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Our ref: AC/CN 178928

Planning Department
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG

22 December 2021

Dear Sir / Madam,

Salters Heath Farm, Cold Arbor Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 2PR

Re:

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Full Planning application for the creation of additional first floor office accommodation within existing roof void (building OB3) and insertion of windows, at Salters Heath Farm, Cold Arbor Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 2PR.

Introduction

This covering letter accompanies an application for full planning permission for the creation of additional first floor office accommodation within existing roof void and the insertion of a window in existing building OB3 at Salters Heath Farm.

The application comprises this covering letter (which is the equivalent of a Planning Statement), the Application Form, Location Plan, Block Plan, and drawings '643 OB3 301', '643 OB3 302' and '643 OB3 303'.

This application generates a fee of £234 payable to the Council. The application is submitted through the planning portal. This payment, plus the planning portal admin fee of £28, will be arranged through the portal system.

Site Description and Planning History

Salters Heath Farm is located within Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site does not contain any statutory or locally listed buildings, is not within a conservation area and is not subject to any other planning designations.

In March 2019, permission was granted to convert the existing traditional farm buildings for B1a office use. The permission also included a 'very special circumstances' case to demolish the existing grain store and silos and replace with a new build element, creating additional office floor space under planning permission 18/02941/FUL.



Non-material amendment applications were permitted under permissions 20/02336/NMA, 20/02334/NMA, and 20/02096/NMA.

Condition 13 (drainage) was discharged in October 2020. Condition 15 (ecology) was discharged in July 2020.

On 27th January 2021, permission was granted under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the variation of conditions 2, 3 and 19 of permission 18/02941/FUL.

Description of Proposal

The proposed development consists of the creation of additional first floor space within a roof void within the building known as 'OB3', and associated windows.

The increase in the floorspace is proposed above an area of proposed ground floor offices and measures 23.5sqm. This area will include the insertion of a new window on the west elevation, and an additional skylight in the roof on the north elevation. The proposed elevations and floorplan are shown on drawings '643 OB3 301', '643 OB3 302' and '643 OB3 303'.

The building currently has planning permission to be converted to a Class B1a Use under planning permission 20/02231/CONVAR, as part of a wider Salters Heath Farm development. This application is submitted on a standalone basis as an alternative to a further s73 application, to avoid the proliferation of project wide consents.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012, and revised most recently in July 2021.

The NPPF supports a prosperous rural economy through the delivery of new employment premises within the countryside and the conversion of existing buildings.

Paragraph 84 supports economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- Promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses

Extensions or alteration of a building within the green belt can be appropriate development in certain circumstances (paragraph 147).

Sevenoaks District Council Policies

Policy L08 of the 2011 Core Strategy (The Countryside and the Rural Economy) states that development that supports the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy will be supported provided it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt and the Kent Downs AONB.

Policy GB7 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015 (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”.*

Policy Assessment

The external appearance of the building as proposed to be converted will remain largely unchanged from that approved under 20/02231/CONVAR. The proposed amendments to the plans include the addition of a skylight to the roof on the north elevation, alongside the addition of a window to the first floor on the west elevation. The proposed window will be in keeping with those previously approved, which are designed to be harmonious with the local vernacular.

The proposals accord with policies L08 and GB7 by supporting the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy, through the creation of new business employment floorspace within an existing building within the Green Belt and AONB, whilst respecting the sensitive landscape through high quality design and use of materials which reflect local design.

The proposed development will not have a negative impact on neighbouring amenity. The proposed window faces away from the nearest residential properties to the west of the building. Similarly, the additional area of offices is further from the residential properties than the areas approved for office use under the existing permission.

The submitted ecology report indicated that OB3 (referred to in the report as the Old Office) had a moderate potential for roosting bats. As part of the discharge of Condition 15, a letter prepared by Greenlink Ecology on 10th July 2020 confirmed that works to this building would therefore be supervised by a Natural England bat licence holder. A copy of this letter is provided.



The proposed additional floorspace would logically only be implemented in conjunction with the permitted conversion of building OB3 (rather than as a standalone scheme). As such, (and in accordance with Kent County Council Parking Standards supplementary planning document SPG4) no further parking spaces would be required for this small increase in floorspace.

Summary

This planning application seeks approval for additional first floor office accommodation within an existing roof void within building OB3 and the installation of additional windows as part of the redevelopment of Salters Heath Farm, Cold Arbor Road, Sevenoaks.

The principle of the development has been established through the extant permission for the building's conversion, granted by Sevenoaks District Council under application reference 20/022/31/CONVAR. The proposals subject of this application seek to make best use of the space available within building OB3 by including 23.5 sqm of additional office accommodation within the roof space of the existing building, in addition to a conservation skylight in the roof on the north elevation, and insertion of a new window on the west elevation to serve the new area.

It is considered that the proposals are in accordance with the relevant planning policies within the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and Allocations and Development Local Plan. In addition to supplementary planning and design guidance, and the NPPF (2021). As such, in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted for the proposed development without delay.

We trust that the information contained within this covering letter, in addition to the enclosed drawings and documents is sufficient to allow for determination of this application. However, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries or require further information.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Noel".

**Craig Noel BA MSc DipUP MRTPI
Director**

Encls:
Application Form
Location Plan
Block Plan
PL 643 OB3 01 RevA
Ecology Letter July 2020
Ecology Report Sep 2018