



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No:	20230541
Location:	Land to the east of Brookers Farm, Luddesdown Road, Luddesdown
Description:	Retrospective application for the necessary engineering operational works to construct a track to service an associated storage area.
Applicant:	Vineyard Farms Ltd
Site Visit Date:	6 June 2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Drawing no. DHA/17381/01 (Site Location Plan)
Drawing no. DHA/17381/02 (Existing and Proposed Access Track)
Drawing no. DHA/17381/03 (Biodiversity Enhancement Plan)
Planning Statement

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20230181	Engineering works to construct a formal car parking area for Vineyard Farms Ltd office, and winery and vineyard workers.	Refused	24.05.2023
20210607	Retrospective application for erection of two storage/fermentation tanks.	Temporary permission	23.07.2021
19880177	Erection of two agricultural buildings to form grain store, workshop/general purposes building.	Permission	23.05.1988
19500058	Alteration of existing and erection of new farm buildings	Permission	08.05.1950

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS07 – Economy, Employment and Skills
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the identified Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) 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 (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026
- Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society Wishes to register an objection to the application The site is in an area within which Green Belt policies apply and the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The development detracts from the landscape in the area and is damaging to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Environment Agency

Due to the scale, nature and setting of this proposal and the supporting information submitted, we have assessed this proposal as low risk. We therefore do not have any specific comments to add.

KCC Archaeology

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, 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

The biodiversity enhancement plan is vague in our opinion. There has likely been a biodiversity loss in the absence of compensatory measures, contravening paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2021) and section 40 of

the NERC Act (2006). Whilst it appears that the creation of wildflower meadow could offset loss, we need to understand the following:

- How will the wildflower meadow be created;
- Which seed mix will be used (if any) and where will this be obtained from;
- What will the management regime be (and where will arisings be piled);
- Who will be responsible for its creation/management, and;
- What is the planting schedule for the (native) species used to 'gap up' the existing hedgerow.

Once the above queries have been addressed, our comments will be available for revision.

KCC Highways

As detailed in the submitted Planning Statement, the agricultural track will be used to support the existing farm operations, to enable agricultural vehicles to transport compost throughout the site.

Any gates should open away from the carriageway and provide adequate room for the largest vehicles which will require access to the site, to wait off the highway, whilst the gates are opened or closed. As the access will be used by large agricultural vehicles, I would advise that the gates should be set back 15 metres from the highway.

Subject to the above and provided that the following requirements are secured by condition or planning obligation, then I would raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority:

- Gates to open away from the highway and to be set back a minimum of 15 metres from the edge of the carriageway.

KCC PROW

I can confirm that I do not have any objections to the above planning application at Brookers Farm. Public Right of Way Footpath NS243 lays to the west of the track.

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.

Kent Downs AONB Unit

The Kent Downs AONB Unit is currently involved in a major Public Inquiry in Medway (incidentally by the same applicant) and is therefore unable to provide a detailed response to planning application consultations at the moment. This does not indicate that the AONB Unit considers the proposal would not impact on the statutory purposes of AONB designation and it is the responsibility of the Council to decide whether the application meets legislative and policy requirements in respect of AONBs.

The local planning authority has a legal duty to take account of the purposes of AONB designation in determining the application i.e. the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty. In addition to consideration of the proposal against the local authority's development plan, account should be taken of paragraphs 176 and 177 of the NPPF and the principles and objectives of the [Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, Third Revision](#) 2021 to 2026. The Management Plan is adopted by all the local authorities in Kent as their policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The national [PPG](#) confirms that AONB Management Plans can be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

The site is located within the [West Kent Downs Landscape Character Area of the Kent Downs LCA Update](#) 2020 and within the Luddesdown Sub Area. Summary characteristics of this Character Area include the

dip-slop landform of dry valleys running north-south, interspersed with broad, undulating ridges and plateaux; extensive blocks of woodland, as well as strips on valley sides with the topography and woodland restricting views in much of the area, but with occasional long views along valleys. In respect of the Luddesdown sub area it is stated that *'this is a tranquil, complex and distinctive landscape, with a peaceful remote feel, strong sense of place and few detracting features. It has a strong sense of time-depth, and the structure of the landscape has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century'*.

Landscape Management Recommendations within the LCA include:

- Protect the deeply rural character of the area, resisting development which gives it a more urbanised character
- Protect the enclosed landscapes of the dry valleys formed by the steep valley sides and numerous woodland blocks
- Manage the extensive new vineyard areas to maximise the potential to enhance landscape and biodiversity
- Ensure that any new development around historic villages respects the scale, layout, massing and materials of existing buildings, and also their relationship with the landform.

The site is located on the bottom of a dry valley and as such is in a particularly sensitive location, as dry valleys were one of the main targets of the AONB designation and are noted specifically as being one of the components of the 'dramatic landform and views' special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB.

The proposed works have taken place in a remote and rural location, away from any existing infrastructure and buildings associated with the farm. The engineering works have facilitated an approximately 325m length of access track, roughly parallel with the existing lane plus with a further spur track up the valley side and a large area of hard standing of 792m, sitting slightly elevated above the road which neither conserves nor enhances the AONB. The track is required to facilitate access to a compost and organic fertilizer storage area which includes open storage of large plastic bags, pale in colour with a shiny surface which contrast with the open rural surroundings and stands out as an unnatural additional that fails to conserve or enhance this part of the AONB. While ecological and landscape works are proposed, and the ecological benefits of these works is noted, the proposed mitigation will only have limited impacts in filtering or screening views of the works, particularly in winter months when the trees/hedgerow are not in leaf.

It is not considered that the proposal meets the key policy test of conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the Kent Downs AONB, nor complies with the landscape management recommendations set out in the LCA above and as such the AONB Unit does not support the application. It is considered that a less sensitive part of the holding should be found to facilitate the storage area, preferably clustered with existing physical infrastructure where there would not be the same landscape and visual impacts and that the application should be refused and the land returned to its former state.

Internal Consultees

GBC Environmental Protection

No objection or comments to make.

GBC Highways

Looking at the Google Street View images, it appears this track has been created between January 2021 and March 2023. In January 2021, there was no northern access to the site.



The southern access has existed for many years and as such will not be considered further.



The March 2023 Google Street View image shows the access and the installation of a gate, this gate should be inset, to accommodate the largest vehicle liable to access the site so the highway is not obstructed whilst gates are opened or closed. Recent legislation changes now permit lorries up to 18.55 metres to operate on roads in England, so allowing pedestrian access to the gate would require the gate to be set back some 20 metres from the highway.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/524/made>

It is however accepted that the access route may restrict the use of Longer Semi Trailers, but this would be subject to a route planning and risk assessment by the haulier and cannot be controlled.

With regards to the width of the track, it is noted Tractors can be up to 4.3 metres wide and as this an agricultural site I have no objections to the width.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tractors-regulations-on-use/tractors-and-regulatory-requirements-a-brief-guide-september-2017>

Subject to the relocation of the northern gate to the site I have no objections.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised on site. The consultation period expired on 30 June 2023.

Two letters of representation have been received from the same residential property, with the following comments:

- The site used to be a beautiful meadow and is now an eyesore.
- There are requirements for what tracks should be made of in an AONB but these seem to have been disregarded to enable HGV lorries that will deliver compost.
- HGV lorries are not suitable for this stretch of road, which is a single track, and a restriction should be placed to stop them.
- This access road was discussed at Luddesdown Parish Council on 16 January 2023 - see extract from the minutes:
4.1 Public Session
Representatives from Luddesdown Vineyard were present and explained the new access track off Cutters Ridge Road was done so they could restart the compost site which requires access for lorries to deliver 1000 tonnes of compost. This would then be used to provide organic fuel for the vineyards they own. The access track had been created under Permitted Development rights.
- The landscaping suggestions are inadequate and would not be sufficient to block views of this eyesore.
- The area has become a dumping ground with blue metal storage structures and lots of the green netting from the vines. It is not just a compost storage area.
- It is not possible that this is the only area on the vineyard that could take deliveries of 1000 tonnes of compost.
- The planning application suggests that this access was always there - this is not correct: there were vines planted there and prior to the vineyard, root vegetables were grown there. The vehicular access point nearest Cuxton is a new access point, as is the route of the track.
- The previous access area was not tarmac and could not be seen from the road.
- This development has a blatant disregard for the AONB designation to construct development that suits the vineyard to store and have 1000 tonnes of compost delivered.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted, and no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks full retrospective planning permission for the necessary engineering operational works to construct a track to service an associated storage area.

The site comprises a field within the ownership of Vineyard Farms Ltd, which is based in Luddesdown and is a producer of English sparkling and still wines.

The proposal seeks to provide a compost and organic fertilizer storage area ancillary to the viticultural and agricultural activities of Vineyard Farms Ltd. Vineyards Farm Ltd receive approximately 360 bags of compost per annum, each bag is approximately 500kg. These bags of compost are delivered on 15 tonne articulated lorries, and as Vineyard Farms Ltd grow and expand, more compost will be required to fertilise the additional vineyards.

For this reason, a heavy duty agricultural track was constructed through this field, which was chosen as it is central to the wider farm area. The Planning Statement submits that this central location removes the need for vehicles to access Luddesdown itself, so the compost and organic fertilizer can be transported to the

adjacent fields by tractor and trailer. The main access way into the composting area will be tarmac, as will the hardstanding storage area. A biodiversity enhancement plan has been submitted for the wider field, though these proposals are outside the application site boundary.

Principle Issues

Paragraphs 84 and 85 of the NPPF 2021 relate to supporting a prosperous rural economy. The development and diversification of agricultural rural businesses should be enabled, and it should be recognised that proposals to meet local business needs may be required in such areas, in locations that are not well served by public transport. It will be important, however, to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).

Policy CS07 of the Core Strategy 2014 also supports proposals that promote the appropriate expansion and diversification of the rural area economy. Policy CS02 supports development outside rural settlements, including proposals to diversify and maintain the rural economy, where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in this plan.

National and local policy is generally supportive of such rural business development and expansion, subject to compatibility with policies for protecting the Green Belt and other policies in the development plan.

This proposal is located in the countryside, outside any rural settlement, in the Green Belt and in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Taking into account these designations, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Appropriateness of development in the Green Belt
- Impact on openness
- Landscape character
- Highways
- Biodiversity

As there are no residential properties in close proximity to the site, there are no amenity concerns in terms of light, privacy, or environmental impacts.

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 highlights the importance of the Green Belt and its role in preventing urban sprawl and keeping land permanently open. As the site lies in the Green Belt there is a need to establish whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development.

The submitted Planning Statement asserts that the engineering operational works to construct a track to serve an associated storage area are necessary and ancillary to the operations of Vineyard Farms Ltd.

The Millington Court of Appeal Case (1999) is referred to in this regard, where it was established that work relating to the production of wine from grapes grown on a farm near Shrewsbury amounted to 'agriculture'. It is submitted that on the same basis, the use as intended does not amount to a material change of use such that it is only the engineering works that require the submission of a planning application. Matters such as the use itself and impacts such as storage of fertilizer and compost do not therefore fall to be considered as part of this application, as they amount to agricultural operations. However, the scale of this case was very different to the current application, concerned as it was with a much smaller holding than that of Vineyard Farms Ltd.

It is recognised that the proposed use would be for the farm and on farm land. However, the proposed storage use would be materially different from the current use as an agricultural field given the scale of the

development involved, and changes such a large part of the field. It is recognised that this part of the site has historically been used as a 'dumping' ground, but this proposal formalises the use of this area for (at least) the large scale storage of compost. It is therefore considered to be a material change of use and the proposal should be assessed on this basis, as well as considering the engineering operations involved.

Whilst paragraph 150 (b) of the NPPF 2021 considers engineering operations as a form of development in the Green Belt that is not inappropriate provided the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it (which will be assessed below), the material change in the use of a field for a storage area does not fall under one of the exceptional forms of appropriate development in the Green Belt, and therefore would simply be considered inappropriate development, which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Such circumstances have not been put forward as part of the application submission, and the proposal is unacceptable on this basis.

Harm to openness and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt

As set out in paragraph 150 (b) of the NPPF 2021, it is necessary to consider the level of harm to openness from the proposal that would result from engineering operations for the construction of a track on this site. It needs to be borne in mind that the Courts have held that the impact on openness has both a spatial and visual dimension and it is a matter of planning judgement as to whether the proposal will result in (any) harm to openness.

As stated above, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2019 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.

The site comprises a field to the north-east of Luddesdown village. The track runs along the north-western boundary of the site, with accesses to Luddesdown Road at northern- and western-most points of the field. The western access serving a storage area of sorts appears to have been there for a long time though it seems to have been disused and overgrown over the years too.

Google Street View Images of Existing Western Access and Storage Area (February 2009):



Google Street View Images of Existing Western Access and Storage Area (March 2023):



Current Google Earth Aerial Image:



However, the northern entrance and access are newly installed.

Google Earth Street View Image (south-west) January 2021:



Current Site Photograph (south-west) (June 2023)



In both spatial and visual terms, by reason of the permanent nature of the track and storage area, and the increase in the spread of development across the site, this proposal would clearly result in a loss of openness.

There are open views of the site from Luddesdown Road to the north and Buckland Road to the south-east and along the nearby footpath. There is existing boundary screening that limits views into the site in certain places to an extent, but this is not substantial enough to screen it completely. The track spans the length of the field alongside the road, and will have tarmac surfacing, entirely urbanising the site. Whilst additional planting in and around the site would assist in lessening the visual impact of the proposals to an extent, this in itself would impact on the openness of the field. There would also be a difference in activity levels related to the use of the track than previously existed.

Altogether, the extent and spread of the access track and formalisation of the storage area in this open field would impact on the openness of the site and would encroach into the countryside, contrary to the purpose of the Green Belt designation. Paragraph 148 of the NPPF 2021 states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. There are no special circumstances in this case to outweigh such harm. The proposed engineering works fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and conflict with the purpose of it. The proposed change in the use of the land and engineering operations involved are therefore considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Character and Appearance

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well-designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF 2021 aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Reflective of paragraph 176 of the NPPF 2021, which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, Policy SD2 of the Management Plan 2021-2026 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the AONB. Principle SD8 seeks to ensure that proposals do not negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the AONB.

The site is located within the West Kent Downs Landscape Character Area of the Kent Downs Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Update 2020 and within the Luddesdown Sub Area. Summary characteristics of this Character Area include the dip-slop landform of dry valleys running north-south, interspersed with broad, undulating ridges and plateaux; extensive blocks of woodland, as well as strips on valley sides with the topography and woodland restricting views in much of the area, but with occasional long views along valleys. In respect of the Luddesdown sub area it is stated that 'this is a tranquil, complex and distinctive landscape, with a peaceful remote feel, strong sense of place and few detracting features. It has a strong sense of time-depth, and the structure of the landscape has remained largely unchanged since the late nineteenth century'.

One of the Landscape Management Recommendations within the LCA includes protecting the deeply rural character of the area, resisting development which gives it a more urbanised character.

The site is located at the bottom of a dry valley, and in their advice on the proposal, the Kent Downs AONB Unit has noted that the site is in a particularly sensitive location, as dry valleys were one of the main targets of the AONB designation and are noted specifically as being one of the components of the 'dramatic landform and views' special qualities of the Kent Downs AONB. The site is therefore particularly visible from the wider AONB landscape, including from Luddesdown Road, Buckland Road and from public footpath NS243 to the west.

The Kent Downs AONB Unit have specifically commented on the proposal as follows:

"The proposed works have taken place in a remote and rural location, away from any existing infrastructure and buildings associated with the farm. The engineering works have facilitated an approximately 325m length of access track, roughly parallel with the existing [Luddesdown Road] lane plus with a further spur track up the valley side and a large area of hard standing of 792m, sitting slightly elevated above the road, which neither conserves nor enhances the AONB. The track is required to facilitate access to a compost and organic fertilizer storage area which includes open storage of large plastic bags, pale in colour with a shiny surface which contrast with the open rural surroundings and stands out as an unnatural additional [feature] that fails to conserve or enhance this part of the AONB. While ecological and landscape works are proposed, and the ecological benefits of these works is noted, the proposed mitigation will only have limited impacts in filtering or screening views of the works, particularly in winter months when the trees/hedgerow are not in leaf.

It is not considered that the proposal meets the key policy test of conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the Kent Downs AONB, nor complies with the landscape management recommendations set out in the LCA above and as such the AONB Unit does not support the application. It is considered that a less sensitive part of the holding should be found to facilitate the storage area, preferably clustered with existing physical infrastructure where there would not be the same landscape and visual impacts and that the application should be refused and the land returned to its former state."

The application site is also located in the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area within the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA) 2009 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 GLCA will be taken into account in determining applications. The GLCA states that the character area is defined by very undulating topography with arable farmland and pasture, irregular field patterns, fields divided by native hedgerows and areas of native woodland that all contribute to the rural character of the area. The condition of the landscape is generally good, its sensitivity high. The guidelines for the area focus on conserving the distinctive features that are found in the area to protect and maintain its character and quality, including conserving hedgerows.

Considering the nature of the open views of the site, despite additional planting and landscaping, the proposed track and storage area would alter and be entirely different to the character of the current field. The proposal would introduce urbanising features into this landscape, and the landscape and scenic beauty of the Kent Downs AONB and Luddesdown Downs LCA would be significantly and adversely impacted.

The proposal would therefore be contrary to Principles SD2, SD3 and SD8 of the Management Plan, which generally seek to conserve and enhance the character and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB, rather than detract from it. The proposal would also fail to meet the guidelines in the Kent Downs Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Update 2020 and the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment 2009. Overall, the proposal fails to conserve and enhance these valued landscapes and would conflict with the aims of Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, and paragraphs 130, 174 and 176 of the NPPF 2021.

Highways

The access at the western end of the site has existing for many years and there are no changes proposed to this. However, the new access at the northern end of the site has been installed to support the existing farm operations, to enable agricultural vehicles to transport compost

A gate has been installed at this access; this gate should be inset to accommodate the largest vehicle liable to access the site so that the highway is not obstructed whilst the gate is opened or closed. Recent legislation changes now permit lorries up to 18.55m to operate on roads in England, so allowing pedestrian access to the gate would require the gate to be set back at least 15m from the highway. This would have to be amended by condition if planning permission for the development to be forthcoming.

It is however accepted that the access route may restrict the use of Longer Semi Trailers, but this would be subject to a route planning and risk assessment by the haulier and cannot be controlled.

With regards to the width of the track, it is noted tractors can be up to 4.3m wide and as this is an agricultural site there are no objections to the width.

Subject to a condition requiring the repositioning of the gate, the proposal would be acceptable on highways grounds.

Biodiversity

The NPPF 2021 in paragraph 180(a) states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects this stance and states that sites designated for their biodiversity value, such as this one, will be protected. There will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough.

KCC Biodiversity are not satisfied with the submitted biodiversity enhancement plan proposals. There has likely been a biodiversity loss in the absence of compensatory measures, contravening paragraph 174 of the NPPF 2021 and section 40 of the NERC Act (2006). Whilst it appears that the creation of a wildflower meadow could offset loss, the submitted plan is lacking in detail. On this basis, as it stands, the proposal should be refused in the absence of sufficient detail to demonstrate that harm to biodiversity has been adequately compensated for, contrary to the requirements of paragraph 174 of the NPPF and Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Archaeology

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential with a record of the site of possible later prehistoric or Romano-British activity in the form of crop marks c.80m to the east of the site. The proposed works would be likely to impact on any below-ground archaeological remains at the site and it is therefore recommended that an archaeological field evaluation works condition should be applied to any forthcoming consent.

On this basis, the proposal would therefore comply with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 197 of the NPPF 2021.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite the economic benefits of the proposal in terms of supporting a rural business and in turn the rural economy, the significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt and to the special landscape qualities of the area from the access track and storage area. Substantial weight is given to these matters, and there are no special circumstances that would outweigh this harm. This renders the proposal inappropriate and unacceptable for the following reasons:

1. The proposal would result in inappropriate development that would adversely impact on the openness of this site in the Green Belt and would encroach into the countryside. There are no special circumstances that exist that would outweigh this harm. As such, the proposal would fail to comply with the requirements of Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 137, 138, 147, 148 and 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
2. By virtue of the introduction of unnatural, urbanising features in the countryside, the proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the rural landscape and scenic beauty of this site within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area. As such, the proposal would fail to comply with the guidelines and principles of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009), Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 and Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020, and the requirements of Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 130, 174 and 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
3. In the absence of sufficient detail to demonstrate that harm to biodiversity has been adequately compensated for, the proposal is contrary to the requirements of paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

(For detailed reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>K. Parkin</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	13 July 2023	Dated:	14 July 2023