

# **COMBINED DESIGN AND ACCESS/PLANNING STATEMENT FOR THE REMODELLING OF THE EXISTING WORKSHOP AND CHANGE OF USE OF THE MAIN BARN ON LAND AT FOUNTAIN FARM, WELL HILL NURSEY, FIRMINGERS ROAD, ORPINGTON**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This statement accompanies plans for the the remodelling of the existing workshop and change of use of the main barn on land at Fountain Farm, Well Hill Nursey, Firmingers Road, Orpington.

## **2. Site and surroundings**

2.1 The site is located on the east side of Firmingers Road in the Metropolitan Green Belt. It relates to commercial/residential buildings set in a large plot. The M25 runs along the eastern boundary and there is an existing access to the site in the southwest corner of the land. The surrounding area is predominantly rural in nature with sporadic housing and some commercial/community activities including a stables to the west on the opposite side of Firmingers Road.

## **3. Planning history**

3.1 There is no record of relevance.

## **4. The proposal**

4.1 Planning permission is sought for the remodelling of a workshop and the change of use of the main barn from B1 to B2.

## **5. Planning policy**

5.1 The original National Planning Policy Framework was published by Central Government in March 2012 and was an important material consideration in the determination and assessment of all planning applications. On 24th July 2018 the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which



sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.



Looking north across site to main barn

5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three aspects that comprise this goal:

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and



- an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.3 Achieving sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to): moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature; improving the conditions in which people work; widening the choice of high quality homes; securing high quality design; supporting the transition to a low carbon future; contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution; and improving the health, social and cultural well-being for all.

5.4 The Government's planning policies on design are set out in section 12 of the Framework. The initial paragraph of the section states that *"the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities."*

5.5 Paragraph 127 advocates that 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."*

*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.*

5.6 The site is situated in the Metropolitan Green Belt. Chapter 13 of the NPPF begins by stating that *“the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”*

5.7 Paragraph 134 continues to outline the five purposes of the Green Belt:

*“a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*

*b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*

*c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*

*d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*

*e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

5.8 Within the Section 'Proposals affecting the Green Belt' it is stated that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the

Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.9 Paragraph 145 states that:

*“A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*

*a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*

*b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*

*c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*

*d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*

*e) limited infilling in villages;*

*f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*

*g) 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 development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”*

5.10 Paragraph 146 continues:

*“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. These are:*

*a) mineral extraction;*

*b) engineering operations;*

*c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*

*d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*

*e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*

*f) development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”*

5.11 For the purposes of the Development Plan, the current and adopted planning policies are contained in the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy 2011 and the Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015.

## **6. Planning assessment**

### **6.1 Green Belt**

As noted above, Section 13 of the NPPF contains national policy on protecting Green Belt land. It reiterates the great importance the Government attaches to the Green Belt and reaffirms the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. As one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness the key issue is the impact of any development upon this. Whilst 'openness' is



not defined in the Framework, case law establishes the need to consider how developed the Green Belt would appear with and without the proposal. It has been held that it is not necessary for development to be visible to harm openness, but the degree of visual impact is nevertheless a criteria along with the volume of built development.



Workshop before fire and remodelling works

6.2 The previous workshop building was low level, abutting the residential element. This was damaged by fire and strong winds and as such the owner has undertaken remodelling works to reinstate the structure.

6.3 The remodelled workshop is currently partially rebuilt, awaiting a roof to complete. It has been built on the footprint of the previous building, and would remain low level in nature as show on the plans. It is submitted that it would not be materially larger than the previous workshop and as such there would be no adverse impact on openness and no encroachment into the countryside. It would not therefore be inappropriate and there is accordingly no need for the development to be justified by special circumstances as it



would not conflict with the Framework.



Workshop currently on the land

6.4 It is also proposed to change the use of the main barn from B1 to B2. The NPPF allows such development provided it preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The use would take place within the building and it is considered that these requirements would be met.

#### 6.5 *Character and appearance*

The existing buildings, storage and hardstanding on the plot do not make any positive contribution to the quality of the countryside in this area or the character of the locality. The Government attaches great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the Framework. It is submitted that the remodelled workshop is an improvement over the previous structure and no demonstrable harm would occur. No changes to the external appearance of the main barn are proposed.



## 6.6 *Residential amenity*

Given the relationships and detachment to existing neighbouring properties there would be no undue impacts in respect of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing effect. Similarly there would be no adverse detriment with regard to noise and disturbance, particularly bearing in mind that the site is very close to the M25.

## **7. Summary**

7.1 There would be no material harm with regard to the Green Belt, rural character and residential amenity as a result of the scheme. The Council is asked to contact the agent should any further clarification be needed and to work with the applicant should any additional alterations be required before determination in accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF.