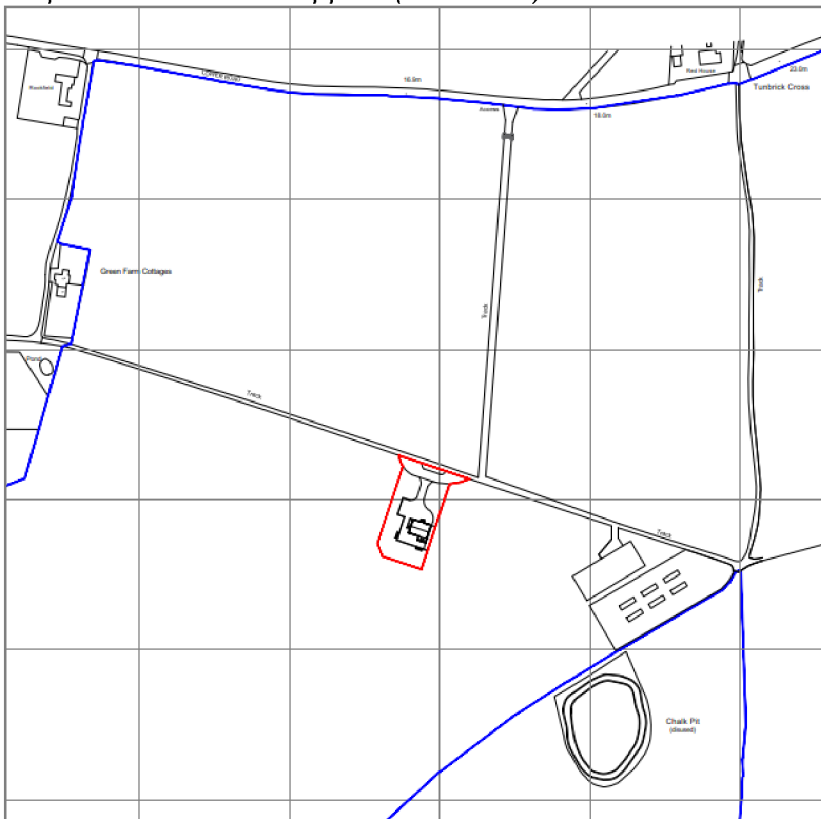
I would strongly like to recommend that the previous refusal comments be considered in the determination of this Application for which I stand by in protection of the Green Belt and the rural communities.

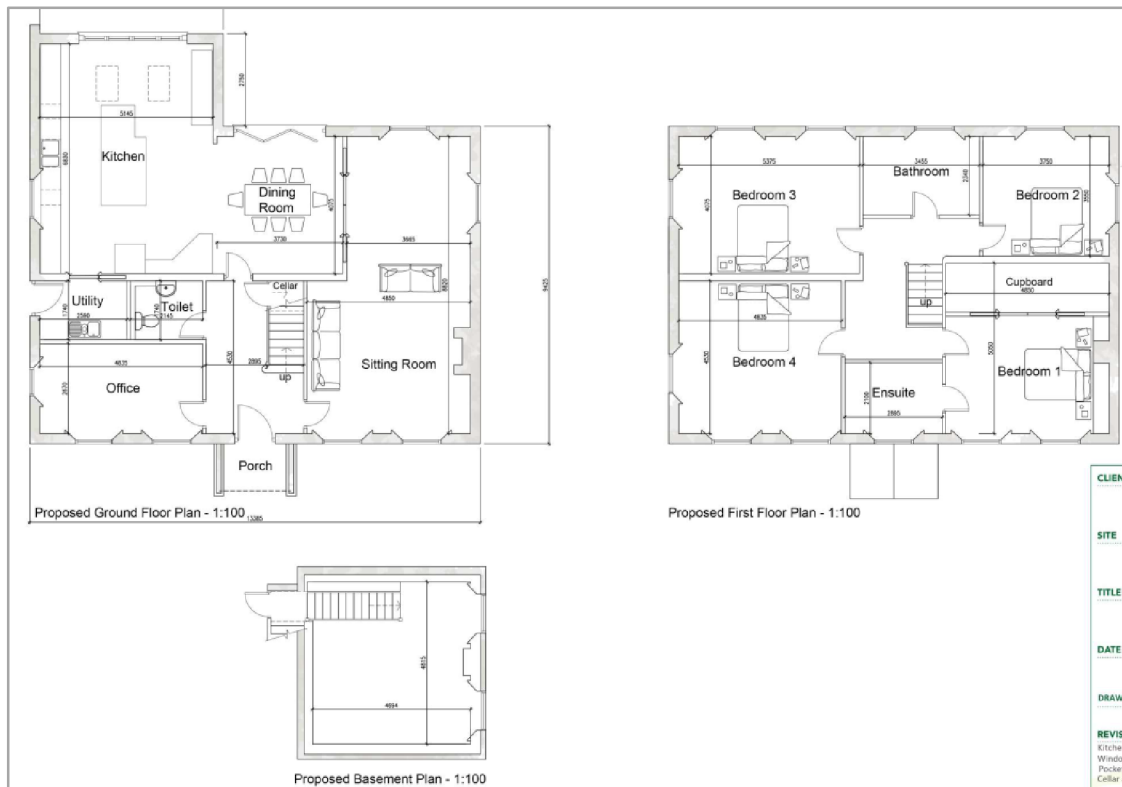
Officer's Analysis

Background

A previous application (20210970) for a 4 bedroom detached dwelling to provide accommodation for the farm manager and family at the site was refused planning permission and then dismissed at appeal in February 2024 (see above planning history). The Inspector concluded that in principle there is an essential need for an agricultural dwelling on site, and as such a dwelling of an appropriate scale and siting would meet the exception test set out in paragraph 84 (a) of the NPPF 2024. However, the scale and location of the house proposed did not achieve this.

Proposal dismissed at appeal (20210970):





The current proposal has been revised in an attempt to overcome the Inspector's concerns. The submitted Planning Statement summarises the proposed amendments as follows:

- *The dwellinghouse proposed has been significantly scaled back in area ..., ridge height ..., form and overall bulk [the ridge height has been reduced further during the application process].*
- *The position of the dwellinghouse is now located to the south-west of the approved and constructed agricultural building and west of the seasonal workers accommodation, and west of the approved cold store. The dwellinghouse's proposed position, orientation and layout of the rooms provides views across the orchard, farmyard, cold store and seasonal workers accommodation from the office and key living areas, as well as key views from the master bedroom at night.*
- *The farm office has its own separate entrance to support the workings of the farm during the day, should meetings not take place out in the orchard or in the farmyard pre and during work tasks.*

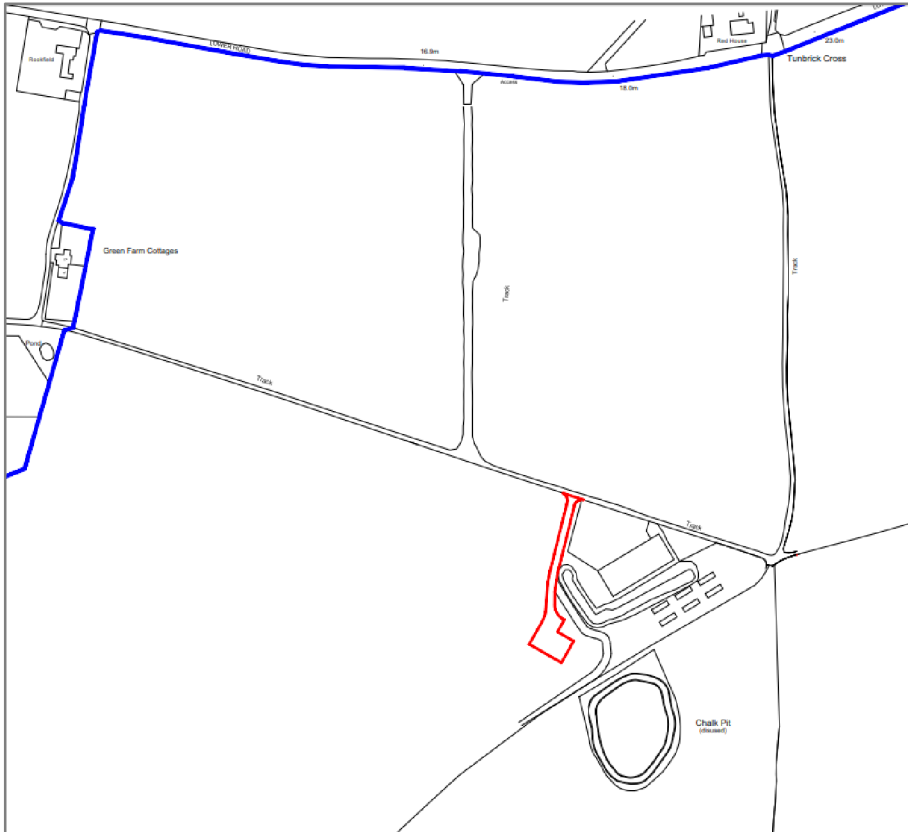
Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling for the farm's manager, including the provision of all associated landscaping, biodiversity enhancements and drainage infrastructure.

It is proposed that a new farmhouse is provided for on-site security and for the management of New Green Farm. The proposal will provide a 4 bedroom family house for the farm manager (a Managing Director of AC Goatham & Son), his wife (who also works for the business) and their children (who take an active interest in farming).

The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an existing farm access via Lower Road to the north of the site, and would be positioned to the south-west of the existing agricultural buildings and caravans:

Site Location Plan



The dwelling would contain an office, living room, snug, kitchen/dining room, utility and toilet on the ground floor, and 4 double bedrooms (one with an ensuite) and a bathroom on the first floor. In total, the floor space would amount to 186.7m².

During the application process, concerns were raised with the agent about the scale of the proposed building not being reduced enough from the previously dismissed building. This led to the building height being reduced further (1.2m lower than the dismissed scheme) as follows:

Dismissed:

Initial re-submission:

Current re-submission:



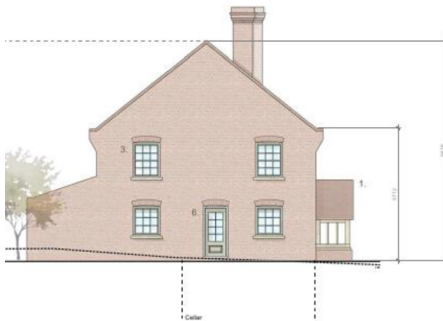
Principal Elevation



Principal Elevation



Principal Elevation



Side Elevation



Side Elevation

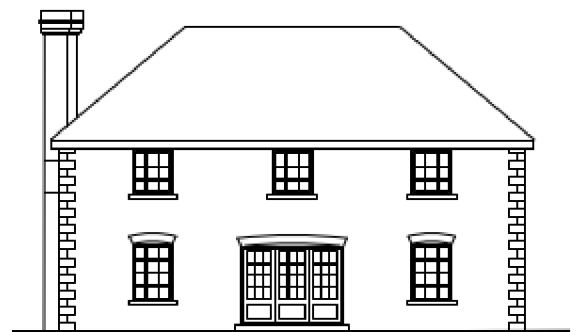


Side Elevation

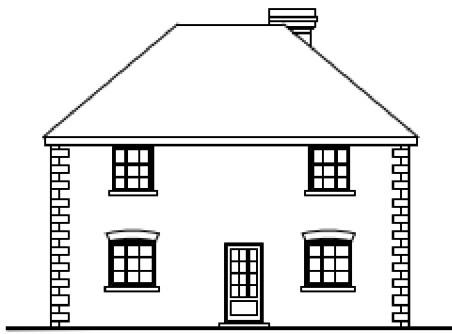
The current elevations and floor plans are as follows:



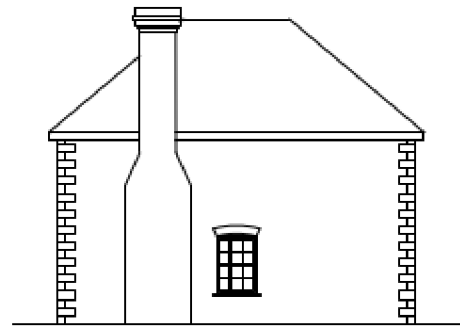
East Elevation



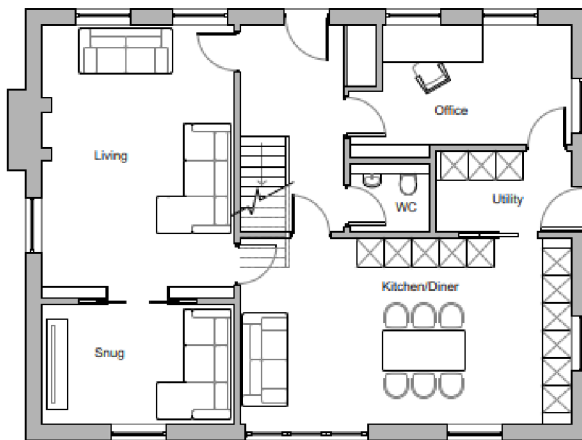
West Elevation



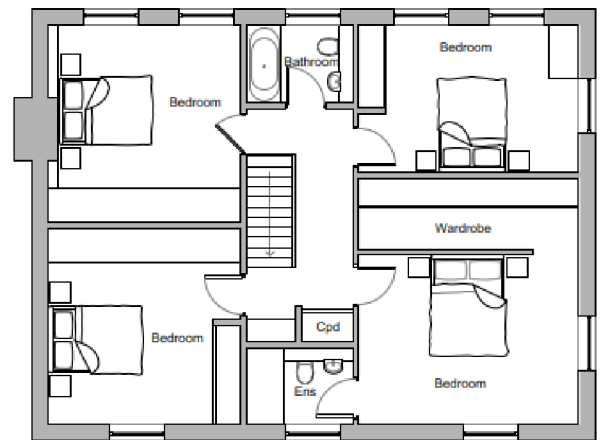
North Elevation



South Elevation



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

The house would be finished in a high standard of materials, including handmade stock bricks, handmade clay tiles, timber windows and doors, and stone cills.

The submitted Supporting Statement states that alongside the dwelling, a driveway, parking area, native planting and soft landscaped garden is proposed. This includes a mixed English native hedge and chestnut post and rail boundary fencing.

Main Considerations

The sustainable location of the proposed development and loss of Grade 1 agricultural land were not judged to be significant issues at the previous appeal, and as a financial contribution was paid in relation to provisions for mitigation in the form of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS), this matter was also acceptable.

Reflecting on the previous refusal grounds and Inspector's remaining concerns at the appeal, the only main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- The effect on openness of the Green Belt; and
- The effect on the rural landscape.

Effect on Openness of the Green Belt

To reiterate the policy context for the proposal, the application site is defined on the Gravesham Local Plan

Core Strategy Policies Map 2014 as lying outside any settlement boundary in the rural area, within the Green Belt and within the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area.

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area, it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024). Paragraph 153 of the NPPF 2024 states that 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.

Local Planning Authorities should regard development as inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2024). In the case of this proposal, the following paragraph 154 development exception is applicable:

(a) buildings for agriculture and forestry.

Saved Policy C10 of the Local Plan 1994, which relates to agricultural dwellings in the countryside, must also be considered. Saved Policy C10 of the Local Plan 1994 states that the Borough Council will only give favourable consideration to applications for agricultural dwellings where an overriding case can be demonstrated and when no satisfactory alternative means of provision is available. The NPPF 2024 also identifies agricultural dwellings (including for those taking majority control of a farm business) as exceptions for the development of isolated homes in the countryside, as set out in paragraph 84.

At the previous appeal, the Inspector was satisfied that the nature and scale of the large-scale fruit growing operation of AC Goatham & Sons at New Green Farm justifies 'a *permanent residential presence on site to ensure the effective operation and security of the enterprise*'. He concluded:

'The principle of the erection of an agricultural dwelling on the holding therefore accords with the provisions of paragraph 84 of the Framework and the guidance in the nPPG [Housing Needs of Different Groups Planning Practice Guidance].'

On this basis, the current proposed dwelling is considered to be acceptable in principle and would meet the paragraphs 84 and 154(a) exceptions, which would mean that the proposed development is not inappropriate.

However, concerns were raised about the siting and scale of the previously proposed dwelling due to the requirements of Policy C10 of the Local Plan 1994, which seeks the most suitable site for a dwelling on the agricultural unit in order to achieve a good relationship with existing farm buildings and the point of access, and a modest size and appropriate design. In relation to siting, the previous proposal was considered to be remote from the complex of present and proposed farm buildings and workers caravans. Whilst the house was supposed to be within 'sight and sound' of the farm hub, it only had secondary bedroom windows over the fruit trees that would look over the hub.

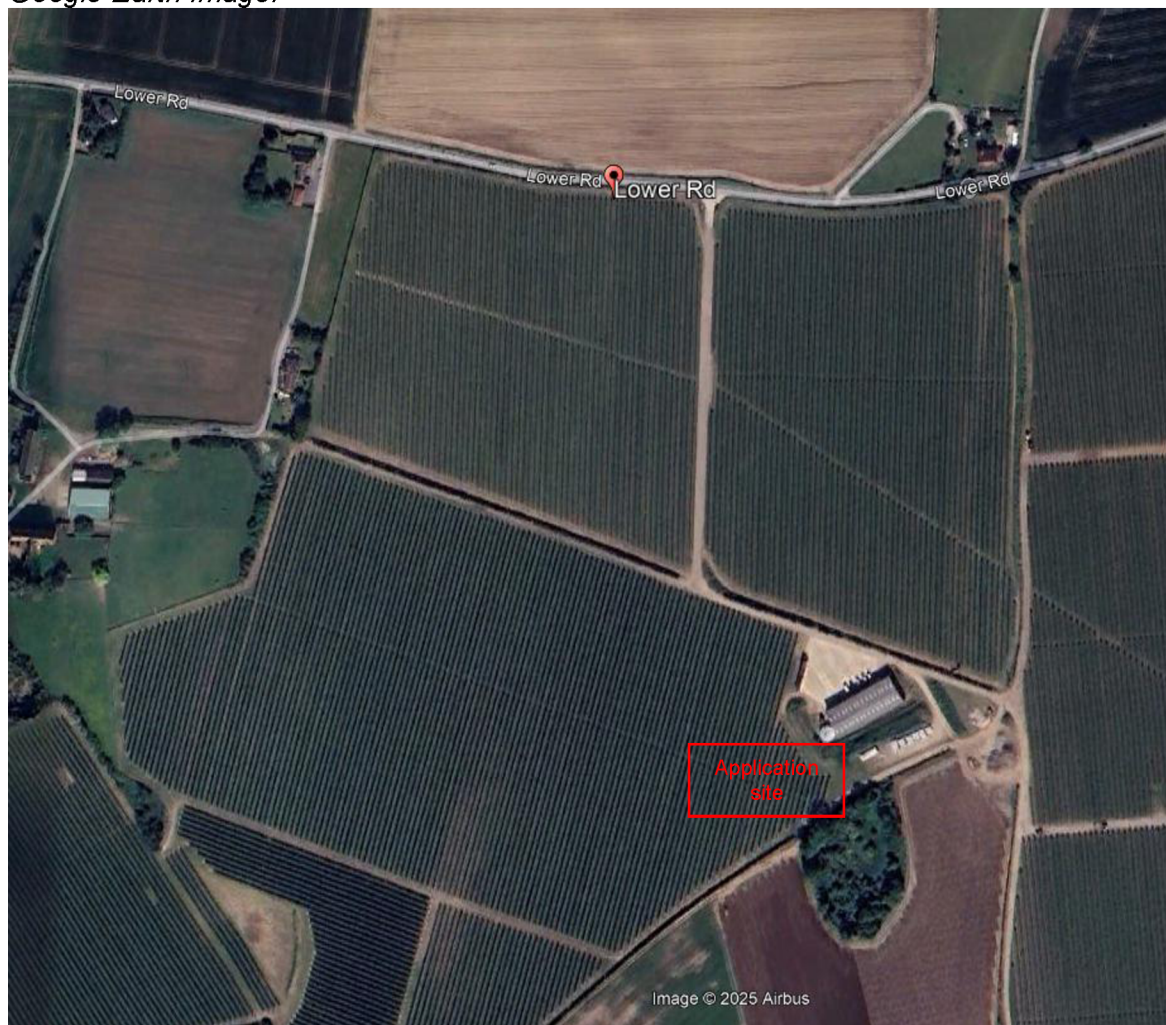
Moreover, the scale and design of the building appeared '*to have been designed to meet the aspirations of the occupiers rather than an active 'hands-on' worker at the farm*'.

These concerns resulted in the proposal having '*an isolated and moderately harmful*' impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 013 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2025 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated. These matters must be considered in relation to the current revised proposal.

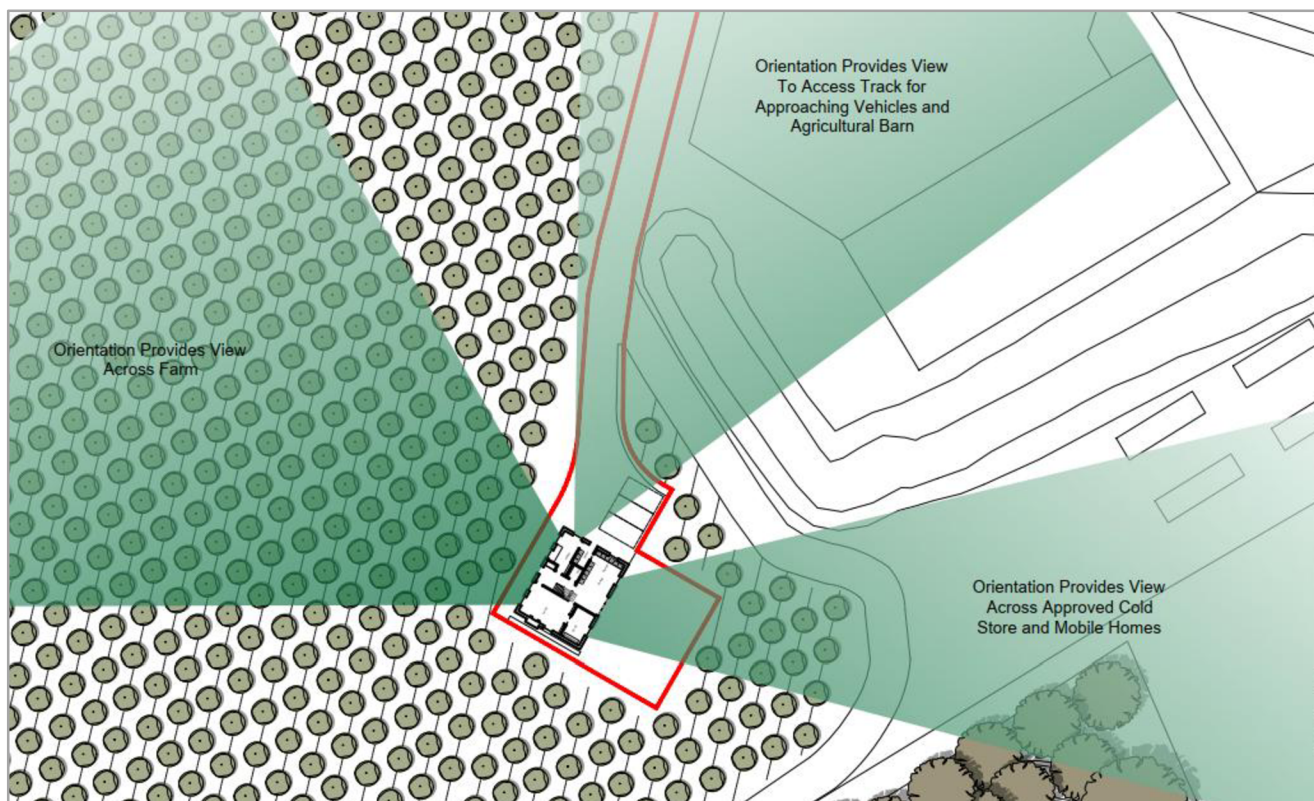
The application site is currently open agricultural land, void of development.

Google Earth Image:



In terms of the spatial and visual aspects of the revised proposal, the siting is in closer proximity to the main farm buildings and workers' caravans and the building would therefore be less isolated and obtrusive in its surroundings; its impact would be more limited and localised. The siting is more akin to a typical farmhouse and farmyard buildings, and the orientation of the dwelling allows for views over the main farm hub from the main habitable areas of the house.

Views from living areas:



The proposed house itself has been reduced in size; the ridge height was approximately 9.2m previously and is now 8.0m. The roof is hipped rather than gabled, the two storey built footprint has been reduced by 1m in width plus the additional single storey kitchen element and cellar have been removed. The space around the dwelling is also reduced; the garden area decreased, the brick retaining walls and large patio areas removed, and the front driveway space minimised. Visually, the house would be screened by the planted orchards around it, and it would be less visible in the landscape away from the Lower Road access.

The use of landscaping and boundary conditions could further help reduce the visual impact. On the basis of the revisions, the proposed dwelling would be seen within the context of the existing farm buildings and would largely be screened from any public vantage point by its position away from the site access and by the surrounding orchards. This would limit and localise the impact on openness, and therefore the openness of the Green Belt would be maintained. The proposal would therefore comply with the requirements of Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024.

Nevertheless, given circumstances of this case being centred around the need for a dwelling being related to the nature and scale of the farming operation, as well as concerns raised in the submitted representations relating to the potential of setting a precedent for housing development in this Green Belt location, it will be essential to impose a condition restricting the use of the dwelling as agricultural and related to the main farming operation. On this basis, subject to such a condition, the proposed dwelling would be acceptable.

Impact on Landscape Character

Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of surrounding area. The application site is located in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area and as such, Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 is also relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) will be taken into account in determining applications. Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF 2024 seeks to ensure planning decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and

beauty of the countryside.

In relation to the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area, one of the key characteristics of the area is the open, gently undulating farmland, which provides high visibility across the area. The overall condition of the landscape is poor and has moderate sensitivity. It is recommended that key landscape elements should be restored and created. Proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements within visually sensitive areas of the open landscape should be resisted.

The Inspector found the previously proposed design and materials appropriate for the area but was concerned about the scale and isolated location of the dwelling in the landscape and made this assessment in a similar way to his assessment of openness, finding it to have a harmful impact on the general landscape character of the area.

Similarly, as the revisions to the proposal have satisfied the concerns about the impact on openness, so have they addressed the concerns relating to the landscape impact, and particularly the siting of the dwelling. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable on the grounds of the conservation of the rural character of the site and surroundings, and would comply with the requirements of the Gravesham LCA 2009, Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF 2024.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2024 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 135f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land. As the site is some distance from neighbouring properties, there would be no adverse impacts on neighbouring amenities.

Future Occupiers

It is considered that the proposal would comply with the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 in terms of the size of the proposed accommodation, which with a gross internal floor area (GIFA) of approximately 187m², would exceed the minimum standard of 124m² for a 2 storey, 4 bedroom, 8 person dwelling. However, the size of the house has been reduced from the 267m² floor area it was previously and would now be more in line with the average size of a four bedroom family house.

The proposal would also comply with the Council's residential layout guidelines in terms of the modest size of the proposed rear garden, which is 12m deep.

Due to the lack of residential development around the site, there would be no adverse impact on the proposed property from overlooking or loss of light.

A condition would be considered necessary to restrict and limit the further development of the site.

There is therefore no conflict with the requirements of the SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 in respect of the standard of amenity and living conditions for future occupants of the proposed dwelling on the site.

Design

The design of the proposal falls to be assessed under the principles of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014. The proposal comprises a detached dwelling and modest rear garden. There is no particular design character attributed to this area, though the proposed Georgian style of house design reflects the original farm estate house for Green Farm (to the west of the site), and includes quoin detailing on the building corners typical of the Georgian style. Disregarding all other aspects, and subject to details of materials to ensure a high-quality development, the proposed design, scale and appearance of the proposed dwelling would be acceptable.

Parking and Highways

A four bedroom dwelling would require a maximum of 3 car parking spaces, which can be accommodated on the site. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with parking standards.

As the property would be a new four bedroom dwelling, provision should be made for the secure and weatherproof storage of 4 bicycles to comply with the minimum requirements of SPG4.

As the proposal would use an existing access, would result in minimal traffic movements and would be some distance from the highway, there would not be any significant impact on highway safety. The proposal would therefore comply with Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Local Plan 1994 and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Other Material Planning Considerations

Biodiversity

The NPPF 2024 in paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects this stance and states that there will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough, and opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), a BNG Metric and a Biodiversity Gain Plan have been submitted with the application, which KCC Biodiversity have deemed to be sufficient to determine the application.

They are satisfied with the results of the submitted ecological reports and have confirmed there is no requirement for further surveys to be carried out. Any impacts can be avoided through a precautionary mitigation approach. They agree with the conclusion that through habitat creation within the adjacent intensively managed orchard a BNG of over 10% can be achieved. A biodiversity gain plan condition will require details of how this can be achieved.

One of the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 193 is that “opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design”. The submitted application documents, including the Planning Statement and PEA, confirm that native species planting will be carried out within the site and additional features will be included to enhance biodiversity (3 nest boxes, 2 bat boxes, bug hotel/bee post, log/brush piles). If planning permission is granted an ecological enhancement plan should be a condition of planning permission.

It is also recommended that a lighting condition be included, as lighting can have a negative impact on bats and other nocturnal species. The condition should require the lighting plan to follow the recommendations within the Bats and artificial lighting in the UK document produced by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

With the inclusion of the above conditions, the development is considered to comply with the requirements of paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF 2024 and CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014.

Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar / Special Protection Area (SPA) – SAMMS Tariff:

As the application site is within 6km of the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites and would provide additional residential accommodation, the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in-combination, on the coastal North Kent Special Protection Areas (SPAs)/Ramsar sites from recreational disturbance on the over-wintering bird interest. On this basis a tariff of £337.49 is required.

This tariff has been paid by the applicant. The Local Planning Authority is therefore satisfied that the proposal would put in place adequate measures to mitigate potential significant adverse effects on the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites, which complies with paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF 2024 and Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Housing Need

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. One such consideration will be whether the plan policies are relevant and up to date.

The Council published an updated Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement in February 2025, which demonstrates that based on data up for the period 2024-2029, the Council can only demonstrate a housing land supply of 3 years.

Given the Council's current inability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, and as the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) that required by the Housing Delivery Test, the housing delivery element of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) set out in Policy CS02 must be regarded as out of date. Therefore, in line with Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF 2024, it is required that with regard to housing development, planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; 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.

The policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(i) are those set out in the NPPF 2024 at footnote 7 (rather than those in development plans) relating to any of the following:

- habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

Relevant to this application, the site is within the Green Belt. In determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will therefore apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, having regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals when evaluated against development plan policy, the need to make efficient use of land (paragraph 130(c)) in context, the relative contribution the proposal makes towards the alleviation of any shortfall in housing delivery at that time and any other considerations material to the proposed development.

The proposed development for a net increase of 1 residential unit would offer a minimum contribution towards meeting this local need and, accordingly, this should be accorded appropriate weight in support of the application. Notwithstanding the Council's shortages in housing delivery and the consequent weight to be given in favour of the proposed development, it is necessary to assess the proposals against the policies in the NPPF and established local planning policy taken as a whole, as has been carried out in the analysis above.

Conclusion

In this case, as discussed above, as the principle of the erection of an agricultural dwelling has been judged to be acceptable on the holding, the proposed revisions to the dwelling would result in an appropriate Green Belt and countryside exception development, the reduced scale and amended siting of which would limit harm to the openness of the Green Belt and conserve the rural landscape context and character of this site within the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area.

Subject to conditions, the proposal would in particular comply with the requirements of Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, saved Policy C10 of the Local Plan 1994, and paragraphs 131, 135, 142, 143, 153, 154, 187 and 193 of the NPPF 2024. Accordingly, planning permission is recommended to be granted.

Recommendation

Planning permission subject to conditions.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	28 July 2025	Dated:	29th July 2025