

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Comments were submitted at 19/06/2026 11:34 AM from [REDACTED]

Application Summary

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

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Name:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]
Address:	[REDACTED] Church Street Lower Higham

Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	I object to this application on the following grounds.

The proposal appears to be a materially unchanged version of two previous proposals, both of which were rejected (20240139 and 20230399). The refusal to grant approval to 20240139 was appealed, and this appeal was dismissed. I do not believe that the current application addresses any of the numerous reasons why the previous proposals were rejected. If I understand correctly, it appears to be nothing more than an underhand attempt to circumvent the planning process on a technicality. The developer previously accepted the need for full planning approval. This was duly declined twice. Now the developer is attempting to argue that they do not need full planning consent. In my view, this is a manipulative attempt to exploit loopholes in the current regulations. Is this not an abuse of the planning process?

The applicant is now seeking prior approval for a 'change of use'. However, the existing hay barn is little more than a large, open structure. It is, I suggest, obvious to the naked eye that it cannot be used for residential purposes without being substantially rebuilt. A rebuild will necessarily involve the addition of new exterior walls, for example, as the structure currently possesses no front or back; moreover, its existing sides consist of open slats which would certainly be unsuitable for housing. The existing roof, which appears to be made of corrugated metal, would also need to be completely replaced. The developer's

proposal also envisages subdivision of the whole into five sealed units with interior walls and the addition in each of a first floor. I submit that the resultant properties would have nothing in common with the existing hay barn apart from location.

The existing hay barn is visually in keeping with its location, immediately adjacent to the historic church of St. Mary's and the Thames marshes at Higham. Building five holiday homes on this site would, I believe, completely alter the current appearance of the hay barn. It would also damage the rural setting of St. Mary's and the rural aspect of the adjacent areas.

The proposed development is located within a conservation zone and immediately adjacent to the Thames marshes at Higham, which are an environmentally sensitive area. Surely, full planning permission is required for such an important change to a protected locality?

Please note: all my other objections submitted in connection with 20240139 and 20230399 remain unchanged. These include the following:

The proposed rebuild will result in an increase in on-site parking and an influx of residential equipment to a currently underdeveloped site that is fully in keeping with the area. The developer will need to install fences and gates and will not be able to control the influx of barbecues, umbrellas, toys and paddling pools, for example, not only in the communal area to the rear of the proposed units, but also in front of them, in the immediate vicinity of the church. Nor will they be able to prohibit the playing of TV and music in these and other external areas. The developer may also choose to introduce recreational infrastructure, such as hot tubs, in due course.

The proposed change of use is likely to create considerable difficulties for visitors to St Mary's church and the Thames marshes at Higham if occupants of the holiday lets and their visitors park alongside St Mary's, thereby occupying the few available public parking spaces in the area.

The proposed change of use would substantially increase traffic and activity in this small rural conservation area. The increase in traffic would not be limited by the number of on-site parking spaces. Holidaymakers and their guests may choose to park additional vehicles alongside St Mary's church, as noted. Moreover, there would be an inevitable increase in other traffic, especially supermarket delivery vans and those associated with other delivery companies. (The nearest shops are located approximately two miles away in Upper Higham.) Residential properties in the lower Church Street area, St Mary's church and the Thames marshes at Higham are accessed via a long, poorly maintained single-track lane that is barely adequate to accommodate existing traffic levels. Pedestrians, dog walkers, ramblers and bird watchers are already required to climb up onto steep verges that are frequently overgrown to avoid an overabundance of traffic, which consists of residents' cars, visitors' cars, delivery vans, sewage lorries (there is no mains drainage), farm vehicles and horse boxes. The significant expansion of traffic that would result from the proposal (which envisages a ca. 25% increase in the number of residential dwellings in the area) would create additional inconvenience for drivers and add to the difficulties and dangers faced by walkers and cyclists.

I would respectfully ask Gravesham Borough Council to reject this application.

Kind regards