

## Planning Statement

Change of Use and Extension of Dwelling to a Meditation, Training and Events Use, First Floor Extensions to existing residential Annex to provide Owner's Dwelling, creation of new area of Car Parking, construction of Water Feature with linking bridge and new Bin Store.

Hockley Place, Church Road,  
Frating, CO7 7HG

**Ms A Wang**

August 2021

The logo for pomery, featuring the word "pomery" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font centered within a solid olive-green rectangular background.

PLANNING CONSULTANTS

## **Introduction**

- 1.0 This statement has been prepared by Pomery Planning Consultants on behalf of our client, Ms A Wang (the applicant). The statement has been prepared to support the applicant's proposal to create a new Meditation/Training and Events facility by changing the use of a large existing dwelling and grounds at Hockley Place, Church Road, Frating. The proposals require the extension of the existing dwelling and its change of use, a new first floor and orangery on the property's existing residential annexe, an area of car parking and a new water feature and bin store. The proposals represent an exciting and unique facility for the Tendring District, designed to provide hotel like accommodation providing visitors with courses and training to raise awareness of their overall well-being.
- 1.1 The new multi-million pound investment will provide high quality accommodation where visitors can enjoy the secluded rural location and access training and education programmes, such as : -
- Meditation training
  - Wisdom training
  - Yoga training
  - Healthy eating / nutrition / superfoods / super herbs training
  - Corporate / team building training through practices to connect
  - Parenting
  - Children's training
  - Courses in nature conservation
- 1.2 In addition, the site can be booked for corporate 'away days' weddings and other celebratory events. It is anticipated that visitors will be both drawn from the from the local area, however, the unique facility will also attract visitors from across the UK and internationally

## The Site and Surroundings

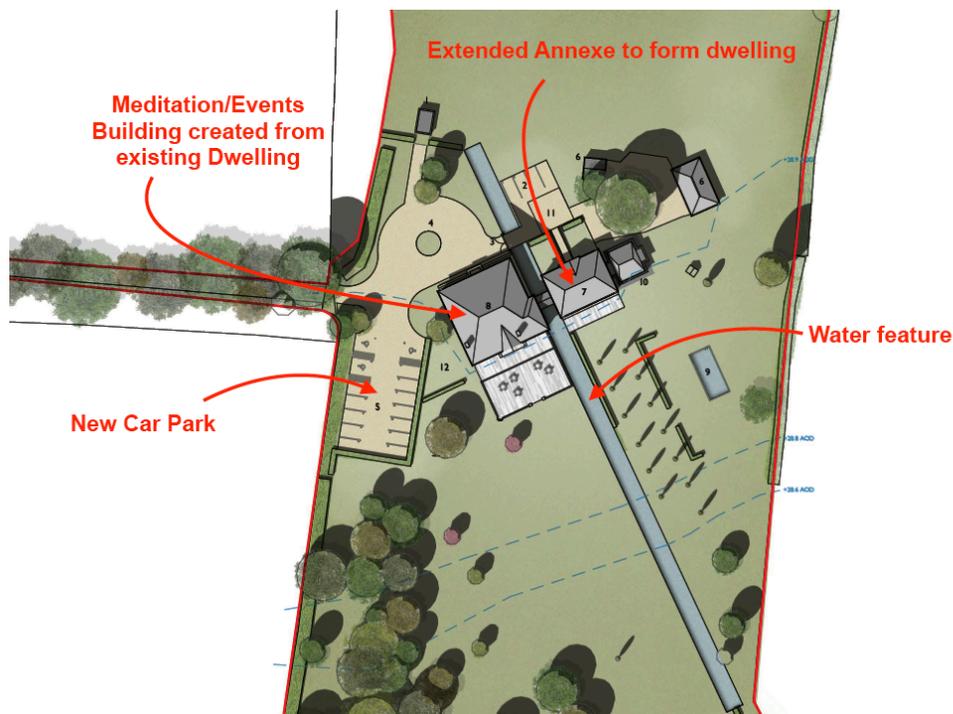
- 2.0 The application site is situated approximately 1.2 miles to the East of Alresford. It is accessed off a 230m long private drive with access gained from Church Road, which is placed to the west of the application site. The site existing use of the site is a private house (C3 residential) and grounds. There is a single substantial main country house centrally located within the ownership boundary. There are a large series of outbuildings placed around the site, alongside a swimming pool, double garage, garden store and workshop. Surrounding the house are large areas of mown lawn with various species of trees dotted nearby. A substantial hedge runs along the east edge of the title boundary, with the entrance from Church Road forming an avenue of trees. A large turning area is situated to the north of the house laid to loose, unbonded gravel easily supporting the turning of cars and delivery vehicles. The site area of ownership extends to some 2.8 Ha. and has no discernible changes in level.
- 2.1 The site can be seen in context in the in the aerial photograph below. The site is not within a Conservation Area and Hockley Place is not on the Statutory list of Buildings and there are no listed buildings in close proximity to the site.



2.2 The land on which the site is located is within Flood Zone One on the Environment Agency Flood Zone Maps, so is at the lowest flooding risk of 1:100 years. The site contains a number of trees, but none are impacted by the proposal.

## The Proposals

3.0 The proposals fall into a number of elements, the main proposal is the extension and change of use of the existing house to a Meditation Centre. This element of the scheme will provide the main focus and use on the site. The second element would be the additional first floor and orangery addition to the existing annexe to provide the applicant and operator with on-site residential accommodation. In addition to these main elements, is the creation of an area of car parking and turning facilities, a new bin store and a central water feature. The key elements of the proposal are illustrated below.



### **3.1 The Meditation/ Events Building**

The proposed extension to the main house is designed to infill one corner to create a square floor plan and improve the overall appearance of the building. Guest accommodation will be on the first floor providing 9 no. en-suite guest rooms. On the ground floor, guests will have access to a dining room, library, lounge and yoga suite. The intention will be to create a very high quality guest experience, similar to a 5 star hotel, but specialising in providing yoga retreat and meditation services amongst other wellbeing education and training. The ground floor provides back of house accommodation, including a commercial kitchen providing healthy eating, nutritional and superfood menus.

3.2 The main focus of the use will be the provision of yoga, education and meditation services and training. The guest accommodation will support overnight or longer guest stays for those accessing the training and services but can also provide high quality corporate hospitality for corporate training and executive or board level company away days. The intention will be to attract high calibre corporate companies to use the site as a private and discreet place to meet and stay away from their usual business environment. The facility can also be used for private events, such as small weddings and family celebrations.

### **3.3 The Owner's Accommodation**

The proposals for the Owner's accommodation are to utilise the existing residential annex, by adding a first floor and orangery. This will provide sufficient residential accommodation for the owner/operator's family, allowing the applicant to live on site and to maintain an intimate relationship with the use and its guests. The new visitor use will of course displace the existing residential use on the site, and as such, no additional residential use would be created by increased occupation of the existing annex.

### 3.4 **Water Feature**

A visually exciting element of the proposal will be the creation of a 120m shallow water feature or rill, which is to cut through the site between the Meditation Building and Owner's accommodation, linked by a bridge. The feature will provide a striking focal point within the site and will eventually support water lilies, fish, plant and insect life, thereby providing enhanced biodiversity within the site. The water feature will also provide an added sense of calm and tranquillity to the site and add visual interest to the built form and immediate landscape.

### 3.5 **Car Parking**

The main car park provides 16 spaces with 2 accessible spaces. An additional 4 spaces are provided to serve the owner's accommodation. The main car parking area is to be enclosed behind a native hedgerow.

## **Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.0 The development plan in Tendring comprises the tendring local plan 2007 and part 1 of the emerging local plan (2017). Part 2 of this plan has recently been examined and the inspector's report is awaited. Part 1 of the new local plan concerns itself with wider strategic planning matters, whilst the policies within part 2, deal with more development management issues and allocations. The 2007 local plan while extant, is largely out of date. Given the advanced nature of the emerging plan it is its policies that are considered to be the most relevant to this proposal. Those policies being : -

Policy PP8 Tourism

Policy PP9 Hotels And Guest Houses

Policy PP13 The Rural Economy

Policy SPL 3 Sustainable Design

Policy HP 1 Improving Health and Wellbeing

Policy HP 2 Community Facilities

Policy PPL 3 The Rural Landscape

Policy CP 1 Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

- 4.1 National planning policy can be found in the National Planning Policy Framework (JULY 2021) (the Framework). The Framework provides the Government's policy position on all planning matter and how they should be applied in Plan making and decisions. In relation to this proposal, the Government supports a prosperous rural economy and advises that planning decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. In addition, support is given to the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship (para84)
- 4.2 Paragraph 85 advises that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have 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 (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

### **The Material Planning Considerations**

- 5.0 The emerging Local Plan advises that tourism in Tendring is worth £276 million and many of the District's jobs are related in some way of tourism. One of the Plan's key priorities is to develop new and exciting projects that will appeal to existing and new visitor markets, one of which being 'up-market' hotel and self-

catering accommodation and interactive visitor facilities. There can be little doubt that this proposal aligns squarely with this key priority.

5.1 Policy PP8 Tourism provides support for economic growth in tourism and will generally support proposals that will help improve the tourism appeal of the District to visitors.

5.2 Amongst other tourism development, Policy PP8 offers specific support for

- educational field centres;
- conference facilities for business and educational purposes or to be used for functions and other celebratory events;

Again, the proposal will deliver these policy objectives to meet current identified needs.

5.3 In relation to visitor accommodation, Policy PP9 Hotels and Guest Houses supports the provision of new visitor accommodation residential health and beauty facilities, educational field centres, function and conference venues.

5.4 To support growth in the rural economy Policy PP13 advises that the Council may grant planning permission for varying types of development in the countryside outside of defined Settlement Development Boundaries for amongst other things, the conversion or re-use of rural buildings in the countryside to employment, leisure or tourism uses.

5.5 There can be no doubt from the relevant Local Plan policy context set out above, that the principle of this proposal is fully supported in terms of promoting high quality new tourism accommodation and attractions to the District. This also applies to proposals in the rural area of the District.

5.6 These proposals represent a multi-million pound private investment in the Tendring District, which will provide new jobs and a new, perhaps niche tourism use, which does not already exist, alongside the delivery of a new community facility. Whilst the proposed use will aim to attract a more prosperous visitor to

the District, the proposals are in no way intended to be elitist. It is hoped that the use will have broad appeal and be flexible enough to perform a number of roles to also appeal to the local community, as well as those resident further afield. Marketing of the facilities will be broadcast widely, which it is hoped will aid in bringing in new visitors to the Tendring District, positively impacting the wider visitor economy.

- 5.7 Whilst the Local Plan offers broad support for the nature and type of use proposed, this support is not offered at any cost and like all new development, particularly in rural areas, there is a need to guard against harm to the landscape, transport capacity and local amenity.

#### 5.8 **Traffic and Transport**

The proposal is to some extent remote from accessible public transport opportunities. The remoteness is to some extent part of the appeal of the site, as it provides a sense of tranquillity and calm, thereby allowing the rural location to be enjoyed. That said the location is just over 1.0 miles from Alresford Railway Station, which can be accessed via a taxi or in the longer term, by the centre's own pick up shuttle service. The modest scale of the proposal, having just nine guest rooms means that there will be no material impact on the capacity of the local highway network.

#### 5.9 **Countryside and Landscape**

The existing house at Hockley Place is a substantial property in a very large plot of 2.8 hectares. The extension of the house infills the presently 'L' shaped dwelling, which visually has no greater impact on the wider landscape. Similarly, the additional floor on the annexe is built over an existing footprint and will be seen in the context of the main house, which will either screen it from view or act as a backdrop. Where the main house does not shield the additional floor, views are only possible from the north or south (Prow 163-7), which is some 150m away, where views are glimpsed through established hedgerows and trees. Overall, the additional built form in the context of the

wider spacious site will have little or no material impact on the landscape or character and appearance of the countryside.

#### 5.10 **Amenity**

The use is generally low key and modest in scale. The site has no immediate neighbours, the closest property being 165m to the north. The nature of the use is one of tranquillity and quiet meditation and learning. Therefore, by its very nature, the use would have no impact on amenity. However, used as a venue for celebratory events, there would perhaps be some potential for disturbance. However, again, the scale of the facilities is such that it could not cater for large gatherings and its relatively distant position in proximity to neighbouring residential uses, allows a good degree of separation to eliminate any significant impact.

### **Summary**

6.0 The proposals represent a multi-million pound private investment by the applicant to provide a new and unique tourism and business focussed use in the District. There is little doubt that the local planning policy framework offers broad support for the principle of this use. The scale of the development is modest, repurposing a large dwelling and parkland setting with no material impact on the landscape. Whilst in a rural location, the site is just over a mile from a rail station and its scale will have no discernible impact on the highway network. The proposals will lead to some new job creation assisting the rural economy and will assist in attracting local and international visitors to the District. No material harm is envisaged to any interest of acknowledged importance and the proposals are considered to be fully policy compliant. Consequently, planning permission should be granted without delay.

