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Dear Sir or Madam,

**Application for Permission in Principle  
The Grove Lodge, Fir Tree Hill, Chandlers Cross WD3 4LY**

Please find enclosed an application for permission in principle for a residential development of 4no. - 5no. dwellings at The Grove Lodge, Fir Tree Hill, Chandlers Cross.

In addition to this covering letter this application is supported by the following documents:

Completed Application Form;  
Existing and Proposed Areas Schedule;  
Location Plan, drawing no. SK001 C; and  
Illustrative Site Plan, drawing no. SK002 B.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Location Plan is submitted for approval whereas the Illustrative Site Plan is submitted for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate how 4no. dwellings could be delivered on the site and is not for approval.

The site area is 0.3361 hectares. The application fee of £1,608 (£402 per 0.1 hectares or part thereof) will be paid separately upon request.

**Permission in Principle**

The permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first ('permission in principle') stage establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.

The Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) dictates that a decision on whether to grant permission in principle shall be made in accordance with the relevant policies in the Local Plan, unless there are material considerations, such as those in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2023) and national guidance, which indicate otherwise.

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In considering an application for permission in principle, the issues that may be considered are limited to location, land use and amount of development. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.

The NPPF demonstrates the Government's support for the permission in principle as a route to identify sites that are suitable for residential development at paragraph 38:

*“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”*

## **The Site**

The site forms part of the wider The Grove Lodge estate which is situated north of Fir Tree Hill. The site is accessed via a single access off Fir Tree Hill which leads firstly to The Grove Lodge, a two storey detached dwelling, before continuing to a series of buildings which form the application site. These buildings comprise barns, stables, workshop and garage and 2no. bungalows which have been recognised by the Council as 'separate dwellings' (17/1643/PREAPP – letter dated 10/10/2017). The site is otherwise predominantly laid to hardstanding.

Residential development to the west is separated from the site by a woodland area. This development between Fir Tree Hill, Chandlers Lane and Popes Croft is of mixed character.

In terms of site constraints, the site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

## **Proposed Development**

This application seeks permission in principle for a minor housing-led development, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended).

As noted above, the scope of this first stage of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. All other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.

Planning practice guidance ('PPG') is clear that where permission in principle is granted, local planning authorities must provide an indication of the amount of development the site has permission in principle for and *'[t]he amount of residential development must be expressed as a range, indicating the minimum and maximum net number of dwellings (i.e. taking into account any existing dwellings on the site) which are, in principle, permitted'* (PPG Paragraph: 052 Reference ID: 58-052-20180615).

As such, this application seeks permission in principle for 4no. – 5no. dwellinghouses (Use Class C3), a net gain of 2no. – 3no. dwellings, at The Grove Lodge as indicated on the accompanying Location Plan. Indicative layout plans for the construction of 4no. dwellings have been provided in support of the application.

## Planning Considerations

The only matters for consideration are the location, land use and amount of development.

### Location

It is acknowledged that the site falls outside of the defined settlement boundaries within the Core Strategy (adopted 2011). However, the site is previously developed land and contains two existing houses, with The Grove Lodge also part of the wider estate. The site is also in proximity to existing residential development fronting Fir Tree Hill, Chandlers Lane, White Shack Lane and Popes Croft to the west. Residential development of the site would therefore not represent isolated development in the countryside. It would instead comprise the recycling of urban land to optimise the use of the land and contribute to meeting identified housing need in accordance with NPPF paragraph 125 and Core Strategy Policy CP12.

### Land Use and Amount

#### *Development in the Green Belt*

While the construction of new buildings should generally be treated as 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, the NPPF provides exceptions to this, including at paragraph 149(g), *"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."* The adopted Local Plan for Three Rivers pre-dates the NPPF, but mostly remains consistent in this regard.

The existing site forms part of The Grove Lodge estate and the land and buildings are therefore residential in land use terms, with the exception of the two bungalows which are independent of The Grove Lodge but themselves are of residential land use. The site is therefore previously developed land. The Council has previously accepted the same through pre-application 17/1643/PREAPP where the Pre-Application Advice Note (01/11/2017) states, *"...it would constitute a previously developed land (brownfield land)..."*

Therefore, redevelopment of the site would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and in turn acceptable in Green Belt policy terms, provided the development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

All existing buildings are of permanent construction and amount to some 670sqm of footprint area. The stable, barn with mezzanine floor and workshop / garage buildings are large structures. The existing bungalows would also each benefit from permitted development rights for an additional storey under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class AA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) where a prior approval application would be limited to consideration of the impact on the amenity of adjoining neighbours; the external appearance of the dwellings; air traffic and defence asset impacts of the development; and impacts on protected views – all of which can be demonstrated as being acceptable. In addition, the built form spreads across much of the site with predominantly hardstanding in between. The existing site therefore has a relatively harmful impact on openness.

The indicative layout plans which accompany this application demonstrate that four new dwellings would have a total footprint area of 440sqm, a notable reduction to the existing area of 670sqm. There are also opportunities to improve openness and 'greening' in parts of the site through the layout of the dwellings, their gardens and through the removal of significant levels of hardstanding.

We acknowledge that the footprint area is not the only consideration when considering impact on openness. However, the scale, bulk, massing, etc. of the development is not for consideration at this permission in principle stage and is reserved for the technical details stage. For the purpose of this permission in principle application then, it has been demonstrated that residential development comprising 4-5 dwellings can be delivered in accordance with NPPF paragraph 149(g).

In terms of the increase in residential occupation of the site, the net increase in dwellings is only proposed at 2no. – 3no. units. It is also noted that the buildings which remain ancillary to The Grove Lodge are also residential in use and therefore there is an element of residential-related activity for those buildings. The degree of activity likely to be generated from the development will therefore be limited. We would also accept conditions which restrict permitted development rights to be attached where necessary.

As such, it has been demonstrated that the site is capable of delivering 4no. – 5no. dwellings in accordance with local and national Green Belt policy.

#### *Impact on Character*

Depending on the final scale and mix of housing, between 4no. and 5no. dwellings can be delivered on the site, served by a remodelling of the existing private access off Fir Tree Hill. The site forms its own character due to the physical separation from properties to the west and is mostly screened from public vantage points due to the distance from Fir Tree Hill and woodland screening to the west. Nevertheless, Clarendon Fields provides an example of a cul-de-sac approach served by four dwellings in the immediate surrounding area.

This level of development is considered to be in keeping with the existing character of The Grove Lodge estate which already comprises a cluster of buildings set around an access road, including two existing bungalows. The development even provides opportunity to improve greening and openness through improved layout of built form and the introduction of gardens and soft landscaping.

The houses would be set within ample plots. They would be set back from the proposed access road to provide front car parking and space for soft landscaping. Suitable flank to boundary separation distances are achievable and private rear gardens would provide amenity space in line with local guidance.

#### Five Year Housing Land Supply

We also note that the Council is currently only able to demonstrate 1.9 years supply of deliverable housing (as per Housing Land Supply Update, December 2022). The site would make a contribution to the Council's housing land supply through optimising the use of previously developed land and the provision of additional housing should be afforded substantial weight.

The Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan states that the Council is fully committed to working proactively and is utilising the full range of tools and processes at its disposal. In this instance, through utilising permission in principle, the Council has the opportunity to boost its housing supply on a windfall site.

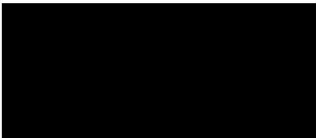
## **Conclusion**

The site is previously developed land in the Green Belt. It has been demonstrated that the complete redevelopment of the site for 4no. – 5no. dwellings can be achieved without a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. As such, the proposal can be considered as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 149(g) and Policies CP11 of the Core Strategy and DM2 of the Development Management Policies document (adopted 2013). It has also been shown that the amount and location of the development would not harm the character of the area.

Permission in principle should therefore be granted for the redevelopment of the site for 4no. – 5no. dwellings, with all other matters to be considered at technical design stage.

This application should also be considered in the context of the Council's current undersupply of deliverable housing and the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out at paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

Yours faithfully



**Rob Morgan MRTPI**  
Associate Director  
Savills