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Dear Sir / Madam

**Planning Application made on behalf of James Cullen, John Cullen and Sarah Gracey
Site at Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent
Provision of Field Access**

Please find attached our planning application, on behalf of the above landowners, proposing the construction of a field access via Ashgrove Road. The application is accompanied by the following documents:

- This Supporting letter
- Completed application forms
- An application fee of £234 has been paid separately

Document	Reference / Version	Date	Prepared by
Location Plan	LOC01 Rev A		ECE Architecture
Proposed Block Plan & Proposed Gate Elevation and Section	001 Rev A		ECE Architecture
Existing Access Plan	002		ECE Architecture
Stage 1 Road Safety Audit	WP/JS/2008028 RSA1 v1.0	May 2021	Gateway TSP
DMRB GG119 – Road Safety Audit Response Report	N02-siseve-RSADR 2021-06-01	1 June 2021	Motion
Proposed Field Access	2008028-02A		Motion
Swept Path Analysis Plan	2008028-TK01		Motion
Ecological Assessment Technical Note		June 2021	Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Limited

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Aboricultural Survey	AR4102-L3	4 June 2021	Quaife Woodlands
Tree Protection Plan	AR-4102 TPP-210527		Quaife Woodlands

The Site

The application site comprises an agricultural field of approximately 2.35 hectares located between Ashgrove Road to the east and Oak Lane to the west. Residential development lies to the north and east of the site, the western boundary is marked by Oak Lane and beyond the southern boundary lies further agricultural fields, not within the applicant's ownership.

The site is currently rough pasture land with hedging and trees along the site boundaries. Both Ashgrove Road and Oak Lane are set at a lower level than the application site, with raised banking and hedging generally following the boundary along each road.

There is currently no independent access to the site from the road. The sole existing access is a route that crosses neighbouring third party land via the Byway leading off of Ashgrove Road to the south. This involves using an existing field access and gate through the neighbouring field rising to a further fence-line along the southern boundary of the application site. Drawing 002 (Existing Access Plan) has been submitted with the accompanying documents illustrating this situation involving third party land access.

Proposed Development

The proposed development is the formation of a new access to the site from Ashgrove Road. The position of the access has been informed by Motion Transport Consultants who concluded that access via Ashgrove Road was most suitable and the position selected is on the straightest part of the road and also on the part where the site at roadside is closest to the level with the road, rather than an area where banking is higher. The difference in level between the road and gate would be around 2m. There is no lighting proposed.

A Road Safety Audit Stage 1 has been undertaken and the design comments taken on board through the design of the proposed access. These comments relate to running an access gradient of 12.5% from carriageway to gate and with the surrounding ground within the site being re-graded to accommodate this. These recommendations still result in an access which is sympathetic to its context in terms of its appearance, whilst placing the necessary emphasis on highway safety.

The proposed form of access is identified on the plans submitted by Motion and which accompany this application. The tarmac surfaced access road would be 6.5 metres wide, sufficient to accommodate passing vehicles accessing the site, notably the largest vehicle likely to require access which would be for farm vehicles and trailers. Sufficient distance would be provided from the back edge of Ashgrove Road to the gated access which would mean vehicles could enter without overhanging the highway. A new gate would be provided with new hedging planted either side behind the required sight lines of the access to replace that loss.

The accompanying tree report has also informed the location of the access road, as it indicates the trees along this road frontage are not of high quality and the access and provision of sightlines would not result in the loss of any significant trees or hedging. New tree planting and hedging would compensate for any loss.

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Planning Policy

The application site is designated as Green Belt and falls within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Land immediately opposite to the east falls within the urban area and comprises detached residential properties.

Green Belt policy seeks to protect the openness of the Green Belt from inappropriate development. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF supports “engineering operations” provided they preserve openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

Paragraph 172 of the NPPF confirms 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.”

Planning Assessment

The new access is necessary to provide independent access to the application site. As noted above, there is currently no independent access to this parcel of land and whilst historically there has been agreement that field access may be achieved over the neighbouring field from the Byway off Ashgrove Road, that is not legally binding and at any point that informal agreement could be withdrawn. Consequently, there is a need to provide a separate independent access to secure access for farm vehicles for the future. This will provide the independent ability for field cutting and hedgerow/tree maintenance. It will provide the option for greater sheep grazing which has historically always taken place on the land. The proposed access is therefore required to maintain the existing use of the land.

The access position off Ashgrove Road has been selected in accordance with highway advice and the position is the safest section along Ashgrove Road at a point where the road banking is at its lowest. Alternative locations were discounted on the more rural Oak Lane to the west where higher banking and tree planting with hedges is more prevalent. An access here would be more damaging to the rural character, as such Ashgrove Road is the preferred access location.

The access has been designed specifically to accommodate farm vehicles and meets the necessary geometry required, as shown on the submitted highway plans by Motion. The surface would be tarmac. Alternative gravel or unmade finishes would cause material to be deposited onto the road and are therefore to be avoided from a highway safety perspective.

Whilst the proposed access will result in the loss of some trees and hedging, this is not considered unacceptable given that new hedging is being proposed behind the sight lines comprising of native species which complements the existing hedging along Ashgrove Road. Moreover, the accompanying Arboricultural and Ecology reports confirm that there is no harm arising as a result of the proposal.

In terms of any impact upon the Green Belt and AONB, the proposal is considered to be a sensitive and routine engineering operation connected with agriculture and considered appropriate development within the Green Belt. As noted above, the access point has been sensitively selected and the new planting will be provided on



the road frontage to address any loss. The presence of a field access track is commonly seen in semi-rural locations. Indeed, this site lies on the very edge of the urban area with residential properties and their accesses along the eastern side of Ashgrove Road. This has the effect of diluting the rural character of this particular location, particularly in comparison to Oak Lane which has a more traditional rural feel. The proposal is therefore not considered to be damaging to the openness of the Green Belt and does not result in any harm to the AONB due to its small-scale nature and is required to maintain its current use.

It is therefore considered that the proposal is appropriate and provides the necessary access to the site which does not currently exist.

Should you require any clarification please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

Yours faithfully



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