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PLANNING APPLICATION

BY

MR & MRS K LOVE

RELATING TO

CLOSEHEATH FARM
RANGLES LANE
KNOCKHOLT, KENT
TN14 7NJ

PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

OUR REF: PH/20/80

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. We have been instructed by Mr & Mrs K Love to prepare and submit an application for full planning permission for redevelopment of existing equestrian, commercial/storage buildings at Closeheath Farm, Randles lane, Knockholt, TN14 7NJ to enable two detached dwellings to be introduced as part two storey part chalet style design along with the existing office building to be removed and replaced with a new office building.
- 1.2. The application has been prepared having regard to the sites location within the confines of the Green Belt. It follows the receipt of detailed pre-application advice from Sevenoaks District Council dated the 4 June 2020, which concerned proposals for the demolition of the existing equestrian buildings and commercial storage buildings proposal, the replacement of the existing single storey office building along with the erection of 6 dwellings (comprising two detached houses of two storey design with linked garages and two pairs of semi-detached dwellings).
- 1.3. This statement therefore considers the pre-application advice that was provided under Council reference PA/20/00125 which forms **APPENDIX 1** of this statement in conjunction with all relevant planning policy to the determination of this application that is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015) the Sevenoaks Core Strategy (2011) the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Document concerning development within the Green Blet and the Nationally Described Space Standards Document concerning new housing development.
- 1.4. This statement is accompanied by detailed plans and elevations of the existing and proposed buildings that are provided by Crofton Design Services Ltd. It is also accompanied by a detailed preliminary Ecological Appraisal provided by The Ecology Partnership and a comprehensive Arboricultural Survey and Planning Integration Report provided by Quaife Woodlands.
- 1.5. The plans provided by Crofton Design survey the existing floor area, footprint, and volume of buildings and hard standing and compare these with the total volume and footprint of



proposed built form and the amount of proposed hardstanding. The case has been prepared in order to demonstrate that substantial improvements in terms of footprint, volume and hardstanding are proposed by this application with the Council having agreed at the pre-app stage that the site comprises previously developed land within the Green Belt (Brownfield Land/PDL).

2. THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1. The application site comprises two large functional barn buildings that were originally in agricultural use. These were converted to provide private stables and a riding school in 1999 (99/01078/FUL) and have continued to be used for this purpose up until today's date. A view of the two buildings in question can be seen below.



Stable building on left hand side of image and
horse exercise building linked to to on right hand side of photo

- 2.2. As the above image illustrates, the existing equestrian buildings (sui generis use) are of substantial two storey scale and are of significant volume. Equestrian buildings are judged to comprise previously development land within the Green Belt having regard to the definition of such land contained within the annexe of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and case law.

- 2.3. In addition, the site includes several other more modest buildings that comprise a single storey office and buildings used for storage purposes. These can be seen in the below photograph:



Image showing storage buildings, hardstanding and single storey office (top of image)

- 2.4. The buildings have been in existence on site for a substantial period of time and can be seen in the below aerial photograph taken in 2008.



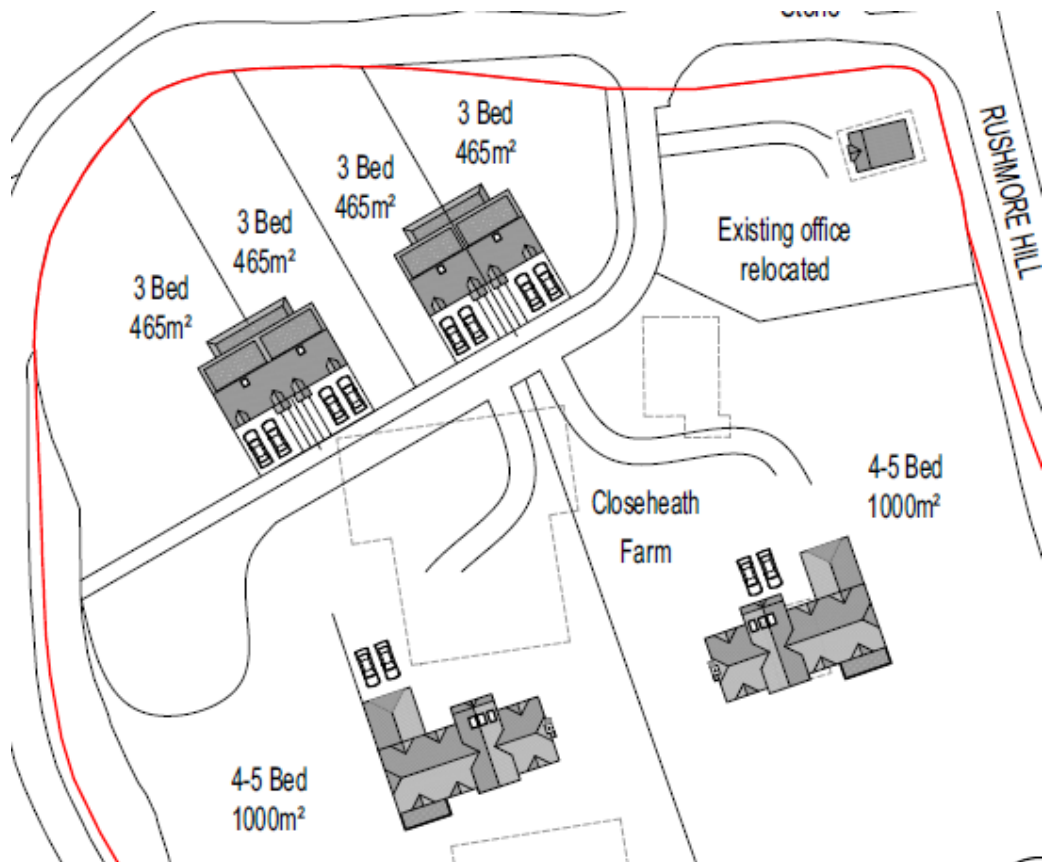
Aerial image of the site taken from 5th March 2008 showing large barns, office building and industrial storage buildings along with a significant amount of hardstanding (source – google earth pro)

- 2.5. The land is positioned within the confines of the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined by the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan document (2015).
- 2.6. The site is positioned away from any surrounding residential properties but is served by its own independent gated vehicular access onto Randles Lane (to the north)
- 2.7. The information provided by Crofton Design Services demonstrates that there are a number of buildings of substantial scale on the site which have a cumulative footprint of some **844.6m²**. The volume of the existing built form is **3785.6** cubic metres. In addition, there is a substantial amount of hardstanding which surrounds the buildings as illustrated on the aerial images provided above. The existing hardstanding on the site measures some **1157.7m²**.

3. PRE - APPLICATION ADVICE

3.1. As detailed within the introduction to this statement, a copy of the Council's pre-application advice that was provided prior to this formal application being submitted was provided on 4 June 2020 following an online meeting. The reference number for the pre-application advice was PA/20/00125 and a copy of the advice can be seen in **APPENDIX 1** of this statement.

3.2. The advice was provided concerning proposals to demolish the existing equestrian buildings along with commercial storage buildings to enable 6 dwellings to be introduced comprising two detached houses of two storey design with linked garages and two pairs of semi-detached dwellings. The plans also proposed the relocation of the existing single storey office building on the site. A copy of the pre-app plans that were presented at the time form **APPENDIX 2** of this statement and photographs of the existing buildings can be seen in **APPENDIX 3**.



6 two storey dwellings proposed at pre-application stage

- 3.3. In providing pre-application advice, the Council confirmed that with the site being used for equestrian purposes and for some commercial office use then it would constitute previously developed land within the Green Belt.
- 3.4. As a result of this, paragraph 145 (g) of the National Planning Policy is triggered which permits the limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land within the Green Belt.
- 3.5. In providing specific advice regarding the existing site layout, the Council noted that at present the existing buildings on the site are focused on the northern part of it with the southern part being largely open with a sand school. It was recommended that a comparison would need to be made within any formal application of existing and proposed gross external area (footprint) and volumes of built forms on the site and a floor space calculation may also be useful for any subsequent application.
- 3.6. The Council stated that the reductions in gross external area and volume were welcome but the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would also need to have regard to how built form manifests itself on site.
- 3.7. Concern was expressed regarding the full two storey nature of some of the buildings that were proposed, most notably the two storey dwellings and that these may be judged to have a greater presence as built form compared to the existing buildings to be removed. The Council therefore recommend that the comparison of eaves heights and ridge heights may also be useful to provide with any formal application in order to demonstrate the bulk of proposed buildings was comparable to existing structures.
- 3.8. The Council also commented that the change of use of land to provide 6 dwellings would bring with it a level of residential paraphernalia including boundary treatments and other structures and it was important for any application to include details in these regards in order for the Council to properly assess the impact that would be caused by additional domestic paraphernalia.

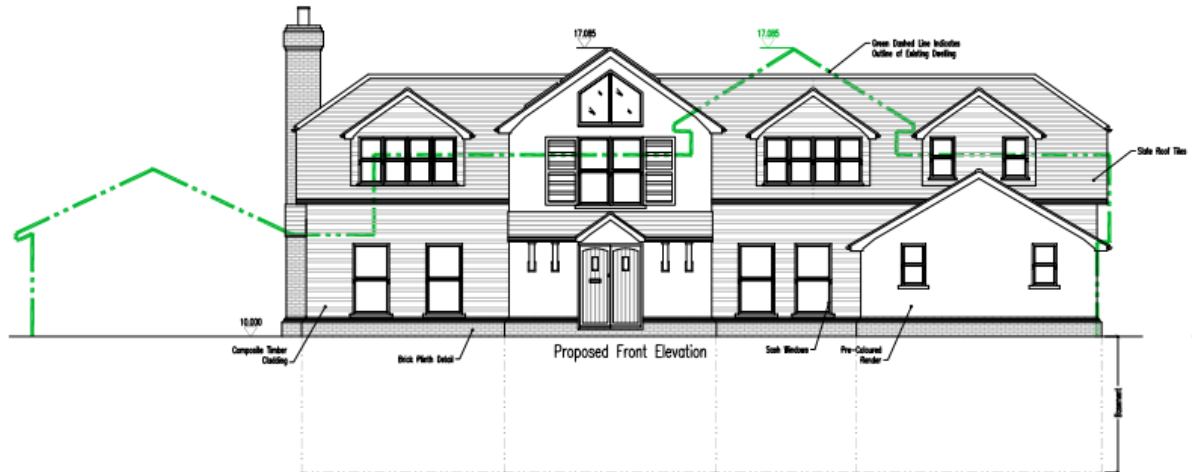
- 3.9. As all 6 dwellings proposed accommodation within the roof space to be served by a first-floor level, the Council advised that some reduction in massing would be necessary. Although it was suggested that two storey gables should be removed in their entirety from the 6 dwellings, the revised proposals now submitted only now propose for two dwellings to be introduced. Their height has been reduced to be comparable to the existing buildings to be removed in terms of their eaves and ridge height.
- 3.10. In terms of the relocation of the office unit, this was welcomed having regard to policy EMP5 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan with employment use being retained.
- 3.11. In terms of other considerations, the Council recommended that any application would need to be submitted with an Arboricultural Statement as the site was extensively surrounded by trees protected by Tree Preservation order and Ancient Woodland. It was also recommended that any application would need to be accompanied by an Ecological Survey (PEA). As a result of this advice, a comprehensive Arboricultural Statement is presented with this application in conjunction with the Phase 1 Ecology Survey (PEA). An additional Bat Report has been commissioned (as recommended by the PEA) and surveys are due to be undertaken in May and will follow up the submissions now made.
- 3.12. In terms of residential amenity, the Council noted the significant distance that would be retained between the site and any neighbouring property and therefore no harm to residential amenity would be likely.
- 3.13. In terms of parking the Council stated it required for parking to be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted standards but acknowledged that the site was already served by an existing vehicular access onto Randles Lane.

4. **THE PROPOSALS**

- 4.1. Following receipt of detailed pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority, plans have been finalised concerning the proposed redevelopment of the site with the Council accepting 'in principle' that the land comprises previously developed land within the Green Belt.
- 4.2. In order to ensure that the overall bulk and scale of proposals represents a significant improvement to Green Belt openness compared to existing buildings, the plans have been significantly reduced so that now only two detached dwellings are proposed to be served by their own detached garages. In addition to this, an office is still proposed to be re-sited but redesigned. This would be of single storey design only and of modest proportions commensurate in size with the existing single storey office building to be demolished.
- 4.3. The two detached dwellings that are proposed have been designed so that their overall height is no greater than the existing substantial stable buildings to be removed.
- 4.4. At present there are two substantial stable buildings and now two detached dwellings are proposed effectively in their place. The remaining buildings to be demolished would provide more than enough room to be traded off for the garages to serve the two dwellings.
- 4.5. The plans and information provided by Crofton Design Services illustrates that the overall volume of existing buildings to be demolished is **3785.6m³** and the total volume of all buildings proposed is 2621.8m³ this represents a reduction of some **-1163.8m³**.
- 4.6. In relation to footprint, the existing buildings to be demolished have a total footprint of **844.6m²** and the overall footprint of all buildings proposed will be **595.8m²** this represents a reduction of **-248.8m²**.

- 4.7. In relation to hard standing, at present the site has some **1157.7m²** of hardstanding and **853m²** of hardstanding is proposed this represents a reduction of **-304.7m²** in terms of overall hardstanding.
- 4.8. The plans would utilise the existing access onto Randles Lane and each dwelling would be served by its own residential curtilage to be enclosed by hedgerows. No high-level boundaries are to be introduced in order to preserve the setting and character of this part of the Green Belt. The reduction in the number of proposed dwellings from 6 at the pre application stage to two as now proposed would also reduce the level of domestic paraphernalia on the site.
- 4.9. The plans illustrate that all bedrooms would accord with the Nationally Described Space Standards and the overall dwelling sizes would also accord with the required internal areas set out within this national guidance document.
- 4.10. In relation to the proposed office building this would have a gross external floor area of 56 square metres and would provide a similar size office to that which is to be demolished. There would therefore be no loss of employment on the site and the office is to be positioned closer to the site access.
- 4.11. Parking is to be provided in accordance with the Councils adopted standards in conjunction with secure cycle storage for both dwellings and the office unit. In addition, secure refuse and recycling storage is to be provided for the proposed houses and the office building.
- 4.12. The dwellings have been designed to be of a traditional form and the modest height would ensure the character and appearance of this part of the Green Belt is adequately preserved. The garage buildings would also be of a similar form of traditional design that would appear in keeping with the Kentish vernacular.
- 4.13. The proposed dwellings take their influence from the recently consented replacement dwelling that has been completed to the north of the site at Dalcrest, Rushmore Hill, Knockholt, TN14 7NG. This dwelling was allowed on appeal under Council reference

SE/17/03998/FUL on 25 January 2019 and a copy of the consented front elevation of this house that was judged to be appropriate in this part of the Green Belt can be seen below:



Consented front elevation of 17/03998 – Dalcrest, Rushmore Hill, Knockholt

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. Relevant planning policy that has been considered prior to the preparation of this formal application comprises that contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) along with the Policies of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan and the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance concerning Development within the Green Belt.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 5.2. Section 13 of the Framework refers to the protection of Green Belt Land and the relevant paragraph to the determination of any application is paragraph 145 (g). This allows the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use. The existing equestrian buildings, the existing storage buildings, and the single storey office fall within the classification of Previously developed land as agreed with the Council at the pre application stage. This is detailed as follows:

Previously developed land: 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.

- 5.3. The Framework specifies that the redevelopment of previously developed sites within the Green Belt will be acceptable where proposals 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 development would reuse previously developed land and contribute towards

meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the Local Planning Authority.

Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan

- 5.4. Policies EN1 & EN2 refer to the general design principles that would be used to assess all planning applications and the need to protect amenity. The policies require for the form of new development to respond to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the area and the topography of the site whilst utilising a high quality of design. The policies also require for the new development not cause any harm to the residential amenities of surrounding properties.
- 5.5. In terms of development within the Green Belt, Section 7 of the ADMP acknowledges in paragraph 7.9 that the complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brown field land) represents appropriate development within the confines of such locations, and this is consistent with the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).
- 5.6. In terms of the Council's latest position in relation to affordable housing, this was published in December 2019 with the Council confirming that affordable housing, or contributions in this regard would only be sought on development involving 6 or more homes or on sites that are more than 0.5 hectares in size irrespective of the number of dwellings that are proposed. In this case, the application only proposes the erection of 2 homes and the overall site area is less than 0.5 hectares in size. There is therefore no requirement for on site affordable housing provision or contributions to be made in this regard.

Sevenoaks District Council – Development in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (2015)

- 5.7. Section 7 of this guidance refers to previously developed (brown field) site redevelopment. This states that in line with the NPPF, 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 guidance specifies the Council will consider the impact of

proposals on a case-by-case basis and the unique circumstances of the site would 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:

- 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:
- Not exceed the height of the existing buildings
- Not occupy a larger area of the site than existing buildings.

5.8. The Council focus on the aggregate ground floor area of the existing buildings (the footprint) excluding temporary buildings and will also look a volume of built form and areas of hardstanding. The Council will also consider the dispersal of buildings over the land compared to the existing situation.

6. PLANNING MERITS AND GROUNDS

- 6.1. This application is prepared in accordance with Section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework with pre-application advice being sought from the Local Planning Authority prior to plans being finalised that now accompany this formal application.
- 6.2. In providing pre-application advice, the Council acknowledged the sites' location within the Green Belt and was able to confirm that the site comprised previously development land within the confines of the Green Belt.
- 6.3. The Council's advice sought for development to be confined within the curtilage of where the existing buildings are on the site and also provided design advice in relation to the proposed redevelopment.
- 6.4. The pre-application scheme sought the Council's advice concerning a development of 6 new homes and the re-siting of the existing office building. The overall volume of proposed buildings being some 3395.9m³. this represented a modest reduction when compared to the existing volume of buildings on site with these measuring some 3785.6m³ at present.
- 6.5. Having regard to the Council's constructive comments on the manner in which it would assess the previously developed land application, the application herewith submitted has been reduced in terms of the quantum of built form proposed and the number of dwellings.
- 6.6. This reduced scheme now proposes the erection of only two detached dwellings as well as a new replacement office building that will ensure there is no loss of employment on the site.
- 6.7. The proposed amount of volume of new built form would now be **2621.8m³** which represents a significant volume reduction compared to both the pre app proposals and

when compared to existing buildings to be demolished. When compared to existing buildings to be removed, there would be a volume reduction of some **1163.8m³**.

- 6.8. In order to respond to the Council's concerns regarding the height of proposed buildings, the two dwellings would contain much of their first-floor accommodation within the roof space and the height of the two houses would be no greater than the existing two most substantial stable building and horse exercise arena that are to be demolished. The houses are also to be sited in the approximate location of the buildings to be removed.
- 6.9. In terms of the overall footprint of built form, this would be **595.8m²** and this represents a reduction of some **248.8m²** compared to the existing buildings to be demolished. The footprint and spread of the building will also be significantly reduced when compared to the pre application scheme.
- 6.10. In relation to hard standing, the redevelopment proposals would simply use the existing access onto Randles Lane and would involve a reduction of hard standing of some **304.7m²** compared to the amount of hardstanding which currently exists on site.
- 6.11. The design therefore has been significantly reduced in order to ensure compliance with paragraph 145 (g) of the National Planning Policy Framework is achieved. In addition, the design considers the terms of the Council's supplementary Planning Guidance Document, in particular section 7 of this guidance that refers to the redevelopment of previously developed sites in the Green Belt.
- 6.12. In accordance with this design guidance, the proposals would now have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and would in fact have a reduced impact compared to existing buildings to be removed.
- 6.13. The proposals would not exceed the height of existing buildings to be demolished and the redevelopment would see a significant reduction in the area of the site that is developed compared to the existing situation.

- 6.14. The design would therefore see a material improvement to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.15. Furthermore, details are provided for the means of enclosure for the two houses with only landscaping proposed for the boundaries. This will ensure that the openness and character of this part of the Green Belt is adequately preserved. There would also be no encroachment caused to the public footpath that will continue to run through the site between the houses to be created.
- 6.16. In accordance with pre-application advice, the application is accompanied by a detailed Arboricultural Survey. This confirms that no harm to any important trees would be caused by the development. It also confirms that adequate space would be retained with the adjacent woodland in order to ensure that the character and appearance of the woodland is adequately preserved by the design.
- 6.17. The preliminary Ecological Appraisal presented follows a comprehensive site survey. Although this confirms that an additional Bat Survey will be necessary, this has been commissioned and will be presented to the Council during the application process.
- 6.18. The development is situated away from any surrounding residential property and the layout will ensure that no harm to the amenities and privacy of any surrounding property would be caused. In addition, the two dwellings to be created would be afforded an acceptable degree of outlook and the internal layout of both dwellings meets and exceeds the Nationally Described Space Standards Document.
- 6.19. Taking these material considerations into account, the application comprises an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and also complies with all other relevant planning policy considerations.
- 6.20. It is therefore requested for full planning permission to be granted.