

planning
transport
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Planning Statement

On behalf of Hatchery

Preston Farm, Shoreham Road, Shoreham, TN14 7UD

December 2020
DHA/14484



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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of Hatchery in support of a detailed planning application relating to Preston Farm, Shoreham Road, Shoreham ("Preston Farm" or "the site").
- 1.1.2 Full planning permission is sought for a combination of conversion and replacement of existing buildings to create a new rural business work hub. The intention is to deliver a combination of flexible private offices, coworking space and 'makerspace' for the manufacture of local produce. The wider scheme includes a site hub, including café and fitness centre.. All proposed uses fall within the new Class E Use Class.
- 1.1.3 The existing access via Shoreham road would be retained and the proposal includes associated parking and landscaping.

1.2 Key Issues

- 1.2.1 Preston Farm is a former dairy, which diversified to business use in the 1990's and comprises offices and a commercial livery yard. The site is Previously Developed/ brownfield land owing to the cessation of the former agricultural operations and the ongoing commercial use of the land since the early 2000's.
- 1.2.2 The site was purchased by Hatchery with a vision of re-purposing the existing commercial facilities, enhancing the visual impact of the farm, improving the landscape and amenity of the countryside, and creating a high-quality commercial facility designed to support start-ups and small, growing businesses. In this respect, rural office use would be the core use, however some alternative light industrial 'makerspaces' are included within the proposal. This includes areas to encourage the local manufacture of produce; such as craft ales, cheese and such like. The wider scheme includes a site hub comprising a café/restaurant for community users and facilities to support customer wellbeing, such as a personal training studio, showers and changing room.
- 1.2.3 In terms of the planning merits of the scheme, national policy aims to support the rural economy by enabling the sustainable growth and expansion of business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Likewise, the Sevenoaks Core Strategy encourages development that supports the maintenance or diversification of the rural economy (specifically start-up businesses), provided it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and conserves and enhances the rural character of the landscape.
- 1.2.4 The site is in an area of countryside falling within the Metropolitan Green Belt ("MGB" or "the Green Belt") and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("AONB") where restrictions to new development apply. Nonetheless, the site is brownfield so national policy makes provision for its redevelopment provided there would be no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Moreover, the proposal aims to enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB with a sensitive redevelopment that reduces built volume, footprint and delivers

enhancements to the landscape and amenity using high quality, durable materials. The proposal also incorporates biodiversity enhancements.

- 1.2.5 Whilst the existing commercial livery and tree surgeon facilities would be lost, the current uses are not significant employers and so the proposed replacement facilities would deliver a substantial uplift in local job opportunities, focussed on small scale enterprise, where demand has started to significantly exceed supply in recent years.
- 1.2.6 The demand for this type of development is partly due to the loss in office floorspace because of changes to permitted development rights, which permit the conversion of office space to dwellings without planning permission. However, the demand for high quality rural workspace is anticipated to grow significantly because of the current Covid-19 crisis, which has accelerated emerging trends in the labour market such as flexible working patterns, increasing numbers of freelancers and changing attitudes towards workplace wellbeing and environment.
- 1.2.7 Taking the above into account, we believe that our client's proposal is uniquely placed to deliver high quality rural workspace, for which there is now an immediate and pressing need and that is likely to increase in the future.

1.3 About Hatchery

- 1.3.1 Hatchery is a new business that seeks to transform old farms and agricultural buildings into high quality flexible workplaces. The company's ambition is to reimagine the farmstead of yesterday and create rural campuses where everything is designed to create a more wholesome, enjoyable and productive way of working.
- 1.3.2 Hatchery's intention is for the developed site to achieve three aims:
 - 1) To help small businesses grow by providing better rural workspace, more flexibility and the support of a well-networked community of like-minded members.
 - 2) To empower people to work on their terms by providing professional environments close to home; allowing people to work more flexibly, waste less time commuting, see their families more and stay rooted in their communities.
 - 3) To be a force for good in the local community by providing better infrastructure and amenities, creating local jobs and connecting people.
- 1.3.3 Submission of this application document feels incredibly timely to Hatchery, considering the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on communities, businesses and workers. Hatchery would like Preston Farm to help local people and businesses to bounce back from the crisis and economic downturn and support healthy lifestyles and changing working patterns long into the future.

1.4 Report Structure and Supporting Documentation

- 1.4.1 This statement provides a detailed overview of the application site and proposals. It assesses the planning merits of the scheme, having regard to the applicable

planning policy framework and concludes that permission should be granted. It forms part of the application submission and should be made available for inspection with the other application documents, which are referenced below.

Documents

Document:	Author:
Application Form	DHA
CIL Questions Form	DHA
Planning Statement (this document)	DHA
Design and Access Statement	Mcmullan Studio
Landscape Visual Impact Assessment	Land Management Services Ltd
Transport Statement	DHA
Flood Risk Assessment	DHA
Arboricultural Survey, Implications Assessment and Method Statement [J207171 P3 Arb]	Greenspace Ecological Solutions
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal [J20717]	Greenspace Ecological Solutions
Bat Emergence Surveys [J20717_P2]	Greenspace Ecological Solutions
Geo-Environmental Desk Study	Sevenoaks Environmental Consultancy Ltd
Archaeology Desk Based Assessment	SWAT
Structural Survey and Method Statement	Elliott Wood
Energy Statement	P³R Engineers Ltd

Table 1.1: List of Reports/Forms

Drawings:

Drawing:	Number:	Author:
Site Location Plan	034 000 XLP 0001	Mcmullan Studio
Existing/Demolition Site Plan	034 010 XP 0001	
Building 4: Demolition Elevations	034 101 DME 0001	
Building 4: Demolition Plan	034 101 DMP 0001	
Building 1-3: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 100 XP 0001	
Building 4: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 101 XP 0001	
Building 5: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 102 XP 0001	
Building 6: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 103 XP 0001	
Building 7: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 104 XP 0001	
Building 8: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 105 XP 0001	
Building 9: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 106 XP 0001	
Building 10: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 107 XP 0001	
Building 11: Existing Plan & Elevations	034 108 XP 0001	
Existing Sections AA & BB	034 200 XP 0001	
Existing Sections CC & DD	034 201 XP 0001	
Existing Sections EE & FF	034 202 XP 0001	

Existing Section GG	034 203 XP 0001	Mcmullan Studio
Existing Section HH	034 204 XP 0001	
Existing Section II	034 205 XP 0001	
Existing Section JJ	034 206 XP 0001	
Proposed Masterplan	034 010 GP 0001	
Proposed Masterplan - Roof Plan	034 011 GP 0001	
Building 1: Proposed Ground Floor Plan	034 110 GP 0001	
Building 1: Proposed First Floor Plan	034 111 GP 0001	
Building 1: Proposed Roof Plan	034 112 GP 0001	
Building 2: Proposed Ground Floor Plan	034 120 GP 0001	
Building 2: Proposed Roof Plan	034 121 GP 0001	
Building 3: Proposed Ground Floor Plan	034 130 GP 0001	
Building 3: Proposed First Floor Plan	034 131 GP 0001	
Building 3: Proposed Roof Plan	034 132 GP 0001	
Building 1: Proposed North & East Elevations	034 310 GE 0001	
Building 1: Proposed South & West Elevations	034 311 GE 0001	
Building 2: Proposed North & East Elevations	034 320 GE 0001	
Building 2: Proposed South & West Elevations	034 321 GE 0001	
Building 3: Proposed North & East Elevations	034 330 GE 0001	
Building 3: Proposed South & West Elevations	034 331 GE 0001	
Proposed Sections AA & BB	034 200 GS 0001	
Proposed Sections CC & DD	034 201 GS 0001	
Proposed Sections EE & FF	034 202 GS 0001	
Proposed Section GG	034 203 GS 0001	
Proposed Section HH	034 204 GS 0001	
Proposed Section II	034 205 GS 0001	
Proposed Section JJ	034 206 GS 0001	
A225 Access Landscape Masterplan	25 PF 008 Rev B	Land Management Services Ltd
Landscape Character Masterplan	25-PF 004 Rev G	
Landscape Planting Masterplan	25-PF 009 Rev E	

Table 1.2: List of Plans

2 Site Context

2.1 The Application Site and Surroundings

- 2.1.1 The application site is located *circa* 1.5km north-east of Shoreham, west of Shoreham Road/A225 and the Sevenoaks to London railway line connecting Shoreham with Eynsford.

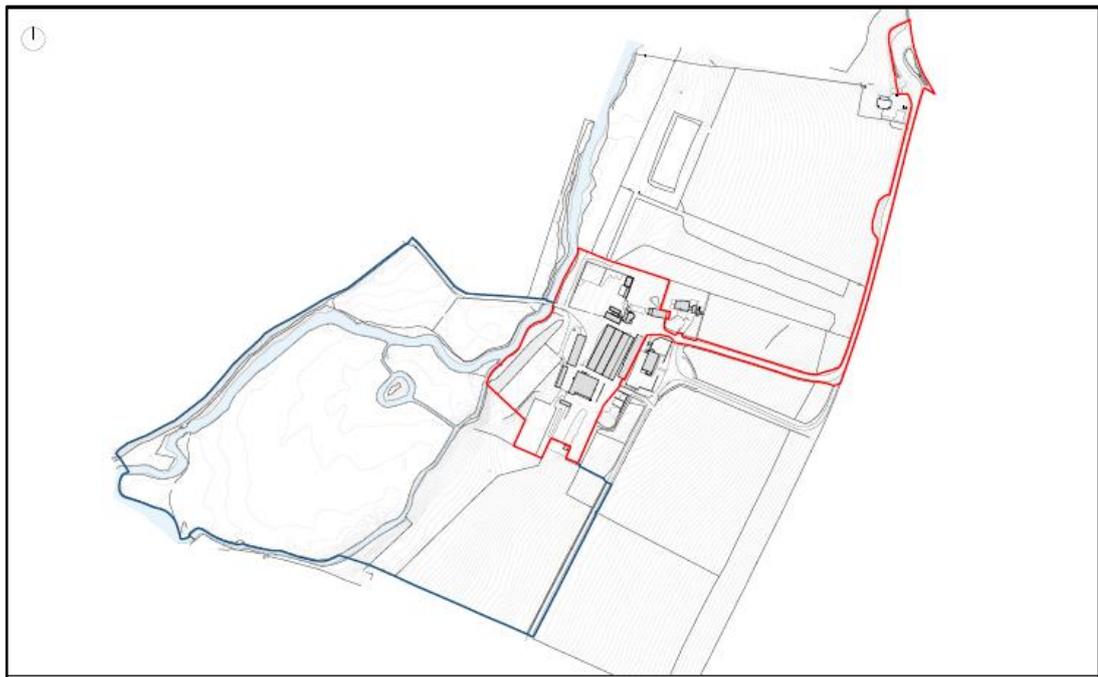


Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan

- 2.1.2 Preston Farm is a former dairy, which diversified to commercial use in the 1990's. Current uses include the offices and service yard for 'Down to Earth Trees' and a commercial livery yard.
- 2.1.3 The farm and livery buildings comprise a combination of older buildings with more recent additions, including a large, open sided black Dutch barn. A large, modern enclosed barn sits within the former courtyard to the farm. Livery vehicles are parked on an open surfaced area to the south of the farmyard. There are two ménages with black rubberised surfacing to the south and south west of the farmyard.
- 2.1.4 Immediately adjacent to the application site is Preston Farmhouse, a Georgian farmhouse that forms part of the original farmstead. Consent has recently been granted for the refurbishment of the building along with a new two storey extension, a single storey garage and associated landscape works. Whilst of a considerable age, it is not a designated heritage asset with any statutory protection.
- 2.1.5 The Dairy House, a modern two storey detached dwelling, sits adjacent to the north east boundary of the site.

- 2.1.6 Both properties are within the same ownership as the application site (the Bax Family) and share the vehicle access from Shoreham Road.
- 2.1.7 Preston Farm Cottages are located adjacent to the vehicle access point with the A225 Shoreham Road.
- 2.1.8 The site is otherwise surrounded by uninterrupted countryside forming part of the Darent Valley.
- 2.1.9 Vehicle access to the site is currently achieved via a large informal priority junction to the west of the A225 Shoreham Road. The access is currently some 17m in width as it joins the A225, which allows ample space for HGVs to enter the site before travelling south on the access road, which is orientated parallel to the A225 Shoreham Road. The access road itself is a track and relatively narrow on the south bound section, with a passing bay provided approximately halfway down its length. The track then widens as it turns to the west, towards the site.

2.2 Site Constraints and Designations

- 2.2.1 The site is in an area of countryside falling within the Green Belt and Kent Downs AONB.
- 2.2.2 It also forms part of an Area of Archaeological Potential and Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- 2.2.3 In terms of wider constraints, part of the site is in flood zone 1. There are no heritage assets close by whose significance would be affected by the site's redevelopment.

2.3 Accessibility

- 2.3.1 The site is in the countryside where opportunities to walk to nearby services, facilities and use public transport infrastructure are generally limited. However, footpath SR19 provides a walking route to Shoreham village and so there are opportunities to utilise sustainable transport modes to access essential services, facilities and public transport infrastructure in the nearby village.
- 2.3.2 A pair of flag and post bus stops are located approximately 1.2 kilometres to the south of the site access at Shoreham Railway Station. It is noted that footpath SR19 can be used to access these stops.
- 2.3.3 In terms of connectivity to the strategic road network, the site benefits from being a short distance from the M20, M25 and M26, which provide excellent links to greater London and the surrounding home counties. The site is also well connected to several towns and villages in the north of Sevenoaks District, including Eynsford, Otford, Sevenoaks, Swanley, Kemsing and Horton Kirby.

2.4 Planning History

- 2.4.1 The planning history highlights the site's diversification from agricultural to commercial. Planning application 89/01402/HIST permitted the change of use from calf and lamb pens to equestrian use. Application 99/01980/FUL permitted the further change of use from farm offices and workshop/storage to general

offices, workshops/storage. Both are non-agricultural uses that trigger a PDL definition. We provide further commentary and justification regarding the PDL status of the land below.

2.5 Land Status

- 2.5.1 To consider the principle of development, it is first necessary to consider the status of the land and whether it constitutes Previously Developed Land ('PDL'). In this respect, the NPPF glossary defines PDL as:

'Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape'.

- 2.5.2 The site is a former dairy and the NPPF excludes land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings from its definition of PDL. However, cessation of the dairy herd led to the site's agricultural redundancy in the 1990's and since this time Preston farm has diversified to commercial use.
- 2.5.3 This principle was established in *R (on the application of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Broxbourne Borough Council and Britannia Nurseries* [2015] EWHC 185 (Admin) (herein 'Lee Valley vs Broxbourne BC'), which determined that agricultural buildings last used lawfully for non-agricultural purposes cease to be agricultural buildings for the purposes of the definition of PDL. The judge rejected the submission that the previous agricultural use of the buildings meant that the land was still excluded from PDL because it remains land which "is or has been occupied by agricultural buildings".
- 2.5.4 The lawfulness of the site's commercial use is evidenced by the online planning records and the property being subsequently listed for business rates. In respect of the latter, the office and commercial yard, livery buildings and further storage facilities have a combined rateable value of £30,185.

- 3.2.2 Given its condition, the proposal seeks to remove the modern lean-to addition on the western elevation and to convert the building into a series of light industrial workshops primarily targeting the makers of local products such as cheese, craft ales and other processes compatible within a wider commercial hub. Within the proposal this building is subsequently referred to as Building 3.
- 3.2.3 The intention would be to reclad the external aspects with metal sheeting compatible with the agricultural surroundings and to re-roof with new metal roofing sheets.

3.3 Redevelopment

- 3.3.1 The remaining buildings and structures are proposed for demolition and replacement with two new buildings.

Building 1 – Private Offices

- 3.3.2 Building 1 seeks to provide high-quality private offices and meeting rooms over two floors with a light-filled central communal area for hot desking.
- 3.3.3 The proposed façade is divided into two horizontal bands. The upper level is clad with timber weatherboarding featuring a horizontally laid ship lap detail. The lower level is clad with vertical timber slats. The visual distinction between the two is accentuated by the jettied upper floor.
- 3.3.4 The external building materials comprise timber cladding in recessive tones and colours. The roof is made of corrugated metal sheets. Eaves have a limited overhang and no soffit board to reflect the form of local barns. Gutters are fixed by simple rafter brackets.
- 3.3.5 Rooflights are incorporated to maximise daylight and provide natural ventilation, creating a healthy indoor environment for work and recreation.
- 3.3.6 Further detail for the design rationale is included within the supporting Design and Access Statement.

Building 2 – Site Hub

- 3.3.7 The proposed single storey building would act as the site's communal hub. Accordingly, it would house an open plan café/restaurant with kitchen which could be turned into an event space for workers, visitors and local community.
- 3.3.8 The hub also features a flexible working space that can be adapted to suit a range of endeavours - from freelancers to start-ups and community groups.
- 3.3.9 A large-span prefabricated steel frame structure is proposed and would feature the same sectional roof profile and material as Building 1, but is single storey in height. The roof is also 'mirrored' to create two of the same, side-by-side but connected. This creates a coherent aesthetic across the entire farmstead.
- 3.3.10 Glazed rooflights are located on the least visible roof-slope to maximise ventilation without compromising the building's visual appeal when viewed from the surrounding landscape.



Figure 3.2 Proposed site plan

3.4 Access

3.4.1 Access to the site will be achieved via the existing access point to the west of Shoreham Road. It is noted that this will be amended and formalised to provide an access which is more fitting for its environment, whilst still allowing the relevant vehicles to access the site. Full detail is included within the supporting transport statement.

3.5 Parking

3.5.1 The development will provide a total of 86 vehicle parking spaces: broken down between 81 standard parking spaces and five disabled parking spaces. In addition, four of the standard parking spaces will have electric charging points. Six motorcycle parking spaces will be provided within the main car park.

3.5.2 18 cycle parking spaces will be provided. Cycle parking stands will be provided at the eastern edge of the site for all staff and visitors. The appropriate shower, changing and secure locker facilities will also be provided.

3.5.3 Full detail is included within the supporting transport statement.

3.6 Servicing

3.6.1 Vehicle swept path analysis has been completed at the site access onto the A225 Shoreham Road. This has demonstrated that the manoeuvres of a vehicle up to

the size of a 16.5 metre articulated goods vehicle and a 12.0 metre rigid goods vehicle can be safely accommodated.

- 3.6.2 Further swept path analysis has been undertaken on the site access road. As a result, four existing passing bays are being formalised, through the use of signage, to allow for a goods vehicle and car to pass safely on the site access road. The access road will continue to respect the PRoW, which crosses it / uses it.
- 3.6.3 Within the site layout, swept path analysis has been undertaken which shows that the manoeuvres of the above vehicles along with a 11.4 metre refuse vehicle, a fire tender, 7.5t box van and estate car can be accommodated within the car park.
- 3.6.4 Full detail is included within the supporting transport statement.

3.7 Landscaping and Biodiversity

- 3.7.1 The proposal is supported by a comprehensive landscaping strategy that respects the landscape and ecology of the river corridor and the transition across the Farm. Full detail is included within the supporting documentation.



Figure 3.3 Proposed landscape character masterplan

4 Statement of Community Involvement

4.1 Policy Context

- 4.1.1 Paragraph 39 of the NPPF outlines the importance of early engagement and its potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.
- 4.1.2 Paragraph 40 states that local planning authorities should encourage the uptake of pre-application advice and, where they think it would be beneficial, encourage applicants to engage with the local community and statutory and non-statutory consultees.

4.2 Overview

- 4.2.1 As outlined previously, Hatchery's vision for the site is to transform what is now a tired, dilapidated farmyard into a new rural work hub, providing a mix of workspaces and amenities to service the local community and local businesses. Indeed, one of the three core business aims of Hatchery is to *"be a force for good in the local community, by providing better infrastructure and amenities, creating local jobs and connectivity"*.
- 4.2.2 With the local community at the heart of Hatchery's proposal, the project team were committed to ensuring that as many people as possible in the local area were aware of the planning application, prior to its submission to the Council.
- 4.2.3 It was originally intended to invite residents, local business owners and other interested stakeholders, to a drop-in session at Shoreham Village Hall. However, this was not possible due to the restrictions imposed by Government to tackle Covid-19. In response to this, Hatchery produced an online public consultation platform, which provided the local community with an opportunity to provide their feedback and engage with the project. Details of the consultation, and how to provide feedback, were publicised via the Shoreham Gazette, shared via local Social Media pages and posters were put up around the village.
- 4.2.4 As well as the local community, Hatchery has also engaged with and sought feedback from the Local Planning Authority, the Sevenoaks District Council Economic Development team, the Leader of the Council, Locate in Kent, the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership and the Ward and County Members for Otford and Shoreham Parish Council. Furthermore, there have been informal discussions with the Kent Downs AONB management team, whose feedback has been incorporated into the design and the overall landscape approach for the site.

4.3 Consultation Advertisement

- 4.3.1 The consultation website was advertised in the Shoreham Gazette, which outlined a brief overview of the proposal, provided details for the consultation website and invited people to provide feedback. The Shoreham Gazette is delivered to every household in the village and was therefore deemed the most effective way of reaching those who would likely have an interest in the proposal or be impacted by it. An extract of the newspaper article is included below (figure 4.1). In addition, the consultation was advertised with posters around community hubs within the village.

- 4.3.2 In short, the applicant endeavoured to ensure as many people as possible were aware of the consultation and could participate.

A NEW FUTURE FOR PRESTON FARM

In autumn last year, I moved to Preston Farm in the Darent Valley, just north-east of Shoreham. I feel incredibly lucky to now call it home, along with my wife, Jesse, and our three kids, Tabitha, Eliza and Bo.

It's been a busy first 9 months for us here at the farm... We have refurbished Dairy House, and are now tackling the much bigger project of the old Farmhouse. We have welcomed some new family members - Luna the dog and two colonies of honey bees - and we've been investing in our passion for the environment and conservation, working with The Woodland Trust, the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership and Kent Wildlife Trust on a number of projects that we hope will turn Preston Farm into a haven for wildlife.

Over the past few months, I have been working with a small team of consultants to explore the potential to develop our old farmyard into a 'work hub' to support small businesses and provide local people with an alternative to working from home, or commuting into the City. I would like to invite you all to consider this idea and to provide your feedback on our emerging plans.

We had hoped to organise and invite you to a drop-in session at Shoreham Village Hall to discuss our proposal with you in person, but due to lockdown restrictions and not wanting to put anyone at unnecessary risk, doing this 'virtually' felt like the most sensible option. An outline of our proposal and some early-stage thinking on designs can be found at www.prestonfarmshoreham.co.uk, which will be available to access from approximately 24 June until 31 July. We would be very grateful if you would take the time to visit our website, consider our ideas and provide us with comments using the form at the bottom of the webpage.

I hope you are all keeping safe and well, and I look forward to seeing you in and around Shoreham in the near future.

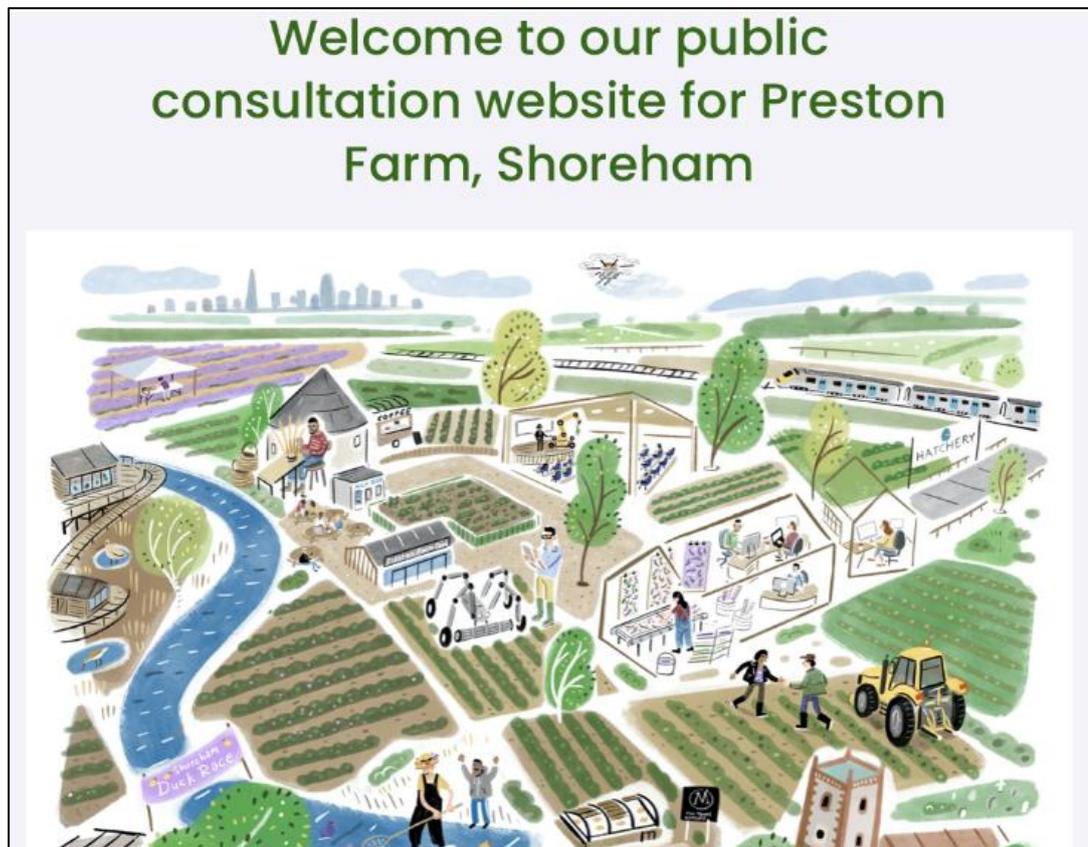
Will Bax

Figure 4.1: Copy of Shoreham Gazette advert

4.4 Public Consultation

- 4.4.1 The public consultation website launched on the 24th June and could be accessed until 10th August 2020 at www.prestonfarmshoreham.co.uk. The website provided an overview of the site, its location and details of the proposed development, noting how the scheme would address the sites location in the Kent Downs AONB and enhance the ecological value of the site.
- 4.4.2 The consultation page included an overview of the vision for the site, underpinned by Hatchery's three core aims:
- 1) To bring businesses together to create a supportive community of like-minded people.
 - 2) To offer local people an alternative to working from home or commuting into the city.
 - 3) To support the local economy and community.
- 4.4.3 There was a feedback form at the bottom of the page, which people were encouraged to complete and return by email.

- 4.4.4 An extract of the consultation front page has been included below and wider extracts of the web pages are included as **Appendix 1**.



Preston Farm Public Consultation Website – Front Page

4.5 Feedback and Responses

- 4.5.1 Notwithstanding the less than ideal circumstances, Hatchery were pleased to see so many people engage with the scheme, with 34 people completing the feedback form provided. The feedback has been analysed to assess the overall support and concerns regarding the proposed development.

Question 1: What age bracket do you fall into?

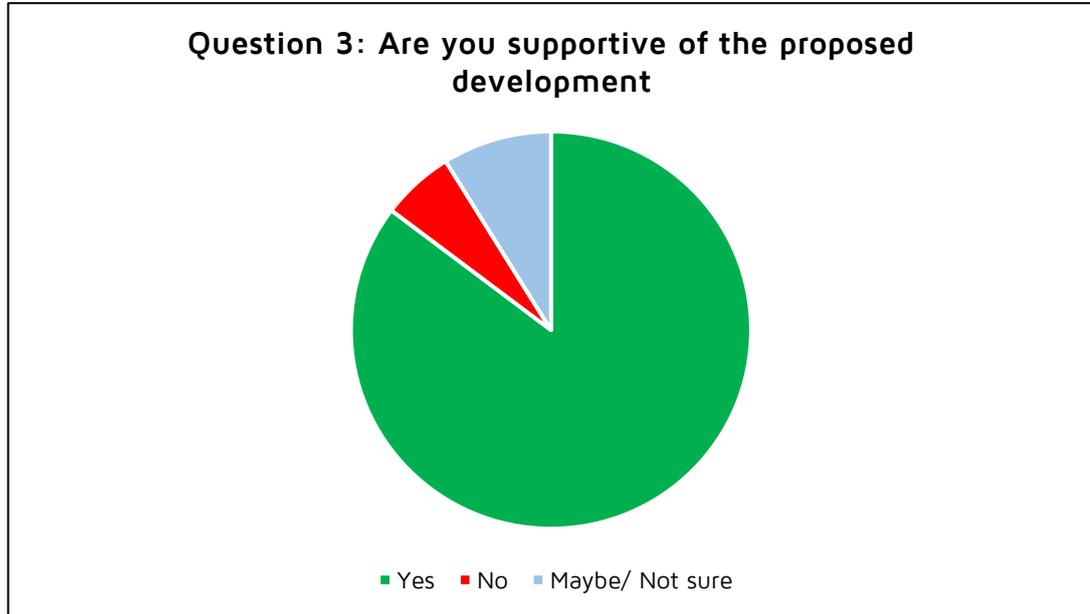
- 4.5.2 Most of the respondents (59%) fell into the 41-60 age bracket. 6 of the respondents (18%) were over 61 years of age and 6 (18%) were between the age of 31 and 40. Two of the respondents (6%) were under the age of 31, with one of them being under 18.

Question 2: Why are you interested in the proposal?

- 4.5.3 Most of the respondents were either residents, a local business owner or employed locally.

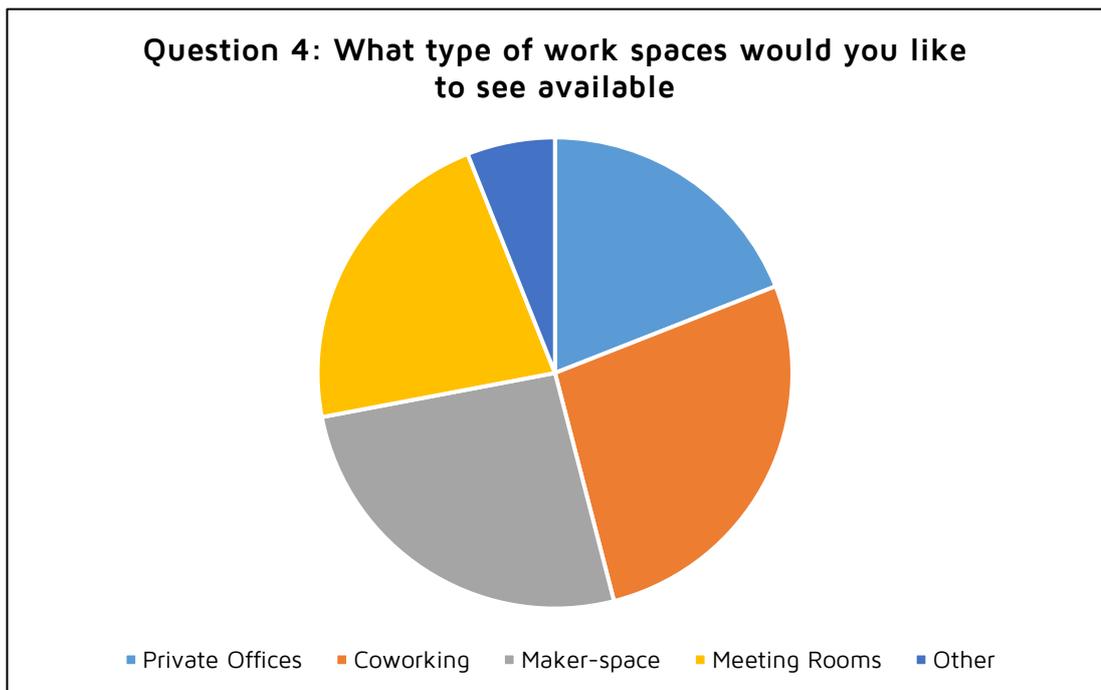
Question 3: Are you supportive of the proposed development?

4.5.4 85% of the respondents are supportive of the proposal to develop Preston Farm. Just 6% expressed objection and 9% were unsure at the time of writing.



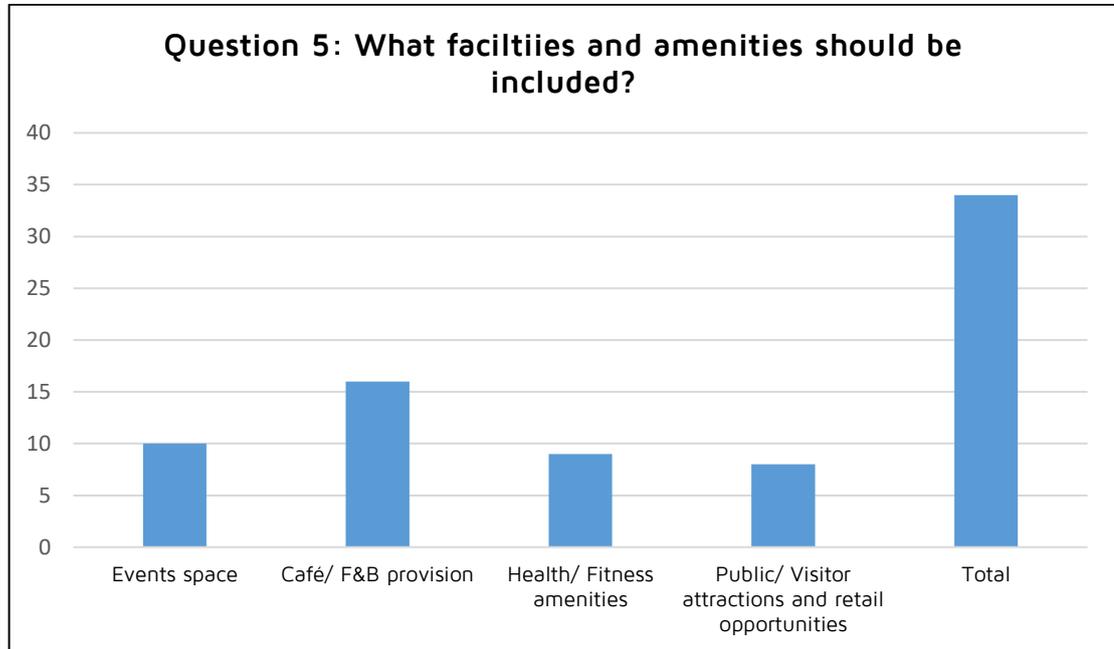
Question 4: What types of spaces would you like to see available?

4.5.5 The respondents were asked to comment on the need for different types of workspaces, including; private offices, coworking, meeting rooms and a makerspace. The responses received suggest there is a strong local demand for a variety of workspaces, with coworking and makerspaces being the most popular.



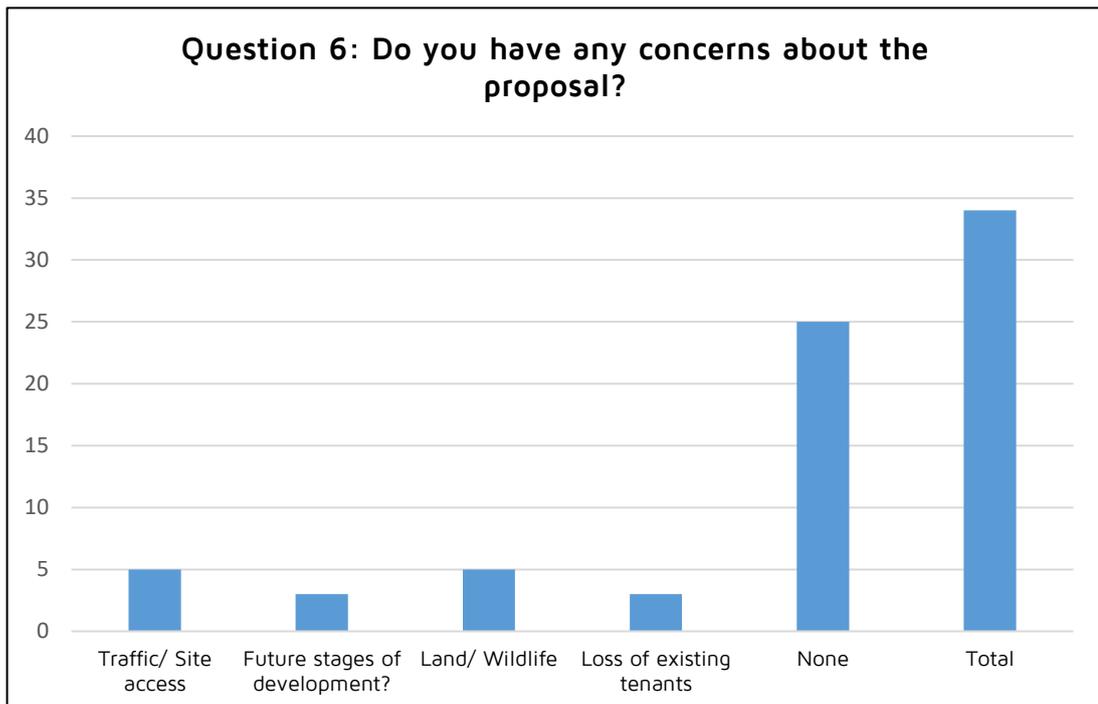
What facilities and amenities should be included?

4.5.6 The most popular on-site amenities requested were a café/F&B provision (47%). Events space, health/fitness and public/visitor attractions (24% - 29%) were also frequently requested.



Question 6: Do you have any concerns about the proposal?

4.5.7 Most respondents (74%) did not raise any concerns in respect of the proposal. However, some common concerns related to traffic/site access (15%) and protecting the surrounding land/wildlife (15%).



Question 6: Do you have any other comments and/or feedback?

4.5.8 Some of the respondents asked for more information to understand aspects of the proposal in more detail, which have been taken into account in the preparation of the proposal submitted here with. Some of the questions raised are listed below.

- What is the commercial need?
- Which buildings will be retained, and which will be demolished?
- What will happen to the existing tenants?
- What is the proposed development timeline?
- What materials will be used on the buildings?
- How will site access work and how will we encourage sustainable transport, including rail travel (during all weathers)?
- What will the total occupancy be?
- How will you bring people together? Will there be social functions or meeting opportunities?
- Could the community be involved in the proposed development (assisting with the build or on an educational level)? And how will we engage with the community longer term?
- Will we incorporate a gym/ yoga/ fitness offer in our plans?
- Further information requested on our environmental projects and how the surrounding land will be used, including our proposed wetlands project, planting and on-site food production

4.6 The Applicant's Response

4.6.1 Overall, the feedback received was positive, with 85% of responses supportive of the proposal and just 6% in objection. Hatchery were delighted to see that so many people engaged with the proposal and shared their excitement for the concept.

4.6.2 The project team has full regard to the feedback received in developing the final scheme, which is reflected in the mix of workspaces proposed. Moreover, we have sought to address specific concerns raised by respondents through the submission of supporting technical information, including a detailed Transport Statement that demonstrates the suitability of the access and assesses the impact of the proposal on the highway network. Likewise, ecology surveys and landscape impact assessment have been commissioned to inform the proposal and the need for mitigation.

5 Planning Policy Framework

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.2 For this planning application, the development plan comprises policies from the Sevenoaks Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (adopted 2015).
- 5.1.3 In addition to the development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") sets out the Government's requirements and policies for planning in England. It must be treated as an important material consideration.
- 5.1.4 Other material considerations include the Sevenoaks Development in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the status of the emerging Sevenoaks Local Plan and the local plan evidence base.
- 5.1.5 This chapter highlights the aspects of the NPPF and development plan that are relevant to this application and the weight that can be given to adopted policies.

5.2 The Development Plan

Sevenoaks Core Strategy (2011)

- 5.2.1 The Core Strategy is a strategic document that underpins the Council's Local Development Framework (Local Plan). The policies that are considered relevant to this proposal are summarised below.
- 5.2.2 **Policy LO1** (*Distribution of Development*) controls the spread of new development and confirms that the priority is to locate new development within the most sustainable settlements, and to protect rural areas by permitting only development that is consistent with policies for the protection of the Green Belt and AONB.
- 5.2.3 **Policy LO8** (*The Countryside and Rural Economy*) states that the extent of the Green Belt will be maintained. In terms of the countryside, the policy notes that this should be conserved, having regard to the special character of the landscape. Particular regard will be given to the condition and sensitivity of the landscape character and securing the recommended landscape actions in the proposed SPD to ensure that all development conserves and enhances local landscape character and that appropriate mitigation is provided where damage to local character cannot be avoided. Notwithstanding these requirements, the policy goes on to say that development which supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy will be supported.
- 5.2.4 **Policy SP1** (*Design of New Development and Conservation*) states that new development should be designed to a high quality and respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. In areas where the local environment lacks positive features, new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment.

- 5.2.5 **Policy SP8** (*Economic Development and Land for Business*) outlines the strategy for economic development in the District, which seeks to retain, intensify and regenerate existing business areas at Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge and Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. In addition, the policy supports the development of the economy through the provision for new office development in Sevenoaks and Swanley Town Centre; promoting hotel and tourism development in urban and rural areas; working with partners to develop initiatives to improve skills in the workforce; and supporting the development of start-up units in suitable locations.

Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015)

- 5.2.6 The ADMP was adopted by the Council in February 2015 and forms part of the Local Plan for Sevenoaks District alongside the Core Strategy. The policies considered relevant are summarised below.
- 5.2.7 **Policy SC1** (*Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development*) states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that the Council will work proactively with applicant to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 5.2.8 **Policy EN1** (*Design Principles*) has regard to core design principles and states:

'Proposals which would create high quality design and meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the form of the proposed development would respond to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the area;
- b) the layout of the proposed development would respect the topography and character of the site and the surrounding area and sensitively incorporate natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site;
- c) the proposal would not result in the loss of buildings, open spaces or green infrastructure that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;
- d) the proposal would ensure satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provide adequate parking and refuse facilities;
- e) the proposal would incorporate, within the design opportunities for increasing biodiversity potential, where possible, and retaining and enhancing Green Infrastructure features including sustainable drainage systems. Proposals that affect a site's existing biodiversity and Green Infrastructure should be designed in a way that avoids or mitigates any potential harm;
- f) the design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, would be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;
- g) new development would be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities; and
- h) the design of new developments would result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

- 5.2.9 **Policy EN2** (*Amenity Protection*) seeks to protect amenity and states that proposals will be permitted where they would provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers of the development and would safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties by ensuring that development does not result in, and is not located in areas where occupiers of the development would be subject to, excessive noise, vibration, odour, air pollution, activity or vehicle movements, overlooking or visual intrusion and where the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, or light enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties.
- 5.2.10 **Policy EN5** (*Landscape*) states that The Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Proposals within the AONB will be permitted where the form, scale, materials and design would conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and have regard to the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance. Proposals that affect the landscape throughout the District will be permitted where they would:
- a) conserve the character of the landscape, including areas of tranquillity; and
 - b) where feasible help secure enhancements in accordance with landscape actions in accordance with the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD’.
- 5.2.11 **Policy EMP5** (Non-Allocated Employment Sites) outlines that in considering proposals for the creation or loss of business uses on unallocated sites, the Council will assess the impact of the proposals on the environment, local economy and the local community. Proposals for mixed use redevelopment on existing unallocated business sites will be permitted providing the proposal includes a significant element of business use and the proposal complies with all other relevant planning policies.
- 5.2.12 **Policy GB7** (Re-use of a Building within the Green Belt) states that proposals for the re-use of a building in the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:
- a) the proposed new use, along with any associated use of land surrounding the building, will not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt or harm the existing character of the area; and
 - b) the applicant can demonstrate through a detailed structural survey and method statement that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete re-construction that would detract from their original character.
- 5.2.13 Where a proposal seeks the re-use of an agricultural building constructed within the last 10 years, it will be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that there is no longer an agricultural need for the building, or that the building is no longer fit for its agricultural purpose.
- 5.2.14 **Policy T1** (Mitigating Travel Impact) states that new developments will be required to mitigate any adverse travel impacts, including their impact on congestion and safety, environmental impact, such as noise and tranquillity, pollution and impact on amenity and health.

- 5.2.15 **Policy T2** (Vehicle Parking) requires vehicle and cycle parking provision in new residential developments to be in accordance with KCC interim Guidance note 3 to the Kent Design Guide.

5.3 Other Material Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

- 5.3.1 The NPPF sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced and must be treated as important material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.3.2 The framework should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes), but the most relevant parts are summarised below.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 5.3.3 **Paragraph 7** states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 5.3.4 **Paragraph 8** states achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).
- 5.3.5 **Paragraph 11** states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means: c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Building a Strong Competitive Economy

- 5.3.6 **Paragraph 80** emphasises that 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. **Paragraph 82** requires planning policies and decisions to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.
- 5.3.7 When it comes to the rural economy, **paragraph 83** states that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of

business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.

- 5.3.8 **Paragraph 84** requires planning policies and decisions to recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs may need to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances, it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 5.3.9 **Paragraph 109** states development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Making Effective Use of Land

- 5.3.10 **Paragraphs 117** states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. This includes encouraging multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains (**Paragraph 118**).
- 5.3.11 **Paragraph 121** identified that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose.

Achieving Well Designed Places

- 5.3.12 **Paragraph 124** states the creation of high-quality buildings and places are fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 5.3.13 **Paragraph 127** states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: a) 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; b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit; e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Protecting Green Belt Land

- 5.3.14 **Paragraph 143** states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate. There are several exceptions to this, but relevant to this proposal is *'Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.'*
- 5.3.15 In addition, **paragraph 146** confirms that certain other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes the re-use of buildings provided they are of permanent and substantial construction.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 5.3.16 **Paragraph 170** sets out how planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- 5.3.17 **Paragraph 172** emphasises that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. It states that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, and planning permission refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that development is in the public interest.
- 5.3.18 With respect to habitats and biodiversity, **paragraph 175** says that when determining applications, local planning authorities should apply the principles that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Equally proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity to seeking net gains should be supported and encouraged.

Development in the Green Belt SPD (adopted 2015)

- 5.3.19 Section 7 of the SPD refers to Previously Developed Brownfield Site Redevelopment. Although it refers to the 2012 NPPF which has now been superseded, the thrust of the section remains relevant.
- 5.3.20 It states that the Council will consider redevelopment proposals of brownfield sites based on whether they would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The Council will consider the impact of proposals on a case by case basis and the unique circumstances of the site but in order to maintain the same impact on the openness of the Green Belt and fulfil its purpose, the Council would generally expect redevelopment proposals to:
- a) have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it, and where possible have less;
 - b) not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and

c) not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings.

- 5.3.21 The SPD clarifies that the most relevant area for the purpose of (c) is the aggregate ground floor area of the existing buildings (the "footprint"), excluding temporary buildings, open spaces with direct external access between wings of a building, and areas of hardstanding. However, the Council will consider alternative approaches to determining impact where there is justification to do so.
- 5.3.22 The SPD also provides further guidance on the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt and stresses that proposals will not be permitted if they require substantial rebuilding. It also emphasises the need to demonstrate there is no longer an agricultural requirement for agricultural buildings constructed in the last 10 years, albeit this is not directly applicable to the proposed development as it now has a lawful commercial use.

Status of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan

- 5.3.23 In May 2019, SDC submitted the Sevenoaks District Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination and Karen Baker was appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the plan for its legal compliance and soundness.
- 5.3.24 Following two weeks of the hearing sessions, the inspector wrote to the Council to confirm that the hearing schedules for weeks 3 and 4 were to be cancelled and then subsequently outlined her concerns in relation to Duty to Cooperate (letter dated 31st October 2019).
- 5.3.25 Following ongoing correspondence between PINS and the Council thereafter, the Planning Inspector issued their final report in relation to the examination of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan and concluded that it is not legally compliant in respect of the Duty to Cooperate. On this basis, it was recommended that the plan should not be adopted.
- 5.3.26 SDC has since been granted permission to bring a judicial review against the Planning Inspector's decision to recommend that the plan should not be adopted. The review was recently quashed by the High Court and therefore the plan carries no weight. Moreover, the future direction of SDC's planning policy remains unclear.
- 5.3.27 Nonetheless, whilst the plan does not hold any weight in decision making, the evidence that was used to underpin its preparation remains material.

Local Plan Evidence Base

- 5.3.28 To inform the Local Plan review process, an Economic Needs Study (ENS) was prepared by Turley in association with Colliers International, on behalf of Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils.
- 5.3.29 The study identified the pressures on employment stock and revealed that Sevenoaks lost 46,220 sqm of established floorspace in the period 2008 to 2015. This includes a significant amount of office stock being lost to 'prior approval' applications, including in locations such as at Tubs Hill House (Sevenoaks) and Horizon House (Swanley). At the time of publication, it was also predicted that Sevenoaks will lose a further 16,724 sqm of B1a employment floorspace.

- 5.3.30 The report provides a strong quantitative and qualitative case for retaining existing employment areas and allocating additional land to accommodate the District's future needs. It is recommended that the Council plans positively and increases the choice of sites through new allocations, ensuring that the needs of different sectors can be met over the plan period.
- 5.3.31 In addition, the study recognises the importance of the rural economy and encourages the Council to support rural based employment by responding positively to proposals that encourage the re-use of developed sites. It also advises the Council to undertake a survey of start-up, small and rural businesses to understand their needs and location requirements. The study could then be used to inform policy decisions regarding the location of new start-up, incubator and grow on space.

6 Green Belt Assessment

6.1 Context

6.1.1 As outlined at Chapter 4, paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

6.1.2 Nonetheless, there are several exceptions including:

“Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would

- *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the proposal would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority” (NPPF, Paragraph 145f).*

6.1.3 On the basis that the site is brownfield, but would not provide affordable housing, the proposal falls to be considered in the context of the first limb of paragraph 145(g). For clarity, redevelopment aspects of the site must not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

6.1.4 In addition, paragraph 146 outlines that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes *“the re-use of buildings that are of permanent and substantial construction”* (NPPF, Paragraph 146c).

6.2 Assessment Methodology

6.2.1 From a local perspective, policy GB7 of the ADMP outlines a criterion that proposals for the re-use of buildings should adhere to. In summary, proposals should not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and it must be demonstrated, through the submission of a detailed structural survey, that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete re-construction.

6.2.2 The application is supported by a detailed structural survey prepared by Elliot Wood, which shows that existing building 4, retained for conversion, is structurally sound and suitable for re-purposing without the need for significant re-building. Furthermore, the proposed development would remain in commercial use, with the form and scale of the buildings remaining unaltered.

6.2.3 It is therefore submitted that the retained, converted building would have no greater impact on openness. For these reasons, the elements of the proposal that include the conversion of existing buildings would be in accordance with local and national policy.

6.2.4 In terms of the wider redevelopment proposals, the adopted development plan is absent of a policy that directs the decision maker how to interpret the provisions of para 145(g).

6.2.5 However, whilst it does not form part of the development plan, the development in the Green Belt SPD outlines the Council's approach to proposals for the redevelopment of PDL and states that, whilst each application will be judged on a case by case basis, in order to maintain the same impact on the openness of the Green Belt, the Council would generally expect redevelopment proposals to:

- a) *have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and where possible have less;*
- b) *not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and*
- c) *not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings.*

6.2.6 We take no issue with the thrust of this approach and consider that a pragmatic starting point would be to compare the footprint, floorspace and volume of the existing and proposed development. Thereafter, the impact on openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it should be assessed, having regard to the characteristics of the site, the nature of the development proposed and wider benefits such as the reduction in sprawl and impermeable hardstanding.

6.3 Assessment of Impact

6.3.1 Based on this context, we set out below an assessment of the existing and proposed footprint, floorspace and volume.

Footprint (sqm)	
Cumulative Existing Footprint	2,252
Proposed Footprint	1,886
Percentage Change	-16.25%
Floorspace (sqm)	
Cumulative Existing Floorspace	2,064
Proposed Floorspace (GIA)	2,635
Percentage Change	27.66%
Volume (m3)	
Cumulative Existing Building Volume	10,124.5
Total Proposed Volume	10,079.1
Percentage Change	-0.45%

Table 5.1: Footprint, floorspace and volume comparisons

Openness

6.3.2 The figures reveal that the proposed development would result in a marginal reduction in built volume (0.45%) and a significant reduction in site coverage in comparison to the existing development (16.5%).

6.3.3 There would be an increase in floorspace (27%); however, this merely accounts for the creation of floorspace above ground level and would not result in a greater impact on the Green Belt than the existing buildings. To the contrary, because of the reduction in volume and footprint, we consider there would be an overall improvement to openness. Furthermore, the concentration of the buildings in a

more traditional loose knit courtyard format means that development is more compact than the ad-hoc nature of the existing building layout. Furthermore, it better responds to this core characteristic of the AONB.

- 6.3.4 In addition, it should be noted that the existing buildings could be proportionately extended in line with the provisions of Policy GB8 of the ADMP. This further emphasises that the proposal is appropriate.
- 6.3.5 Notwithstanding this, we also recognise the need to assess visual impacts of development on Green Belt openness. In this respect the proposal has sought to contain the proposed buildings to the existing developed area and limit encroachment into undeveloped parts of the site. The proposed buildings would retain a two-storey building height across the site and have been orientated to improve the feeling of spaciousness throughout the site, in comparison to the current cluttered arrangement.
- 6.3.6 It is therefore submitted that the proposal would have no greater impact on Green Belt openness and would provide a betterment in visual terms.

Strategic Green Belt Function

- 6.3.7 As set out at paragraph 134 of the NPPF, Green Belt serves five purposes and therefore we address the submission site in the context of each of these objectives below.

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 6.3.8 Urban sprawl can be defined as the advancement of sporadic and unplanned development beyond the clear physical boundary of a developed settlement.
- 6.3.9 Whilst this is a legitimate planning matter, the site is previously developed land in the countryside and the proposal restricted to developed areas of Preston Farm. Therefore, it would not contribute to the sprawl of an existing built up area. To the contrary, the proposal seeks to better utilise a developed site, which would result in an overall reduction in footprint and volume.

To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 6.3.10 The site is PDL and a significant distance from any town or village, with the closest being Shoreham to the south. Moreover, the proposal is confined to the developed areas of Preston Farm and results in an overall reduction in built volume and the ground coverage of existing development.
- 6.3.11 The above considered, the proposed redevelopment would not contribute toward the merging of towns or villages.

To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 6.3.12 Encroachment can be defined as the presence of development within the Green Belt not connected or adjacent to a built-up area.
- 6.3.13 The developed parts of the site are broadly in keeping with the existing cluster of built development and therefore any impact on the countryside would be

negligible. Indeed, it would certainly not represent further encroachment into the countryside that conflicts with the Green Belts strategic function.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 6.3.14 The site does not lie within a Conservation Area nor within proximity to listed buildings. Accordingly, development on this site would not affect this objective.

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict land

- 6.3.15 The site comprises is brownfield and therefore its development should help protect more sensitive greenfield Green Belt sites.
- 6.3.16 In summary, we consider the site to play an extremely limited role in fulfilling Green Belt objectives.

6.4 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.4.1 Considering the information presented within this section of the report, we are of the view that the proposal would re-use an existing building that is structurally sound and capable of conversion in accordance with policy GB7 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- 6.4.2 In respect of wider elements of the scheme, for which the plan is absent of a policy, the proposal fully complies with the objective of not having a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it represents appropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF.

7 Planning Considerations

7.1 Principle of Development

- 7.1.1 The proposal seeks permission for the provision of high quality, flexible commercial space to be used by local businesses, commuters and would-be home workers. The development would be facilitated through the conversion of an existing building that it is structurally sound and capable of conversion and redevelopment of the wider redundant commercial buildings. The result would be a net reduction in built footprint and volume, a betterment to Green Belt openness and an enhancement to the AONB through the restoration of a more traditional loose knit courtyard farmstead arrangement.
- 7.1.2 The core use would be offices in a range of forms; however, there would also be makerspace aimed at craft food producers and other low intensity makers and a supporting site hub to ensure the wider needs of users are met, including high quality environment and gym facilities. The intention being to improve wellbeing of workers using the site.
- 7.1.3 The NPPF supports the expansion and growth of rural enterprise, including through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Moreover, the Core Strategy encourages development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, including the provision of start-up units and facilities to allow for more flexible working practices. This is on the proviso that development is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt and the High Weald and Kent Downs AONB. Policy LO8 states that the extent of the Green Belt will be maintained, and the landscape character of the countryside protected.
- 7.1.4 To this end, the conversion of existing buildings is an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt and it has been demonstrated that the subject buildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for major reconstruction, in accordance with policy GB7. Moreover, the proposal would continue to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 7.1.5 As outlined in chapter 6, the development plan is silent in respect of how to consider proposals for redevelopment of a brownfield sites within the Green Belt. Accordingly, the NPPF must be applied using the combination of a subjective judgement to determine whether there would be a materially greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt in line with paragraph 145(g) of the NPPF 2019.
- 7.1.6 It is submitted that the proposal represents an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt consistent with NPPF objectives and therefore policy CP1, CP8 and LO8 of the Core Strategy.

7.2 Loss of Existing Use

- 7.2.1 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans. Moreover, paragraph 118 says that planning policies and decisions should encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land to meet identified needs.

- 7.2.2 The applicant acknowledges that the proposal would result in the loss of a commercial livery and tree surgeon business. Nonetheless, the site is not allocated for retained use and the proposal would lead to a substantial net increase in jobs generated. This would be to the benefit to the rural economy and particularly small-scale enterprise. As such, there would be no conflict with Policy EMP5 of the AMDP.

7.3 Design and Amenity

- 7.3.1 Preston Farm was originally a 'loose courtyard' farmstead, which was filled and densified post WW2 to meet the needs of modern dairy farming. The intention is to restore this traditional 'loose courtyard' farm layout to repurpose the distinctive local character to create a flexible, indoor-outdoor space to inspire, foster and support a new generation of rural industries and communities. Full detail is included within the supporting Design and Access Statement.
- 7.3.2 The access to the site is established in commercial use and as such the scheme would have no significant increased adverse impact on the residents of Preston Farm Cottages.
- 7.3.3 Both Preston Farmhouse and the Dairy House fall within the same ownership as the applicant.

7.4 Landscape Impact

- 7.4.1 The site is in the Kent Downs AONB where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. Paragraph 172 of the NPPF is clear that the scale and extent of new development within these designated areas should be limited and planning permission refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.
- 7.4.2 The NPPF is clear that determining whether a proposal constitutes 'major' development, for the purposes of applications in the AONB, is a planning judgement decided by the decision maker. This judgement should take into account the nature, scale and setting of the development proposed and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated and defined.
- 7.4.3 As outlined previously, the site is PDL and the proposal seeks to prudent reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings, leading to an overall reduction in volume and footprint. Moreover, the proposal would incorporate significant soft landscaping and improve the visual appearance of the site by using sensitive, high quality and durable materials that are appropriate in an AONB setting.
- 7.4.4 Having regard to the sites characteristics and given that the proposal would reduce built volume and footprint, we say that the proposal could not reasonably be considered major development. To the contrary, the proposal will lead to an enhancement to the landscape setting and therefore would not have an adverse impact on the overall purpose of the AONB or the reasons it is designated and defined.

- 7.4.5 Notwithstanding this, if the Council are minded to form the view that the proposal is major development for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 172, it is considered that there exceptional circumstances to justify the proposal and that development would be in the public interest.
- 7.4.6 Taking each of the relevant criteria in turn, we have already noted that the Core Strategy encourages development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, including the provision of start-up units for smaller businesses in suitable locations, to facilitate more flexible working practices.
- 7.4.7 Moreover, the Economic Needs Study that was commissioned to inform the Councils new Local Plan, revealed that Sevenoaks lost 46,220 sqm of established floorspace in the period 2008 to 2015. The report provides a strong quantitative and qualitative case for retaining existing employment areas and allocating additional land to accommodate the District's future needs. In addition, the study recognises the importance of the rural economy and encourages the Council to support rural based employment by responding positively to proposals that encourage the re-use of developed sites. It also advises the Council to undertake a survey of start-up, small and rural businesses to understand their needs and location requirements. The study could then be used to inform policy decisions regarding the location of new start-up, incubator and grow on space.
- 7.4.8 The above considered, there is a clear and pressing need for employment floorspace in the borough and the ENS has identified shortcomings in the Council's approach to the rural economy, by encouraging them to better understand the needs of rural businesses to inform policy decisions that will encourage enterprise.
- 7.4.9 Whilst the Council has not yet implemented the recommendations of the ENS, the proposal is informed by extensive market research and is uniquely placed to help meet a growing demand for high quality, flexible working space in the rural area, for which there has been inadequate supply in recent years. Moreover, it aligns firmly with several 'mega trends' in the labour market, including changes in working patterns, increasing numbers of freelancers and attitudes towards workplace wellbeing and the environment. Many of these trends have accelerated rapidly because of the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore are not properly reflected in the Core Strategy or the more recent ENS. It is hoped that Preston farm will help people and local businesses to bounce back from the economic downturn and support healthy lifestyles and sustainable working patterns long into the future.
- 7.4.10 For the reasons outlined above, we submit that there is an undeniable and pressing need for the development, which will result in significant benefits to the local economy, including investment, opportunities for job creation and community cohesion. The cost of not permitting the development would be significant, particularly in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan with a strategy for meeting development needs in full.
- 7.4.11 In respect of criteria b, it is well documented that Sevenoaks district is heavily constrained by the Green Belt and AONB. The lack of suitable sites is reflected in the Councils SHELAA and only three new sites were allocated in the Sevenoaks draft Local Plan.

- 7.4.12 The need to support the rural economy and facilitate enterprise remains a pressing requirement that should be addressed via the development management system. It is therefore vital that suitable brownfield sites should come forward to deliver the additional employment floorspace that the borough needs. Prioritising the redevelopment of brownfield sites will avoid the deterioration of more valuable, sensitive landscapes across the district that are not capable of accommodating the growth required.
- 7.4.13 Turning now to the impact of the development on the AONB and the need for mitigation, policy EN5 of the ADMP is broadly consistent with national policy and states that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Proposals within the AONB will be permitted where the form, scale, materials and design would conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and have regard to the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance.
- 7.4.14 An LVA has been prepared to ensure a full assessment of the anticipated effects of the proposed development on the landscape of the Darent Valley and the Kent Downs and the nature of any change to key views and openness. The LVA concludes that there will be no change to the perception and scale of built development when viewed from the surrounding area.
- 7.4.15 In respect of the degree to which development can be moderated, the proposed built and landscape layout will create a more open character, with the removal of built form from the central areas of the farmyard and the creation of a layout which is reminiscent of the former, historic loose courtyard layout. As well as breaking up the scale of built development in views to the site, this will allow views from the central areas to the countryside beyond, enhancing the perception of openness within the site. The massing of built form will be reduced in near views, in particular from the south on Footpath PR19. The proposals will also enable the removal of detracting elements such as the livery parking and maneges, to be replaced with meadows and planting which wrap around Hatchery.
- 7.4.16 The existing farmyard is a typical feature of rural farms, but does comprise large areas of concrete hardstanding, mostly functional agricultural buildings, areas of parking and the manege. The proposals will introduce contemporary buildings sympathetic in terms of scale, siting and materials to this sensitive rural location. There will be an increase in reflective materials, principally glass, but planting will break up the impact of this, in particular from the Cross and the views from Footpath SR19. The other more intrusive visual elements, principally car parking, will be located in the northern parts of the site where this can be most effectively screened.
- 7.4.17 The proposals will not result in any major change to the scale and extent of built form on the site. The landscape setting within and around Hatchery will be enhanced to create a landform, planting and land uses which reflect the heritage, ecology and landscape character of the valley and provide opportunities for site users to benefits from this beautiful location, whilst not detracting from the special qualities of the Darent Valley and the Kent Downs AONB
- 7.4.18 For the reasons outlined above, the proposal would be in accordance with policy EN5 of the ADMP and Paragraph 172 of the NPPF.

7.5 Ecology

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- 7.5.1 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (“PEA”), prepared by Greenspace. The report assesses the sites potential to support protected species and habitats and outlines recommendations on the need for mitigation and/or further survey work.
- 7.5.2 The report concludes that the proposals are not anticipated to result in detrimental impacts on designated areas or ancient woodland. Likewise, the proposal will not result in detrimental impacts to habitats of principle importance listed under S.41 of the NERC Act.
- 7.5.3 In terms of protected species, the appraisal assessed the buildings potential for bat roosting suitability. One building was identified as a confirmed roost, three were of moderate suitability, and two were of low suitability. On this basis, it was concluded that further surveys would be required to inform the application for an appropriate licence from Natural England. These surveys have been completed are summarised below.
- 7.5.4 In addition, suitable habitat for breeding birds exists across the site in the form of buildings and therefore it is recommended that works to these areas are conducted outside the core breeding period for birds. If this is not possible, the habitats should be searched by an ecologist prior to any works taking place.
- 7.5.5 The PEA also outlined recommendations to enhance biodiversity within the site, which includes the installation of bat boxes, bird boxes, barn swallow terraces and the incorporation of a wildlife friendly planting scheme. Any tree planting should be undertaken using native species that complement the nearby SSSI.

Bat Emergence Surveys

- 7.5.6 In accordance with the recommendations outlined within the PEA, bat emergence surveys were undertaken for the affected buildings. The report concludes that bats were recorded in several of the buildings proposed for demolition, which would result in destruction of common pipistrelle bat roosts. Accordingly, an appropriate licence would need to be obtained from Natural England prior to that start of any work to areas deemed sensitive to roosting bats.
- 7.5.7 The content of the licence will outline detailed recommendations regarding timings, methods of best practice and mitigation measures to ensure the favourable conservation status (FCS) of bats is maintained within the site post development. Nonetheless, an outline of the proposed mitigation strategy is provided within the report.
- 7.5.8 It is therefore submitted that, provided the mitigation strategy set out within the license is implemented in full, then the FSC of bats will be maintained and the proposed development will remain compliant with current legislation and planning policies which serve to protect bats.

7.6 Tree Impact

- 7.6.1 The application is supported by a tree survey, implications assessment and method statement prepared by Greenspace. The purpose of the report is to present the results of the tree survey; assess the impact of development on trees within and adjacent to the site; and outline measures to mitigate development impact during construction. A tree protection plan has also been produced and accompanies the report.
- 7.6.2 The tree survey shows that that trees within the survey area vary considerably in terms of their condition and the amenity value they provide to the wider landscape. They can be divided into two distinct character groups:
- 1) Larger, mature trees found adjacent to the site – generally in good condition and contribute to the amenity of the local area
 - 2) Small, younger trees found growing across the site – generally in good condition but have limited amenity value due to their size.
- 7.6.3 The impact assessment identifies that two groups of small trees will be removed to enable the construction of a car park, but there would be no demolition or construction within the RPA of retained trees.
- 7.6.4 The method statement outlines how retained trees and hedges can be protected throughout development. It notes that the movement of demolition and construction machinery near trees may cause compaction of the soil, which affects the trees ability to absorb moisture and nutrients. Therefore, the RPA of retained trees will be protected by a barrier, as shown on the accompanying Tree Protection Plan. Additional mitigation measures are outlined within the report.
- 7.6.5 In summary, whilst two groups of trees will be removed to facilitate the development, they are young and easily replaced. Moreover, through the implementation of specified tree protection measures, it will be possible to minimise the impact of the proposed development on trees and offer a substantial enhancement through the proposed new landscaping scheme. Accordingly, there are no overriding arboricultural reasons which would prevent the proposed development going ahead, subject to the protection measures and construction methodologies specified in the report being correctly implemented.

7.7 Transport Considerations

- 7.7.1 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 7.7.2 A Transport statement has been prepared in support of the application. In summary, access to the site will continue to be achieved via an existing junction with the A225 Shoreham Road, with improvements to the junction proposed as part of the planning application.

- 7.7.3 The development will provide a total of 86 vehicle parking spaces, which includes five disabled parking spaces and four spaces with electric vehicle charging points. 18 cycle parking spaces will be provided.
- 7.7.4 The site is accessible by sustainable means, despite its rural nature. This includes a number of public rights of way providing walking routes towards bus stops and a railway station in Shoreham village.
- 7.7.5 A road safety analysis has been completed which identified only five incidents in the last five year study period, three of which were deemed to be 'slight' in severity and two were deemed to be 'serious' in severity. As such, it is not considered that the proposed development will exacerbate the existing highway safety record.
- 7.7.6 Swept path analysis has been completed for the site access layout. This shows that a 16.5 metre articulated goods vehicle and a 12.0 metre rigid goods vehicle can be safely accommodated at the access and on the internal access road. Further swept path analysis for the car park shows that the relevant range of vehicles can be accommodated.
- 7.7.7 The proposals would result in a net increase of five vehicle trips during the AM peak hour and 16 trips during the PM peak hour. Across the day, the net increase is 23 trips. It is therefore considered that the proposals will not result in a 'severe' impact on the local highway network as per the NPPF.
- 7.7.8 In conclusion, the proposals should not result in any detrimental impacts in transport terms and therefore there should be no sound transport based objections to the proposals.

7.8 Flood Risk & Drainage

- 7.8.1 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.8.2 A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by DHA to support the application. In summary, the site-specific flood risk assessment determined that whilst part of the site is located within Flood Zone 3, the area to be developed is located entirely within Flood Zone 1; low probability risk of flooding from rivers or other sources of flooding.
- 7.8.3 Planning Practice Guidance Table 2, "Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification", states that buildings used for commercial uses are classified as "less vulnerable".
- 7.8.4 Planning Practice Guidance Table 3, "Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone Compatibility", confirms that "less vulnerable" development situated in Flood Zone 1 is acceptable and an exception test is not required.
- 7.8.5 The surface water from the area to be developed will drain into a gravity system discharging to an underground cellular storage tank. Flows from the tank will

discharge into the River Darent at a rate of 5 l/s via a Hydrobrake flow control. This is a significant reduction from the existing site runoff.

- 7.8.6 The proposed foul drainage from the site will drain via the existing 150mm diameter connection into the 900mm foul water sewer that runs through the site.
- 7.8.7 The site-specific flood risk assessment also determines that the development site is at low risk of flooding from other sources.

7.9 Archaeology

- 7.9.1 The application is supported by an archaeological desk-based assessment, which seeks to provide an assessment of the contextual archaeological record in order to determine the potential survival of archaeological deposits that may be impacted upon during any proposed construction works.
- 7.9.2 The assessment has generally shown that the area to be developed is within an area of high potential for all periods except for low for the Modern period. The research suggests that the site carries significant national and regional potential, and its early origins should be investigated, as well as the opportunity for Prehistoric evidence.
- 7.9.3 Most of the building that will be demolished date to the 20th century, with just the barn and oast earlier and of the late Victorian period. The barn is of poor condition and is not of any significance. The oast has already been converted and has lost its cowl. Again, this is not a building of any significance.
- 7.9.4 The current modern buildings are likely to have disturbed any potential archaeology, albeit the level of disturbance is unclear. The development proposals for foundations and associated services will have a high impact on any potential archaeological remains. The need for, scale, scope and nature of any further assessment and/or archaeological works should be agreed through consultation with the statutory authorities but it is anticipated that that an evaluation will be required to ascertain the nature of any archaeological deposits.

7.10 Geo-Environmental Desk Study

- 7.10.1 The application is supported by a Geo-Environmental Desk Study prepared by Sevenoaks Environmental Consultancy Ltd. The report is informed by a walkover survey and publicly available documents, which are used to establish past use, possible indications of contamination or ground instability and potential pollutant linkages.
- 7.10.2 A qualitative risk assessment has been conducted to support a planning condition associated with the redevelopment of the site. The assessment looks at the potential source-pathway receptor linkages of concern and provide recommended actions to either clarify the level of risk of mitigate the risk.
- 7.10.3 The following key recommendations are made in relation to the proposed development of the site:
- That a Preliminary Intrusive Geo-Environmental Site Investigation be conducted to clarify potential risks associated with the sources of

contamination identified including; Made, previous / existing site use for agricultural purposes, vehicle parking, arboriculturist yard, vehicle repairs, ground gas associated with infilled features and former mash land on site, existing and former fuel tanks and stockpiled manure. The site investigation includes analysis of samples (soils, groundwater if encountered and surface water) for the contaminants of concern and should include a ground gas risk assessment in accordance with current CIRIA C665 guidance and;

- That any existing waste chemicals, paints, fuels / oils and general rubbish be appropriately removed and disposed of from site to suitably licensed facilities (all disposal tickets to be retained) prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site.

7.10.4 It is considered that this additional work can be secured by condition and undertaken prior to the commencement of development, to identify necessary remediation to contamination risks.

7.11 Energy Statement

7.11.1 The application is supported by an Energy Statement prepared by P³R Engineers Ltd, which assesses the scheme against the provisions of core policy SP2. It does this by applying the methodology set out in the adopted London Plan energy hierarchy, which outlines how any major development proposal should make the fullest contribution to minimising carbon dioxide emissions in accordance with the following three stage analysis

- 1) Be lean: use less energy
- 2) Be clean: supply energy efficiently
- 3) Be green: use renewable energy

7.11.2 The submitted report details the baseline energy requirements for the proposed development, the reduction in energy demand because of energy efficiency measures and the potential to achieve further CO² reduction using low carbon electricity as the primate energy source. It notes the following conclusions:

- The reduction of passive energy measures, results in a reduction of carbon emissions of 1.6% on the calculated baseline energy requirements.
- There is a requirement to provide 10% of the onsite energy by low carbon or renewable technologies. The most appropriate and financially feasible technology has been assessed using the utilisation of grid electricity which is increasingly being decarbonised.
- The total reduction in emissions compared with the baseline target is 62.9%.
- The development will undergo a BREEAM assessment to demonstrate that the proposals are able to achieve a Very Good Rating.

7.11.3 The above considered, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development complies with Core Strategy Policy SP2.

7.12 Achieving Sustainable Development

7.12.1 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). These objectives are economic, social and environmental.

7.12.2 An economic role includes contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that enough land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.

7.12.3 In this respect, the application proposal will create a high quality workspace attracting a substantial uplift in job creation and offering a range of differing types of commercial workspace.

7.12.4 Socially, Hatchery seeks to deliver a scheme that promotes a more wholesome approach to balancing work and life pressures and therefore seeks to deliver all of the ancillary support uses needed to ensure wellbeing. This includes high quality open space, supporting café facilities and gym provision on site.

7.12.5 Consideration has been given to the environmental value of this site in terms of its landscape quality, agricultural potential, ecology, residential amenity, land contamination, air quality, noise impact, flood risk and locational sustainability.

7.12.6 The site is not of high ecological or agricultural potential and as such there is substantial opportunity for enhancement. The areas to be developed are not subject to flooding and none are left exposed to the excess impacts of noise. In terms of impact on AONB, the proposal would result in a net reduction in built form and the proposal has been designed to respond positively to the rural characteristics of the immediate surrounding areas, while retaining important landscape features.

7.12.7 When all matters are combined, we say there is betterment in respect of all aspects of sustainable development.

8 The Planning Balance

8.1 Decision Making Framework

- 8.1.1 As set out within preceding chapters, there is evidently an inconsistency between the development plan and the NPPF insofar as the development plan makes no provision for full development needs to be met nor how to approach the complete redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Green Belt. Furthermore, it cannot be disputed that Sevenoaks District Council is unable to meet its full employment nor housing needs in the absence of an up to date Local Plan.
- 8.1.2 The application should therefore be decided on a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which means granting permission unless the application of policies provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 8.1.3 To this end, paragraph 145(g) explicitly supports the redevelopment of brownfield land and this statement has shown that redevelopment of Preston Farm would have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development, with an overall reduction in volume and footprint. Therefore, it cannot be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In addition, the proposal includes the re-use of building which are shown to be structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for major or complete reconstruction, in according with policy GB7 of the AMDP.
- 8.1.4 Moreover, whilst the site is in the AONB and the proposal would result in a change to the landscape character, there would not be any adverse impacts. To the contrary, there would be enhancement to the landscape by using high quality, durable materials and a reduction in built form.
- 8.1.5 Accordingly, there is no policy that provides a clear reason for refusal.
- 8.1.6 Given this context, the 'tilted balance' applies. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The key aspect of the presumption is granting planning permission unless the adverse consequences of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Consequently, it would now be wrong for the Council to undertake a simple balancing between positive and negative factors related to this proposal. Until a plan is up to date it is only proposals that have adverse effects markedly ("significantly") outweighing the benefits overall and would constitute development that was unsustainable and should not be granted.
- 8.1.7 The presumption does not indicate that permission should be granted unless the balance was only a little against the grant of permission. Paragraph 11 is part of a pro-development policy, which has the effect of radically tilting the balance in favour the benefits.

8.2 Assessment

Benefits

- 8.2.1 The proposal contributes to several core objectives of the development plan, including the provision of high quality and flexible working spaces to meet the growing demands of small-scale rural enterprise. Moreover, the proposal would make prudent use of a brownfield site to reduce pressure on the need for greenfield and Green Belt release to meet identified needs.
- 8.2.2 Whilst the emerging local plan was recently found unsound, the evidence highlighted that there is insufficient scope within the settlement confines to meet the development needs of the district. Therefore, the ability to contribute to the district's employment needs with the re-use of a suitable brownfield site should be given significant weight.

Harm

- 8.2.3 We accept that the site lies beyond the established limits to built development and within the Green Belt and Kent Downs AONB. Moreover, we acknowledge that the proposed redevelopment would result in the loss of a commercial livery and tree surgeon business.
- 8.2.4 Nonetheless, the site would be re-purposed for commercial use that would generate a substantial uplift in local job opportunities, focussed on start-up companies and small-scale rural enterprise, where demand has started to significantly exceed supply in recent years. The existing demand is largely due to the loss in commercial floorspace owing to changes to permitted development rights. However, the need for high quality rural workspace is also likely to be of even greater significance given the current Covid-19 crisis and what are likely to be significant changes to everyday work patterns. Indeed, the ability to secure a desk space away from home, but without commuting to the city, is likely to be of increasing attractiveness.
- 8.2.5 In addition, this statement has demonstrated that the development would be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt with negligible adverse impacts on the landscape.
- 8.2.6 Turning to wider matters, the proposal would not cause any highway safety issues or result in sever impacts. In addition, the necessary ecological mitigation will be secured prior to development commencing.

Conclusion

- 8.2.7 Having regard to all the matters outlined above, it is our view that the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh any harm, which is negligible.
- 8.2.8 This being the case, the proposal complies with the development plan as per the requirements of S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that there are material considerations that justify a departure from those out of date policies.

- 8.2.9 In light of the above context, and in the absence of any clear reason for refusal, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged and planning permission should be approved unless the adverse consequences of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 8.2.10 Consideration of the scheme has shown the unequivocal need for the development, whilst the ongoing development plan review has shown the limited scope for developing elsewhere outside the designated area.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Summary

- 9.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Hatchery in support of a detailed planning application relating to Preston Farm in Shoreham. Full planning permission is sought for a combination of conversion and replacement of existing buildings to create a new rural business work hub. The intention is to deliver a combination of flexible private offices, coworking space and 'makerspace' for the manufacture of local produce. The wider scheme includes a site hub, including café and fitness centre to cater for the wellbeing of users. All proposed uses fall within the new Class E Use Class.
- 9.1.2 National and local policy support the sustainable growth of the rural economy where proposals would be compatible with policies for protecting the Green Bel, AONB's and protect the rural value and character of the landscape. Moreover, the ENS that was prepared to support the new Local Plan identified a need to significantly boost the supply of employment land to meet rising demand and offset the loss of commercial floorspace to residential under permitted development.
- 9.1.3 Preston Farm is a former dairy, which diversified to business use in the 1990's and comprises offices and a commercial livery. There is a significant degree of built form on site and the site is brownfield land owing to the cessation of the former agricultural operations and the ongoing commercial use of the land since the early 2000's
- 9.1.4 The proposal would result in the loss of existing commercial uses but generate a significant uplift in local job opportunities aimed at small enterprise. The need for high quality rural workspace is in high demand and this will only increase given the current Covid-19 crisis and what are likely to be significant changes to everyday work patterns.
- 9.1.5 Both national and local policy support the sustainable growth of the rural economy and encourage development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, whilst providing start up units in suitable locations.
- 9.1.6 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt where national policy permits; a) the re-use of buildings that are of permanent and substantial construction; and b) the redevelopment of previously developed land provided it would have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The development proposal achieves this.
- 9.1.7 The proposals will not result in any major change to the scale and extent of built form on the site. The landscape setting within and around Hatchery will be enhanced to create a landform, planting and land uses which reflect the heritage, ecology and landscape character of the valley and provide opportunities for site users to benefits from this beautiful location, whilst not detracting from the special qualities of the Darent Valley and the Kent Downs AONB.
- 9.1.8 Additionally, the application has the benefit of the tilted balance in favour of granting permission because of out of date policies. To this end, the clear and tangible benefits of the proposal would outweigh any very limited landscape harm

Hatchery
Preston Farm, Shoreham Road, Shoreham

that might be identified by the Council. For these reasons, we respectfully request that planning permission be granted.

APPENDIX

1



Welcome to our public consultation website for Preston Farm, Shoreham



Preston Farm work hub proposal



Preston Farm is an old dairy farm, occupying a prominent position at the southern end of the Darent Valley, approximately 1 mile northeast of Shoreham village.

The farm is located on the eastern bank of the River Darent and incorporates approximately 45 acres of wet meadow and pasture extending to the lower slopes of the chalk downland.

Our proposal focuses on the area of Preston Farm within the 'redline', as shown in the images below. This area incorporates the old farm buildings, horse manèges and areas of hardstanding.



Sketch showing 'redline' for planning pre-application meeting with Sevenoaks District Council

Our proposal is to:

1. Refurbish the old farm buildings where possible and cost-effective, replacing the more dilapidated units with new, energy-efficient buildings, designed in keeping with the local vernacular and using local materials.
2. Recreate the traditional loose-courtyard layout and, in doing so, reinstate the 'heart' of the farmyard.
3. Replace significant areas of hardstanding with a traditional patchwork of natural landscape and productive gardens.

The diagrams below show a simplified plan of the existing site and an illustration of the proposed concept.



Preston Farm site plan (existing)



Preston Farm site plan (concept)

Landscape concept

Our approach to landscaping combines the traditional and contemporary. The landscape setting is provided by native woodland copses, riverside woodland, boundary hedging and hedgerow and parkland trees. These features flow into the farmyard and merge with wildflower meadows, orchards, coppice, food growing and shelter planting of native shrubs and hedges.

The courtyard gardens lie at the heart of the scheme. Emerging from the surfaced surrounds these gardens will reflect succession planting; nature reclaiming the former farmyard. Water management includes swales, attenuation basins and rain gardens.





We want to bring businesses together to create a supportive community of like-minded people.

By providing high-quality workspaces set in the idyllic Darent Valley, with spaces available to let on flexible, easy-in/easy-out terms.

We want to bring businesses together to create a supportive community of like-minded people.



We want to offer local people an alternative to working from home, or commuting into the City.

By providing 'coworking' space and small private meeting rooms that can be booked on-demand, allowing people to work more flexibly, waste less time commuting and spend more time with their families.



We want to support the local economy and community.

By providing better places to work close to home, creating jobs and offering amenities for use by local people and community groups.

Photo credit: Wildeye Adventures

Please complete the form below and click 'Submit' to send us your feedback.

Name *

First Name

Last Name

Email *

Property address (optional)

Age *

Why is this project of interest to you? *

Please select all that apply

- I live locally
- I work locally
- I run a local business
- Other

Would you support our proposal to develop the old farm buildings at Preston Farm into a 'work hub'?

Please select one of the options and, if you'd like to, provide us with an explanation using the 'Any