



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20260651

Location: Commority Farm, Harvel Road, Meopham

Description: Retrospective application for the erection of an agricultural livestock building.

Applicant: Mr Steve Jones

Site Visit Date: 6 July 2026

Submitted Documents/Plans

Site location plan

Block plan

Drawing no. 055/100 (existing agricultural barn plan and roof plan)

Drawing no. 055/101 (existing agricultural barn elevations)

Relevant Planning History

20240826	Erection of an Agricultural Livestock Building.	Permitted	11.04.2025
20230643	Application for a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the erection of 2 no. agricultural storage buildings.	Prior approval not required	28.06.2023

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

As set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012 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

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 (2026), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

- Section 3 – Decision-making policies
- Section 4 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 7 – Building a strong, effective economy
- Section 14 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 19 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design for Gravesham: Design Code (2024);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan (2021-2026)

Emerging Local Plan as a Material Consideration

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) make it clear that planning applications can only be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework sets out that when considering development proposals, relevant policies may be given weight, however, this is subject to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- The degree of compliance of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the policies for plan-making in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them).

West Oxfordshire District Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government & Rosconn Strategic Land Ltd [2018] EWHC 3065 (Admin) is a High Court judgement that deals with the weight to be given to a Regulation 19 Local Plan. In this judgement, the Court found that the weight to be given to an emerging Local Plan was a matter of planning judgement, which had to be reached having fully considered the relevant part of the Framework, which from 17 August 2026 Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework.

The Council's emerging Local Plan has reached the Regulation 19 Consultation stage, with the consultation having ended on 18 August 2026. The emerging Local Plan does not form part of the Development Plan.

The Council is aware that third parties have raised objections to the wider emerging Local Plan and specific policies within it. Therefore, at present the Council cannot categorically state that the emerging Local Plan can be considered sound and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) [as an emerging Local Plan being brought forward under the legacy system, it would be examined under the 2024 Framework]. Taking this into consideration, one can only conclude that at this stage of the process, **limited (i.e. minimal) weight should be afforded to the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan.**

This position would only change once the emerging Local Plan has progressed towards submission and examination, with the Council being fully aware of policies that are subject to unresolved objections and

with knowledge of policies that have had their soundness and conformity against the Framework challenged.

This approach accords with the approach taken in a separate High Court case, Gladman Developments Ltd v SSHCLG & Corby Borough Council; & Uttlesford DC [2020] EWHC 518 (Admin) and Court of Appeal [2021] EWCA Civ 104, which was also the subject of a Court of Appeal Ruling [2021] EWCA Civ 104.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Kent Police Designing Out Crime

We have reviewed this application in regard to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Applicants/agents should consult us as Designing out Crime Officers (DOCO's) to address CPTED and incorporate Secured By Design (SBD) as appropriate. We use details of the site, relevant crime levels/type and intelligence information to help design out the opportunity for Crime, Fear of Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Nuisance and Conflict.

There is a carbon cost for crime and new developments give an opportunity to address it. Using CPTED along with attaining an SBD award using SBD guidance, policies and academic research would be evidence of the applicants' efforts to design out the opportunity for crime.

We recommend SBD guidance is utilised to address designing out crime to show a clear audit trail for Designing Out Crime, Crime Prevention and Community Safety and to meet our Local Authority statutory duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The points below identify my recommendations for the layout and design of this scheme.

I acknowledge that this application refers to the erection of an agricultural livestock building within a pre-existing agricultural site. I thought I'd take the opportunity to provide the below comments but I appreciate that these may have already been considered or in place;

1. We recommend the applicant review current site security and boundary treatments. We recommend boundary treatments be a minimum of 1.8m in height. Any secondary access points to the side/rear of the site should be secured by the installation of lockable gates. If a boundary is made up of hedging, we recommend the hedges be dense, and where possibly prickly, with a secondary layer for security purposed such as a mess fence to avoid trespassers.
2. We recommend natural surveillance for associated parking areas. As a secondary layer of security, we would also recommend CCTV be installed to further monitor use. We also strongly recommend gating access roads/ parking areas to prevent nuisance parking and misuse out of hours.
3. Defined pedestrian routes to/ from the building are recommended to improve safety and avoid pedestrian and vehicle conflict.
4. CCTV to be installed, especially in areas with limited natural surveillance such as rear of the unit, associated bin stores and on the access / exit road. We also recommend cameras in the following areas to keep users safe and monitor their movements; loading/ unloading areas, car parking area and access points of the proposed unit. The CCTV must not infringe any lighting plan.
5. Alarms. We appreciate the rural nature of the site, an audible only alarm may not be appropriate as it may not be heard. However, a fully monitored, possibly silent, security alarm system should be installed, ideally monitored by an ARC (Alarm Response Centre). Flashing alarm beacons may also be considered. This is particularly important given the rural location.
6. We advise external doorsets (a doorset is the door, fabrication, hinges, frame, installation, and locks) to meet PAS 24: 2022 UKAS certified standard, STS 201 or LPS 2081 Security Rating B+.
7. Any Shutters should be as close to the building line as possible and must avoid the creation of a recess. Shutters must be certificated to LPS 1175: Issue 7, SR2; STS 202: Issue 3, BR2; Sold Secure Gold or PAS

68:2013.

8. Bin Stores associated with this proposal must be secure, lit and, if in an area with limited natural surveillance we recommend CCTV cameras be installed. We also strongly advise against placing this store close enough to the building that it can be used as a climbing aid into the building when closed.

9. If roof access is proposed for maintenance of solar panels etc., we recommend that ladders/ access doors to these areas are securely locked so that members of the public are unable to access this area. We also require CCTV to cover this area in order to monitor unauthorized access.

To note, as Designing Out Crime Officers we use Secured By Design Guidance in our recommendations. Whilst our comments may be standardised within this letter, we encourage the applicant to contact us to discuss the plans in further detail.

If approved, site security is required for the construction phase. There is a duty for the principle contractor "to take reasonable steps to prevent access by unauthorised persons to the construction site" under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007. The site security should incorporate plant, machinery, supplies, tools and other vehicles and be site specific to geography and site requirements.

We welcome a discussion with the applicant/agent about site specific designing out crime. If the points above are not addressed, they can affect the development and local policing.

This information is provided by Kent Police DOCO's and refers to situational crime prevention. This advice focuses on CPTED and Community Safety with regard to this specific planning application.

KCC Archaeologist

I note that the application is retrospective and therefore I would not consider the application would require any archaeological mitigation.

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society notes the site is in an area where Green Belt policies apply. There appears to be documentation defining the land ownership and the extent of the holding. In the event of consent being granted the Society would suggest that conditions are imposed controlling any residential use.

Meopham Parish Council

No objection.

GBC Environmental Protection

No comments to make

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by site notice. No letters of representation have been received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks retrospective permission for the erection of an agricultural livestock building.

Background

20230643 granted prior approval for the erection of two agricultural storage barns. There is a listed building (Swanswood Farm) within 400m of the application site which means a building for livestock requires planning permission and therefore this procedure cannot be used for this application or the previous one 20240826.

The above applications came about as the applicant had the opportunity to purchase much of the tenanted farm known as Harvel House Farm. A condition of this sale was that he lost the tenancy of the buildings and farmhouse at Harvel House Farm and therefore lost the existing farm complex. The first application was the immediate concern as the farm equipment needed to be stored. Now that requirement has been met the farm is seeking to address the lack of livestock accommodation. The 20240826 application addressed the lack of accommodation for cattle and this application seeks to address the lack of accommodation for sheep. Due to the time pressures of the lambing season this barn was erected without planning permission and this application seeks to regularise this.

Principle

The application site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Green Belt

Applications for development in the Green Belt are assessed against section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026. The objective of Green Belt policy, as set out in this chapter, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence.

The five purposes of the Green Belt are:

- a. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e. Assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Policy GB6 (Control of development in the Green Belt) of the NPPF states:

1. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within one of the categories in policy GB7.
2. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Such circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposed development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In making this assessment, substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt which would be caused, including harm to its openness.
3. In the case of proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development, very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

Policy GB7 (Development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt) of the NPPF states:

1. The following categories of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances:
 - a. Development which is for agriculture, horticulture and forestry, or which is solely for nature conservation,

restoration and/or enhancement;

b. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

c. Limited infilling in villages lying within the Green Belt;

d. Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in this Framework or the development plan (for instance, on a rural exception site);

e. The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt;

f. Certain other forms of development, provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes. These are:

i. Mineral extraction and processing, engineering operations, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location);

ii. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order;

iii. Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

iv. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments.

g. Development where all of the following apply:

i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed;

iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework; and

iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8.

h. Residential or mixed-use development which would:

i. Be within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station (applying the definitions in the glossary Annex B);

ii. Be physically well-related to the station or the settlement within which the station is located;

iii. Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure;

iv. Not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location; and

v. In the case of proposals for major development, comply with policy GB8.

The application relates to an agricultural building and therefore meets the exception listed under policy GB7 (1) (a). As it is not inappropriate in the Green Belt the impact on openness on the Green Belt does not need to be considered.

Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 allows development in the rural area, outside of rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt, provided the proposals are compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the local plan.

The proposed development therefore accords with policy CS02 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026.

Diversification of the Rural Economy

Policy CS07 Economy, Employment and Skills States that:

'The Council will support proposals that promote the appropriate expansion and diversification of the rural area economy'.

Policy E2 (Meeting the need for business land and premises) of the NPPF states:

1. To support business growth, substantial weight should be given to:

a. The economic benefits of proposals for commercial development which allow businesses to invest, expand and/or adapt; especially where this would support the economic vision and strategy for the area, the implementation of the Industrial Strategy, support improvements in freight and logistics and/or reflect proposals for Industrial Strategy Zones and AI Growth Zones; and

b. Benefits for domestic food production, animal welfare and/or the environment which can be demonstrated through proposals for development for farm and agricultural modernisation.

2. Where a development proposal is required to demonstrate whether an unmet need exists (including under policy S5) consideration should be given to whether:

a. Market signals indicate an undersupply of specific types of business land or premises, taking into account the anticipated catchment area for the type of development proposed, the changing needs of different sectors and the availability of suitable existing land and buildings; or

b. The specific locational requirements of the proposal are met by existing allocations in the development plan. This includes, but is not limited to, situations where:

i. Existing businesses plan to expand or improve their premises, or clusters or networks of businesses need to grow (such as clusters of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries and associated facilities and infrastructure); or

ii. The availability of infrastructure (such as electricity network infrastructure to provide adequate grid connections, or water and wastewater capacity) makes certain locations particularly important, including opportunities to co-locate large-scale generators and users of power (such as data centres); or

iii. Proposals would meet a local, regional or national need for the provision of new, expanded or upgraded facilities that would result in more efficient, reliable or sustainable handling of goods (whether for their receipt, storage, processing, interchange or distribution).

Policy E4 (Rural business development) of the NPPF states:

1. In applying policy E2, the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including through:

- a. The conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- b. The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;
- c. Facilities to support rural leisure and tourism and measures to retain and expand accessible local shops and services; and
- d. Development to maintain and enhance farm viability and sustainability and support domestic food production, such as improved accommodation for livestock, on-farm reservoirs, greenhouses, polytunnels, farm shops and temporary accommodation for seasonal workers (where this accommodation is ancillary to the agricultural use and not for permanent occupation).

2. Development proposals to meet business needs in rural areas may need to be located outside settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances:

- a. Development proposals should take opportunities, where they exist, to use previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing development; and
- b. The siting and design of development should be appropriate having regard to the character of its surroundings.

The proposed building will support the appropriate expansion of this rural business and therefore accords with local and national policies in this regard.

Design, Character and Appearance

The application site is also located with the Kent Downs National Landscape, Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area and the Whitehorse Wood and Holly Hill Local Wildlife Site.

Impact on the Kent Downs National Landscape

Policy DP3 of the NPPF 2026 requires development to achieve a high standard of design, respond appropriately to local character, create attractive and functional places, make effective use of land, and provide safe, inclusive and accessible environments.

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.

Policy N2 requires development to conserve and enhance the natural environment by responding positively to landscape character, protecting and integrating important natural features, strengthening ecological networks, supporting biodiversity and priority species, and using landscaping and green infrastructure to help development assimilate into its surroundings.

Policy N4 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, landscape character and special qualities of Protected Landscapes, with development expected to avoid harm to these nationally important areas.

The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB), within the West Kent Downs Landscape Character Area of the Kent Downs Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Update 2020, and within the Luddesdown Sub Area. Policy SD2 of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021-2026 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the National Landscape. 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 National Landscape.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 imposed a new statutory Duty on the Council such that the Council must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape in carrying out its functions, including as a Planning Authority. In determining this application, the Local Planning Authority is meeting this Duty by considering the impact of the development on the National Landscape below:

The proposed agricultural building is in keeping with other farm buildings both on this site and the surrounding landscape. It is located close to vegetation that goes some way to screening it, as opposed to being located in the middle of an open field. Whilst there will be an impact on the wider landscape, it is a feature that is common within the area and a feature of the agricultural landscape within which it is located.

The building will therefore not significantly impact the wider landscape and is considered to conserve the local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the National Landscape in accordance with policy SD2 of the Management Plan. Likewise, its containment close to the site boundaries will ensure that the development does not impact negatively on the distinctive landforms, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the National Landscape in accordance with policy SD8 of the Management Plan.

Policy LLC1 supports and pursues the protection, conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs National Landscape. Policy FL5 seeks to promote appropriate farm diversification. It sets out that farm diversification activities will be supported if they help achieve the vision, aims and principles of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan. The proposed development allows for the farm to house cattle and therefore is considered to support this aim.

Landscape Character

The application site is also located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area within the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment 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 LCA will be taken into account in determining applications. The LCA states the area is defined by relatively level topography with dense wooded areas. The condition and sensitivity of the landscape is moderate and the aims are to conserve and create.

As stated above, the barn is a feature that is not considered out of character in this agricultural setting and is relatively well screened from the wider landscape. Therefore no concerns are raised and the proposal is considered to accord with policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014.

Design

The design and scale of the building is in keeping with other agricultural buildings on the site and in the wider area. No objection is raised to its design as this is similar to others on site. The materials used are appropriate and therefore no objections are raised in this regard.

The proposed development therefore accords with Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014, policies SD2, SD8, LLC1 and FL5 of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021-2026 and policies DP3, N2 and N4 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026.

Amenity

Neighbouring Amenity

The nearest property is more than 200m away from the application site and therefore there will be no detrimental impact to any neighbour in terms of loss of outlook, privacy, sunlight or daylight.

The use is not likely to cause significant impact in terms of noise as the barn is required to shelter livestock that are already grazing on the site.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Policy N6 requires development to protect and enhance biodiversity, strengthen ecological networks, support nature recovery, safeguard important habitats and species, and deliver measurable improvements for the natural environment wherever possible.

The application site is located within an agricultural field that takes access through a designated priority deciduous woodland and Whitehorse Wood and Holly Hill Local Wildlife Site (LWS). It is unclear if it is ancient woodland but may not be formally designated as it is too small to be included in the inventory (<0.2ha) but this does not mean it is not ancient woodland. The applicant has confirmed that the track has existed since WW2 when the army requisitioned the field to install search lights and much of the adjoining field between the highway and the woodland comprises of rubble laid down by the army to create a hard base from which to operate the search light. A trackway through the field was also constructed at this point.

The County Ecologist has confirmed that, as the track has been in place in for so long and the barn is already built, there is no need for ecological information as any potential impacts to the woodland during construction have already occurred. They do however request a condition for bat/bird boxes.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

The BNG requirement does not apply to retrospective applications.

Parking and Highways

The agricultural barn will not result in any significant increase in vehicular movements because the building is retrospective and the sheep were already grazing on the land. The access already exists and has been used for farm traffic for a while. No objections are therefore raised on highways grounds.

Conclusion

The agricultural building will have no detrimental impact on the Green Belt, surrounding landscape character, amenity, parking or highway safety and therefore accords with the abovementioned policies and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation:

Permit

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Alison Webster	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
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Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	21 September 2026	Dated:	21st September 2026