

Katherine Parkin
Gravesham Borough Council

Our ref: KT-2025-133144/02
Your ref: 20250994

Sent by email

Date: 27 April 2026

Dear Katherine,

Demolition of existing industrial/commercial unit and reconstruction of new commercial unit, including removal of existing containers.

Plot 8 Norfolk Road Gravesend Kent

Thank you for consulting us on the above application which we received on 8 April 2026. As part of this consultation, we have reviewed the following documents:

- Proposed block plan (ref. 2025-085 005, dated 4 October 2025)
- Flood Risk Assessment (ref. 16-3347, dated 23 March 2026, by Coraiht)
- Contaminated Land Risk Assessment (ref. PH1-2026-000035, dated 25 March 2026, by STM Environmental)

Environment Agency position

We **object** to the proposed development as submitted, due to its proximity to the existing culvert and the lack of information to determine the risks posed to nature conservation / fisheries / ecology and physical habitats.

Please refer to the following sections for our full response:

- Section 1: Reasons for, and how to overcome, our objection(s)
- Section 2: Note to the Applicant / Local Planning Authority

Please note that our comments are based on the details available to us at the time of writing. If any subsequent changes are made to the application, please reconsult us.

Please be aware that we wish to be re-consulted on this planning application once the required information has been submitted. Please also note that our subsequent advice may concern other important environmental issues.

If you are minded to approve the application contrary to our objection, please contact us to explain why material considerations outweigh our objection. This will allow us to make further representations.

Should you have any queries regarding this response, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Gabrielle Delorme

Sustainable Places Planning Specialist

E-mail kslplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk

Section 1: Reasons for, and how to overcome, our objection(s)
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Objection 1: Development too close to existing culvert

Having reviewed the submitted information for this proposal, we are not objecting in principle to the site's redevelopment for a new commercial unit, however we have concerns relating to the proximity of the unit towards the existing culvert that runs along the north of the site as well as its condition.

Reason(s)

Even though there is not a specified measurement from the closest point of the new building towards the outer edge of the culvert, it would appear that the new building would encroach closer towards the culvert. Additionally, within our records, the culvert has a condition rating of **5**, which would indicate that it is in need of repair.

Overcoming our objection

1. The applicant should revise the proximity to the culvert, to clearly show a betterment in the distance to the proposed building.
We request that the applicant submits plans that clearly show the offset between the closed point of the building to the outside edge of the culvert. The measurement should be taken from the landward face of the river. The offset between the building and the culvert should be at least 8 metres to allow for suitable access for heavy machinery and to allow essential maintenance and if necessary, repair to the culvert structure.
2. We would recommend that the applicant carries out a culvert survey (CCTV or Ground Penetration Radar) not only to establish structural defects and any potential recent deterioration, but also determine an accurate culvert alignment. We would advise that any survey should be accompanied with an engineering assessment and recommendations in regards to remedial works and any anticipated risks to the culvert structure.

Objection 2: No evidence that the risks to nature conservation / fisheries / ecology and physical habitats have been assessed – Unlikely to grant FRAP

Insufficient information has been submitted to determine the risks posed to nature conservation / fisheries / ecology and physical habitats due to the lack of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA).

We therefore object and recommend that planning permission is refused. Without sufficient assessment of these risks, we are also unlikely to be able to grant a FRAP.

Reason(s)

In determining this development's FRAP, we will assess its compliance with the Thames River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). We will also consider how the development will affect water biodiversity and the wetland environment. The RBMP states that the water environment should be protected and enhanced to prevent deterioration and promote the recovery of water bodies.

A PEA is required to evaluate the level of risk on species / habitats / hydromorphology / fisheries and show how it is to be controlled. This assessment should, where possible, show opportunities for environmental improvements as per a biodiversity net gain assessment which is required by the Local Planning Authority.

Until this is provided the risk posed by the proposed development is unacceptable. This objection is supported by paragraphs 187 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which recognise that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Overcoming our objection

To overcome our objection, the applicant should submit a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The development's detailed design, demolition, construction, mitigation and compensation measures should be based on the results of this survey and/or ecological assessment, which will need to be carried out by an experienced professional using recognised survey methods.

The survey and/or ecological assessment should:

- identify the impacts to the ecology of the site;
- identify any rare, declining, protected or otherwise important flora, fauna or habitats within the site;
- assess the importance of the above features at a local, regional and national level;
- identify the impacts of the scheme on those features;
- identify watercourses be they above or below ground;
- demonstrate how the development will avoid adverse impacts;
- propose mitigation for any adverse ecological impacts or compensation for loss;
- propose wildlife/habitat enhancement measures.

Missed opportunity for river restoration to support implementation of RBMPs

In line with the Thames RBMP, we recommend that the proposed development is used as an opportunity to restore more natural processes to the watercourse. The site currently bound a culverted section of watercourse to the northern boundary. In order to help achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, we would recommend that this watercourse is daylighted (uncovered) in-order to restore it back to its normal form. This would offer a significant environmental gain.

Section 2: Advice to the Applicant / Local Planning Authority

Flood resistance and resilience

We strongly recommend the use of flood resistance and resilience measures. Physical barriers, raised electrical fittings and special construction materials are just some of the ways you can help reduce flood damage.

To find out which measures will be effective for this development, please contact your building control department. If you'd like to find out more about reducing flood damage, visit the Flood Risk and Coastal Change pages of the planning practice guidance. Further guidance on flood resistance and resilience measures can also be found in:

Government guidance on flood resilient construction

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flood-resilient-construction-of-new-buildings>

CIRIA Code of Practice for property flood resilience

https://www.ciria.org/Research/Projects_underway2/Code_of_Practice_and_guidance_for_property_flood_resilience.aspx

British Standard 85500 – Flood resistant and resilient construction

<https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030299686>

Flood risk issues not within our direct remit

The following issues are not within our direct remit or expertise, but nevertheless may be important considerations for managing flood risk for this development. Prior to deciding this application, we recommend that consideration is given to the issues below. Where necessary, the advice of relevant experts should be sought.

- Adequacy of rescue or evacuation arrangements
- Details and adequacy of an emergency plan
- Provision of and adequacy of a temporary refuge
- Details and adequacy of flood proofing and other building level resistance and resilience measures
- Details and calculations relating to the structural stability of buildings during a flood
- Whether insurance can be gained or not
- Provision of an adequate means of surface water disposal such that flood risk on and off-site isn't increased

Flood Risk Activity Permit

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require a permit or exemption to be obtained for any of the following activities:

- erecting any temporary or permanent structure in, over or under a main river, such as a culvert, outfall, weir, dam, pipe crossing, erosion protection, scaffolding or bridge
- altering, repairing or maintaining any temporary or permanent structure in, over or under a main river, where the work could affect the flow of water in the river or affect any drainage work
- building or altering any permanent or temporary structure designed to contain or divert flood waters from a main river
- dredging, raising or removing any material from a main river, including when you are intending to improve flow in the river or use the materials removed
- diverting or impounding the flow of water or changing the level of water in a main river
- quarrying or excavation within 16 metres of any main river, flood defence (including a remote defence) or culvert
- any activity within 8 metres of the bank of a main river, or 16 metres if it is a tidal main river
- any activity within 8 metres of any flood defence structure or culvert on a main river, or 16 metres on a tidal river
- any activity within 16 metres of a sea defence structure
- activities carried out on the floodplain of a main river, more than 8 metres from the river bank, culvert or flood defence structure (or 16 metres if it is a tidal main river), if you do not have planning permission (you do not need permission to build agricultural hay stacks, straw stacks or manure clamps in these places)

For further guidance please visit [Flood risk activities: environmental permits - GOV.UK](#) or contact our National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or by emailing enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

The applicant should not assume that a permit will automatically be forthcoming once planning permission has been granted, and we advise them to consult with us at the earliest opportunity.

Biodiversity net gain (rivers metric)

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a requirement for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on most types of Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) development. Biodiversity net gain offers an opportunity to promote and achieve our desired environmental outcomes – nature recovery, natural flood management, nature-based solutions and green and blue infrastructure.

Please note, for this application we have not reviewed any submitted BNG information in detail and our position on this application does not mean the biodiversity gain objective has been met. In line with the “[Biodiversity Net Gain](#)” section of the Planning Practice Guidance, it is the role of the Local Planning Authority role to decide if the BNG requirement for development in scope has been met.

Applications subject to statutory BNG require completion of the Watercourse Unit Module by a competent person if:

- a watercourse is onsite,
- the watercourse bank top is within 10m of the redline boundary (i.e. the red line boundary intersects the riparian zone).
- For ditches, the Watercourse Unit Module is applied where the bank top is located within 5m of the red line boundary.
- a culvert lies within the red line boundary.

We recommend that you refer to the following to assist your assessment of the watercourse metric:

[Watercourse Metric \(within the Biodiversity Metric\) - checklist to aid the reviewer.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

Further information, data and advice on our rivers and catchments can be found using the [England | Catchment Data Explorer](#) and [River Basin Management Plans](#).

Planning advice service

Should you wish us to review any technical documents or want further advice to address the environmental issues raised, we may do this as part of our charged for planning advice service.

Further engagement will provide you with the opportunity to discuss and gain our views on potential options to overcome our objection with us, before formally submitting further information as part of your planning application. It should also result in a better quality and more environmentally sensitive development.

As part of our charged for service we will provide a dedicated project manager to act as a single point of contact to help resolve any problems. We currently charge £119.37 per hour, plus VAT. We will provide you with an estimated cost for any further discussions or review of documents. The standard terms of our charged for service are available [here](#).

If you would like more information on our planning advice service, including a cost estimate, please contact us at kslplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk