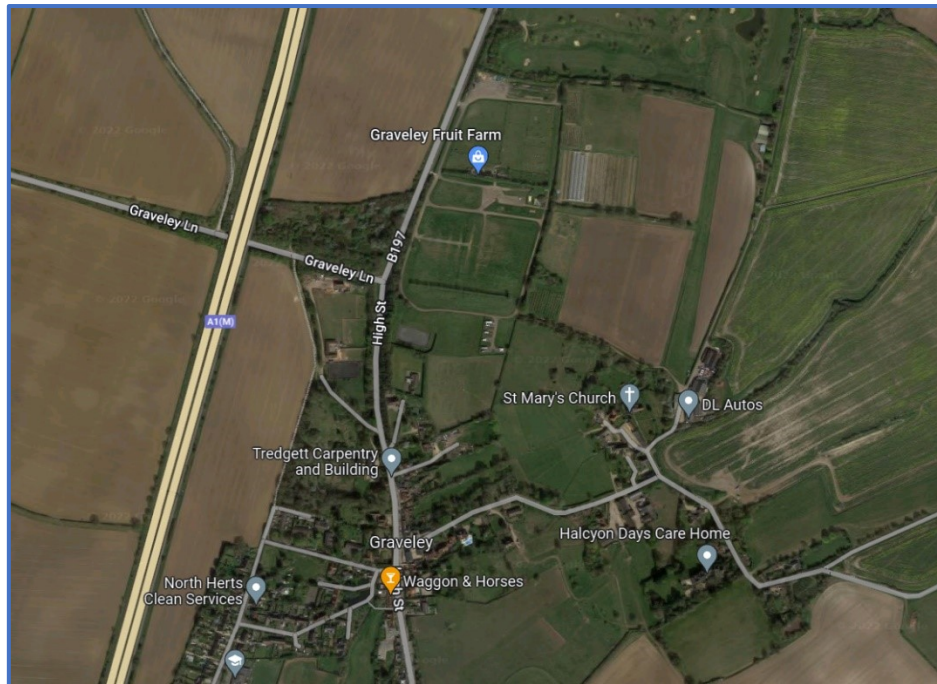


PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



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

August 2025



Contents



1	Introduction	2
2	Site description	2
3	The proposal	3
4	Relevant planning policy	6
5	Principle – Rural workers dwelling	7
6	Principle - Green Belt	10
7	Size, design and character of the area	12
8	Impact upon neighbouring living conditions	13
9	Heritage assets	14
10	Access	14
11	Landscaping	14
12	Building a strong, competitive economy	14
13	Summary	16



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD, to support a planning application for a mobile home for agricultural worker accommodation. 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 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 buildings and is not 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.



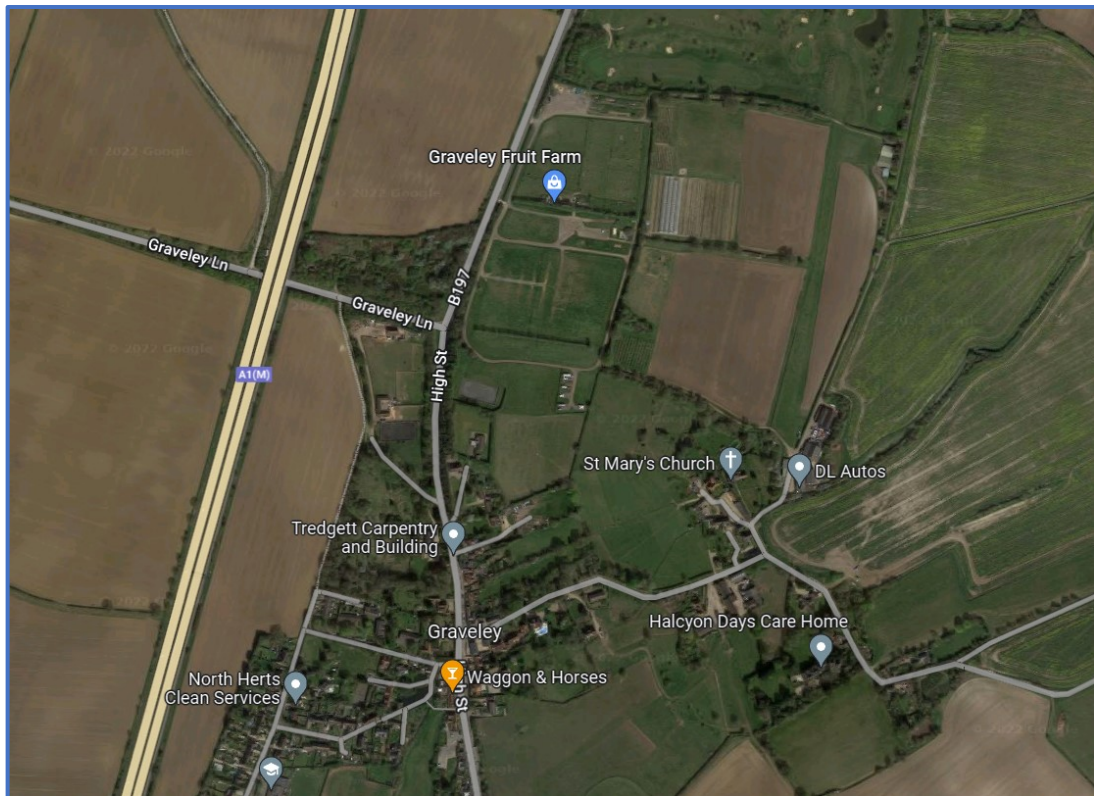


Figure 1 – Aerial view plan for the site, north of Graveley village

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises siting of a mobile home for the purpose of agricultural worker accommodation.
- 3.2 The mobile home would measure approximately 10.6 metres in length, 3.6 metres in width, with a shallow pitched roof. The external materials are of a upvc cladding to the walls and roof, as off white in colour. The proposed model of mobile home is the Willerby Salisbury, 2 bedroom model.
- 3.3 The siting of the mobile home is proposed along the hedgerow and trees line as denoted on the proposed site plan. This position is between the existing café building and the dog training area and affords easy access to the fruit farm main parcel of agricultural area beyond to the east.



- 3.4 The following Figures show the proposed site plan at Figure 2, an aerial view with the proposed location plotted at Figure 3, a typical image of this size of mobile home at Figure 4, with photograph of the site for the proposed location of the mobile home at Figure 5.

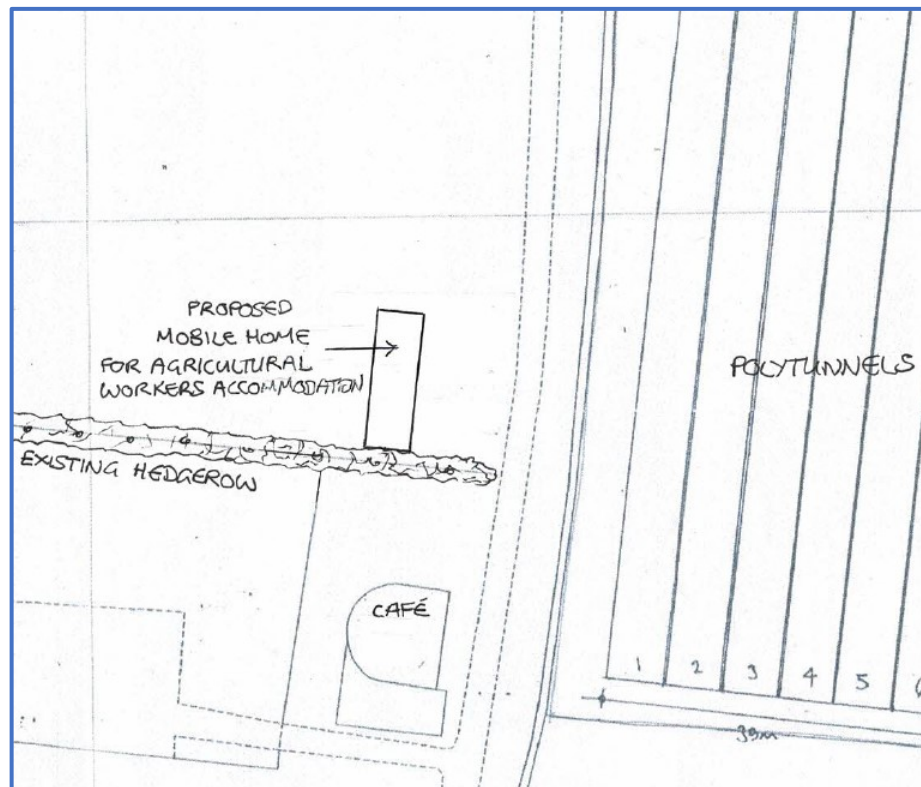


Figure 2 - Proposed site plan



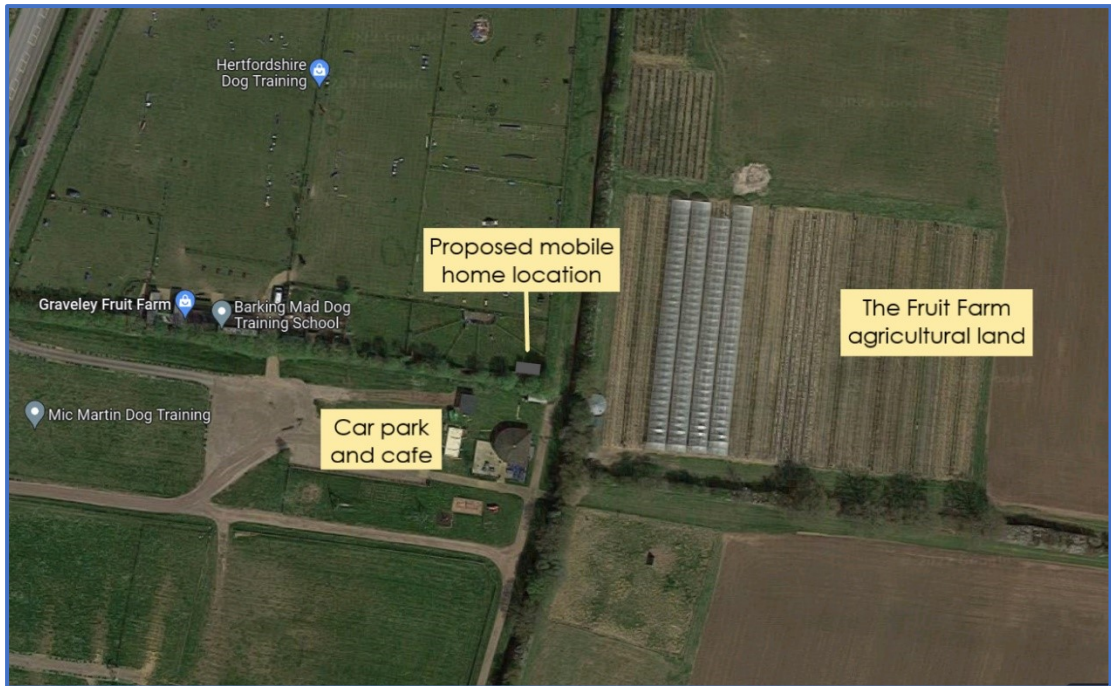


Figure 3 – Aerial view of the site, with proposed location for the mobile home



Figure 4 – Typical image of this model of mobile home





Figure 5 – Proposed location of mobile home, adjacent hedgerow

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 SP8 - Housing

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy SP10 - Healthy Communities

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy CGB3 - Rural Workers' Dwellings

Policy D1 - Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting living conditions



4.3 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

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

5. **Principle – Rural workers' dwelling**

5.1 In regard to the principle of the development, Policy CGB3 – Rural workers dwelling is relevant in this case. Each criterion of this policy is addressed as follows.

5.2 *a) There is a clearly established existing functional need;*

5.3 In this regard, the Fruit Farm has for decades offered a welcoming outdoor recreational activity of pick your own fruit in the summer months. This facility is widely known in the area and has provided a fun activity for all the family for so many years. In recent seasons, it has been a major issue in recruiting and retaining good quality seasonal staff.

5.4 By offering this on site form of accommodation to workers, it will be far easier to recruit and retain the required high quality agricultural workers for the full season duration. Without these key support staff, the Fruit Farm will not be able to continue, as it will not be able to be properly prepared in the spring months and then managed throughout the summer period.

5.5 Moreover, the site has experienced persistent low level vandalism, mainly caused by teenagers who come to the Fruit Farm after hours in the long summer evenings. They have previously smashed up the play equipment and



the features on the crazy golf course and set fire to the straw bale play area. The site requires a permanent on site presence during the season, to keep an eye on the facilities, to stop this vandalism.

- 5.6 Moreover, pigs are kept on the Fruit Farm adjacent the poly tunnels and, the applicant will shortly be introducing ewes to be bred on the site. Therefore, a large degree of welfare is required to properly keep and care for the livestock of the site.
- 5.7 It is not viable for a worker to rent a property, or even a room within a property in the local area. This is due to rental prices being too high for the seasonal agricultural worker wage. It is far more economic for the worker to reside on site, at a far reduced rent compared to the local market rent prices.
- 5.8 Therefore, the mobile home is required to attract and retain the staff needed, in order to sustain this much loved and important community facility, which has been a great recreational outdoor activity for the area for so many decades. This important community facility and local attraction will be very difficult to sustain, if workers cannot reside on the site.
- 5.9 The pre-application response largely accepted the functional needs for the accommodation as set out in this Statement. It was suggested that, 'To provide robust justification and to allow for solid conclusions of the need it is recommended that the planning statement details the use of existing buildings on site and their suitability/unsuitability for the housing of rural workers'.
- 5.10 In regard to this point, there is no such suitable building on the site to provide the accommodation. The café building is the main building of the site. The size and layout of that building is solely for the kitchen, serving and seating area of the café and has no further capacity to provide the facilities of a small dwelling.



- 5.11 The only other structures on the site are the polytunnels for fruit growing, or the children's play equipment, which are clearly unsuitable for habitable accommodation. Therefore, the siting of the proposed mobile home would fulfil the need in a very low impact and cost effective manner, with no other buildings of the site being suitable to provide the required accommodation.
- 5.12 *b) The unit and the rural business concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and should remain so;*
- 5.13 As stated above, the Fruit Farm has for decades offered a welcoming outdoor recreational activity of pick your own fruit in the summer months, together with the recreational facilities of the café, crazy golf course and various children's play equipment. This facility is widely known in the area and has provided fun activities for all the family for so many years.
- 5.14 Fiscal data evidence on the business viability can be provided upon request if deemed necessary, but the business is clearly viable and has been for decades, as this well known local facility.
- 5.15 *c) The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned;*
- 5.16 There are no other dwellings on the site and as set out above, existing accommodation in the area is too expensive for the agricultural workers to afford. Workers tend to be on a short term, high turnover of staff whereby they require accommodation on the site to make the job attractive to apply for, as opposed to also needing to afford a high rental figure in the local area. Moreover, the mobile home would also be a security presence to prevent criminal activity of the site.



d) *The proposal responds appropriately to the site's local context and the needs of the business in terms of design, scale and function.*

- 5.17 The proposal responds extremely appropriately to the site context and the needs of the business. The scale is only that required to accommodate two agricultural workers on the site, to fulfil this required function of the site. The design is very low impact, being a mobile home, which is not affixed to the ground and can be easily removed from the site if no longer required.
- 5.18 Later the policy advises that any temporary or permanent home will be restricted to the occupancy of a worker associated with the business. The planning permission will of course be restricted by condition on this basis. This policy also advises that where proposals are for development that would be inappropriate in the Green Belt, this policy will be used to help consider and assess any case of very special circumstances. This is set out in the Green Belt section below. Therefore, the proposal is considered to meet the requirements of Policy CGB3 of the Local Plan.

6. Principle - Green Belt

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Paragraph 154 (a) sets out that an exception to inappropriate development is..."buildings for agriculture and forestry;".
- 6.3 The application relates to an agricultural building to allow for livestock tending, agricultural produce growing activities and site maintenance. Given the agricultural nature of the existing site use and the tending of livestock, the proposal meets this exception. This must ultimately be tied into



the justified need for the agricultural worker to supplement the agricultural use at the fruit farm, which is set out in the above section.



- 6.4 The details submitted with this application provide sufficient justification and evidence of the needs for this mobile home. Therefore, the proposed mobile home 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.
- 6.5 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 (a) of the NPPF.

Purposes of including land in the Green Belt

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 With the siting of this mobile home 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.



- 6.8 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 mobile home 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.
- 6.9 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.

7. Size, design and character of the area

- 7.1 In regard to the size and design, this is proposed only to provide the necessary accommodation for the agricultural workers. Two workers can reside in the mobile home, with the facilities of bedrooms, kitchen and dining / living area, and a bathroom. The size is commensurate with this need of accommodation only and would be fit for this purpose. The low ridge height as a shallow pitched caravan form, is completely appropriate and reasonable in height and overall scale.
- 7.2 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".*

7.3 The development would indeed function well in providing a modest but vital accommodation need for the site to properly provide and function as a public visiting Fruit Farm. The mobile home responds to local character by being placed in the most discreet and low impact position of the site.

7.4 The proposed location for the building has been specifically chosen so as to be the most discreet and minimised visual impact of the whole site. As can be seen from the photographs, 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 mobile home would nestle very successfully into this area of the land. The mobile home would conserve the landscape and character of the rural area.

7.5 As such, it is considered that the size and design of the mobile home, 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.

8. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

8.1 With regard to any impact of the development upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, there would be no material adverse impact. The



proposed mobile home would be sited at significant distance from any residential property.

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

9. Heritage assets

- 9.1 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.

10. Access

- 10.1 In terms of access, there is vehicular access close to the proposed siting of the mobile home via the existing main access and car parking area. This would afford the siting of the mobile home, to be transported to and from the site with ease. Occupier vehicle parking is provided by the ample parking on site for the whole premises, in the adjacent car park.

11. Landscaping

- 11.1 In regard to landscaping, the site already has established planting by way of hedgerow and tree line, between the mobile home siting and the café area. 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.

12. Building a strong, competitive economy

- 12.1 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. The proposed mobile home will enable the Farm to properly function and safeguard its future, which will in itself contribute to maintaining a strong and competitive economy.

- 12.2 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”.

- 12.3 Therefore, as required by the NPPF, significant weight should be afforded to this need, 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, due to reliable seasonal workers being present on site, providing sustainable employment and enabling the Fruit Farm to continue operating smoothly and successfully.

- 12.4 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.



13. Summary

- 13.1 In summary of the proposed development, the mobile home is required to allow the proper and smooth running of the Fruit Farm operation to continue, as an established outdoor recreational activity, which is enjoyed by so many people in the local and wider communities. This is only possible with workers being present on site, for staff retention and also for the welfare of livestock and security issues. This is the functional need for the mobile home and there are no other suitable alternatives to provide the accommodation.
- 13.2 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 mobile home is therefore considered to be in accordance with this relevant provision for exceptions for development in the Green Belt.
- 13.3 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.
- 13.4 The proposal will enable the Fruit Farm to continue operating as a viable business and community facility. This will in turn contribute to building and maintaining a strong and competitive economy, for businesses in the local and wider area.
- 13.5 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.

