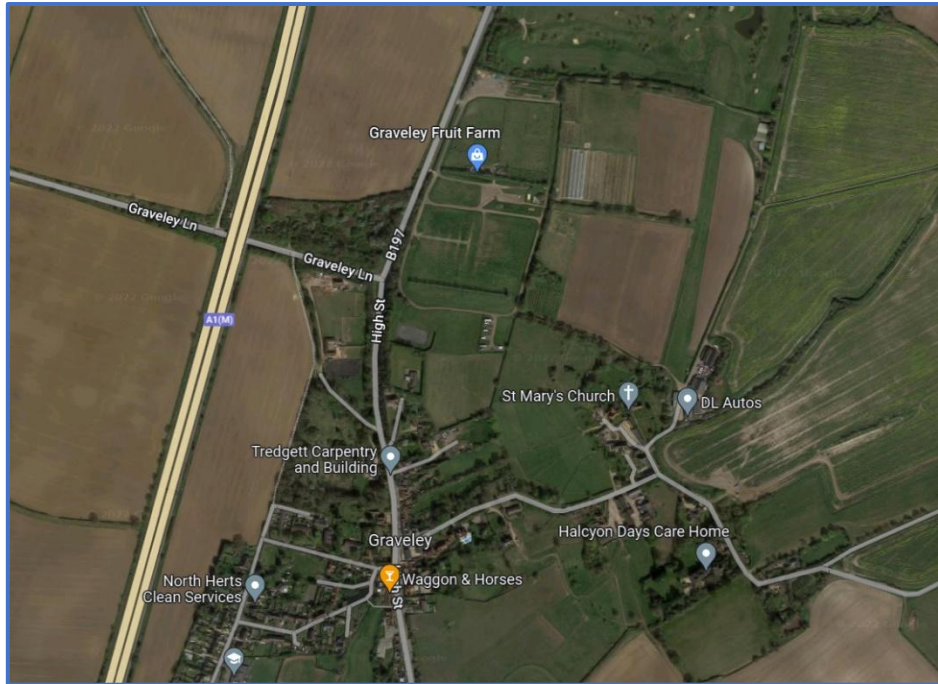


PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



**Graveley Fruit Farm, Jacks Hill, Graveley,
Hertfordshire**

August 2026



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD, to support a planning application for erection of a toilet block building with integrated site office, following removal of existing toilet block buildings. The site is Graveley Fruit Farm, Jacks Hill, Graveley, Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations and explains the design process and principles based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The site comprises a fruit farm of 'pick your own' produce, a café, crazy golf course, a children's play area of various games and activities and a dog training area. The site is located in the Green Belt and close to the main village of Graveley, with access from the B197, which leads into the High Street of Graveley.
- 2.2 The site is not located within a Conservation Area, contains no listed buildings and is not proximate to any listed buildings. The following image shows an aerial view of the site and surroundings at Figure 1, with annotation for Graveley Fruit Farm.



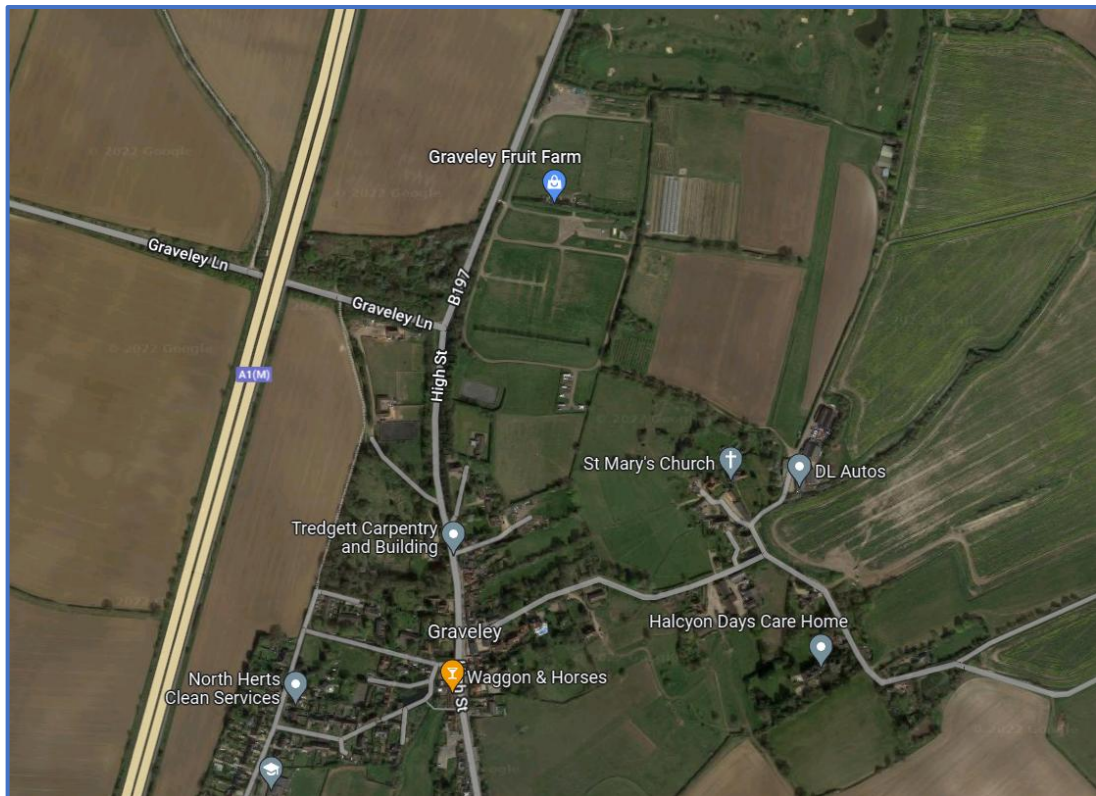


Figure 1 – Aerial view plan for the site, north of Graveley village



Figure 2 - Proposed front elevation





Figure 3 - Proposed front / side elevation

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises replacement of the current toilet block buildings, with a larger toilet block and integrated site office. The current toilet block and separate accessible toilet structure will be removed, prior to construction of the new single building.
- 3.2 The new building would measure approximately 11.3 metres in length, 7 metres in width with a 1.2m canopy to the front, with a pitched roof. The external materials are of timber weatherboarding to the walls, with oak posts to the front canopy and metal profile roof sheeting.
- 3.3 The siting of the building is proposed along the hedgerow and trees line, as denoted on the proposed site plan and in the same position as the existing. This position is between the existing café building and the dog training area and workers mobile home. Connection to the main sewer will be carried out across the applicant's owned land, to the nearest connection along High



Street. The drainage run will of course meet the requirements of the building regulations and of Anglian Water accordingly. The following Figures show the proposed site plan, floor plan and elevations of the new building.

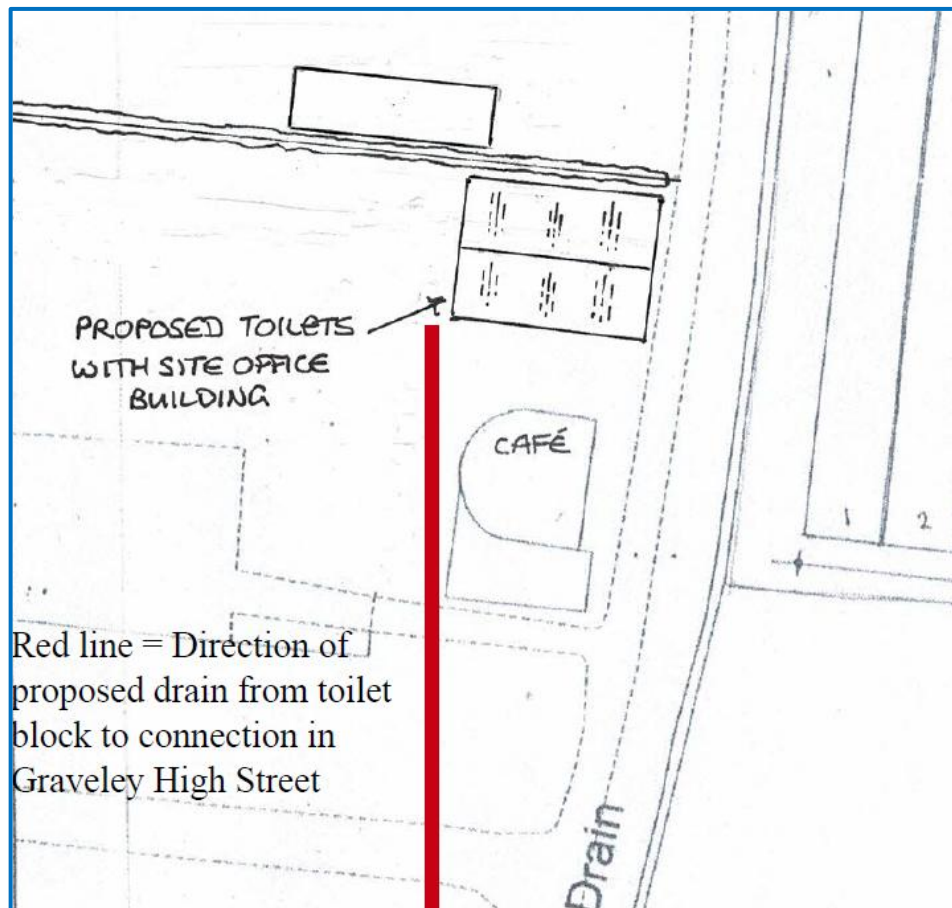


Figure 4 - Proposed site plan



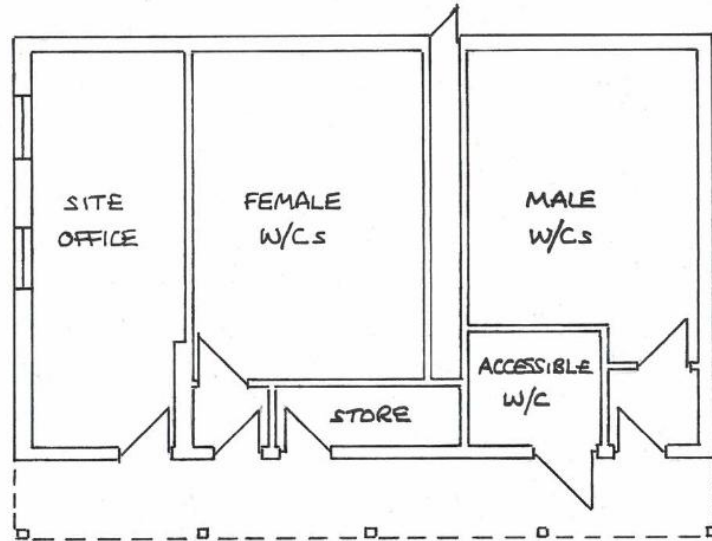


Figure 5 - Proposed floor plan

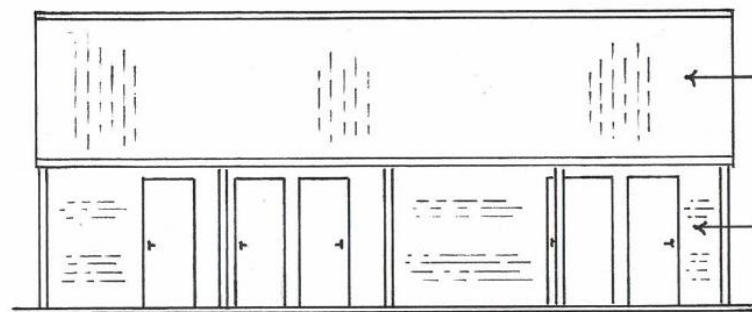


Figure 6 - Proposed front elevation

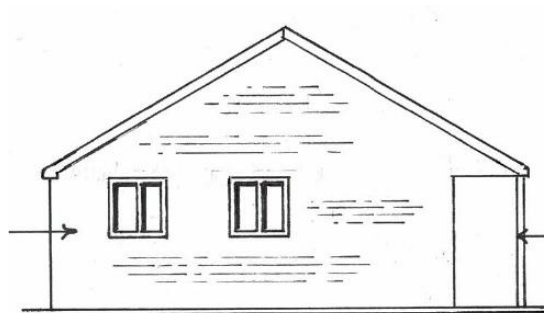


Figure 7 - Proposed side elevation



4. Relevant planning policy



4.1 The following policies within the Local Plan are considered to be of relevance to this application, followed by those of the NPPF:

4.2 North Herts Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy SP10 - Healthy Communities

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy D1 - Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting living conditions

4.3 Supplementary Planning Document

Sustainability

4.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The relevant sections of the NPPF in this case are:

Section 2. Achieving sustainable development

Section 12. Achieving well-designed places

Section 13. Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.5 The relevant planning considerations in this case are discussed in the following sections.

5. Principle - Green Belt

5.1 The application site is washed over by Green Belt designation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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 their permanence.



- 5.2 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states, 'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.' Paragraph 154 (d) sets out that the replacement of a building is not inappropriate development, provided that the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.
- 5.3 In this case, the proposed building is considered to be materially larger than the current buildings that it would replace. However, there is also the exception of part b) which states,
- "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; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;"*.
- 5.4 This proposal does indeed constitute an 'appropriate facility' in connection with the existing use of the land. The larger toilet block is now urgently required due to a marked increase in customer footfall to the Graveley Fruit Farm site, during this season and the last few seasons. The hugely popular fruit farm and all of the children's play facilities of the overall site, has meant the current small toilet block is simply now not fit for purpose.
- 5.5 The new building will provide long term sufficient sized toilet facilities for the existing use, whilst also providing a dedicated site administration office. This will negate the need for a separate building for the office function. The building would also replace the current two buildings, being the main toilet block and a separate structure as an accessible toilet facility. The building would be in the same position as the existing buildings. It would be located close to the café building and in a contained position on the overall site.



- 5.6 Therefore, the proposal constitutes acceptable development in the Green Belt, being not inappropriate. Therefore, the proposal complies with Section 13 of the NPPF and Policy SP5 of the Local Plan.
- 5.7 It is considered the proposal can be supported in regard to Green Belt policy on the basis that it does comply with the exception under paragraph 154 (b) of the NPPF.

Purposes of including land in the Green Belt

- 5.8 With regard to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, the application site consists of an existing and well established Fruit Farm site, consisting of several elements of built form and hardstanding. These include the car parking area, café, crazy golf area, children's play equipment, dog training apparatus and polytunnels. The whole site and land parcels within the site, feature mature planting and hedgerows.
- 5.9 With the siting of the building along an established hedgerow line and being contained in between other built form of the site, it is considered that the proposal would cause no harm to the purposes of the Green Belt. The most relevant purpose in this case is to prevent the encroachment of built form into the open countryside. With its modest form and appropriate and sensitive siting, there would be no conflict with this purpose, or the other purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

- 5.10 In terms of the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and its visual amenity, the NPPF identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Due to its sensitive size, design and siting, the building would result in very little change in visual appearance and no adverse visual impact



upon the Green Belt, or harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt. Moreover, the addition would be entirely unseen by public views due to the significant set back position on the site, well away from Jacks Hill and High Street.

- 5.11 It can be concluded that the proposal would result in appropriate development within the Green Belt and would not be harmful to its openness or the purposes of including land within it. As such, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan and, with Section 13 of the NPPF. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policy for development in the Green Belt.

6. Size, design and character of the area

- 6.1 In regard to the size and design, this is proposed only to provide the necessary facilities of the increased set of customer toilets, including accessible toilet and site office.

- 6.2 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states (relevant points to this proposal only):

"Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping".*

- 6.3 The development would indeed function well in providing a much needed increased size of toilet facilities, in order to be fit for purpose for this public visiting Fruit Farm and family visitor attraction. The building responds to local



character by being placed in the most discreet and low impact position of the site, which replaces the footprint of the current buildings.



- 6.4 The land is not in a prominent position, or unduly exposed in the wide open landscape. It is bounded by dense vegetation of mature planting and trees. Far from being an open vista of a site, the building would nestle very successfully into this area of the site. The building would conserve the landscape and character of the rural area.
- 6.5 As such, it is considered that the size and design of the building, would cause no harm and would preserve the character and appearance of the rural area. The scheme accords with the provisions of Policy D1 of the Local Plan and, with Section 12 of the NPPF.

Sustainability and Energy Statement

- 6.6 In regard to the Sustainability SPD, for reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions, the building would be far superior in this regard, compared to the current buildings. The existing buildings have no insulation, they are basic container like buildings and only intended for a temporary period. The replacement building would be a proper insulated toilet block, with reduced energy demand and double glazed windows to the office area. The timber weatherboarding and other relevant materials will be form sustainability sourced timber and from local suppliers where possible. Low flow water fixtures will be installed, together with low energy lighting, to minimise water and electricity consumption of the building.

7. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 7.1 With regard to any impact of the development upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, there would be no material adverse impact. The proposed building would be sited at significant distance from any residential property.



- 7.2 Therefore, no sense of dominance, loss of light or overlooking, would result for the occupiers of any residential property. The proposal complies with the Local Plan and with Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Heritage assets

- 8.1 The site does not lie within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and is not proximate to any listed buildings. There would therefore be no harmful impact upon heritage assets and the scheme does not conflict with any provisions of the Local Plan, or Section 16 of the NPPF.

9. Access

- 9.1 In terms of access, no changes to the access points of the site are required. Vehicle parking is provided by the ample parking on site for the whole premises, in the adjacent car park.

10. Landscaping

- 10.1 In regard to landscaping, the site already has established planting by way of hedgerow and tree line. This would serve as a visual screening benefit, on this already well contained location. The scheme accords with Section 15 of the NPPF in this regard.

11. Building a strong, competitive economy

- 11.1 Graveley Fruit Farm makes a highly valuable contribution to the local economy for local employment and for numerous other external companies for supplies and machinery. The site is also of course a valuable community asset for the local and wider populations, to enjoy for outdoor recreation, as a very popular family visitor attraction. The proposed replacement building, will enable the Farm to properly function with adequate toilet facilities and



safeguard its future, which will in itself contribute to maintaining a strong and competitive economy.

- 11.2 This is specifically encouraged in the NPPF as the whole of Section 6. This Section states the following,

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future”.

- 11.3 Therefore, as required by the NPPF, significant weight should be afforded to this significant need for enlarged toilet facilities, to support the development and continuation of this well-established Fruit Farm. The site provides numerous benefits for the community as a social and well-being benefit, together with the economic benefits of the host business itself, providing sustainable employment and enabling the Fruit Farm to continue operating smoothly and successfully.

- 11.4 Then also for other businesses in the wider economy by safeguarding the fruit farm operations. This is in regard to continued business for suppliers of equipment and machinery, together with the spin off business for local facilities and services, such as public houses for customers of the Fruit Farm to visit whilst in the area.

12. Summary

- 12.1 In summary of the proposed development, the replacement toilet block with integrated site office, is required as a vital upgraded size and condition of this facility, for this overall existing use as a public visiting Fruit Farm and



outdoor family attraction, which is enjoyed by so many people in the local and wider communities.

- 12.2 Being situated between existing other built form of the site, in a discreet position, the proposal would have no harm upon the actual spatial openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the five purposes of Green Belts. The replacement building is therefore considered to be in accordance with this relevant provision for exceptions for development in the Green Belt.
- 12.3 The building would have no adverse impact and would conserve the visual amenity of the landscape and the character of this rural area. This is due to the suitable scale, and considerate position, located adjacent mature hedgerow and set between existing built structures of the site.
- 12.4 The proposal will enable the Fruit Farm to continue operating as a viable business and very popular community facility. This will in turn contribute to building and maintaining a strong and competitive economy, for businesses in the local and wider area.
- 12.5 With this being the case and with no other harm from all other material considerations, the development is considered to be acceptable for the grant of planning permission accordingly. We would be happy to provide any further information that the appointed Officer may require.

