

Supporting statement for planning application at Bramling farmyard

Introduction

With experience in the holiday letting sector in Kent already, we, as the owners, are aware of the increasing demand for high-quality, rural holiday accommodation in the UK.

Our business model has always been ‘Kent-centric’ and we are continuing to develop properties and invest in Kent. With this development at Bramling, our intention is to offer a sustainable, multigenerational and ecologically rich proposal that will enrich the locality, bring tourism and boost spending in the Canterbury area and beyond.

Alongside the economic benefits that this development brings, it will also benefit the surrounding family farm helping to maintain its agricultural productivity as well as preserving its heritage by re-purposing the currently disused buildings within the farm yard. In addition, the proposed landscaping plan contains native species and species that will enhance the local ecology and provide essential habitats for a wide variety of animal species. For example, we are incorporating bat access tiles and bat roosts in the appropriate buildings specifically designed to preserve local bat populations which then should continue to thrive on the site with the provision of these features.

The proposed scheme has been conceived and designed with regard to the National Planning Policy Framework issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, September 2023 and the Canterbury City Council Adopted Local Plan 2017 (CCCALP). In consideration of these, this proposed development:

- promotes the development and diversification of an agricultural businesses; and
- provides a sustainable rural tourism development that benefits businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respects the character of the countryside.

We lay out further details below.

Economic and Social Considerations

Land Use:

The development will provide overall benefit to Bramling Farm; specifically the improvements and long term preservation of the historical agricultural buildings. Sympathetic exterior and interior architectural design are to be used to retain the rural appearance and ‘feel’ of the existing buildings; thus with the aim to promote diversification of the farm and the preservation of the now redundant historical agricultural buildings which would otherwise fall into disrepair.

Tourism:

The CCCALP states that *“The District is an important tourist destination and hosted 7.2 million visitors in 2015 (Source: Economic Impact Research 2015 - Cool Tourism), therefore tourism forms an important part of the local economy”*. From the Visit Kent Tourism Economic Impact Study (8th December 2020) it is noted that Canterbury is a key hub for tourism in Kent, plus notably, the market is continuing to grow, hence the need for good quality, well-located accommodation that is attractive to a broad range of visitors. This also fits in with the CCCALP which is written to ensure that the area’s traditional economic strengths including culture, heritage, leisure, hospitality and shopping, can be sustained.

The proposed development has been thoughtfully designed to welcome a range of guests, notably multi-generational groups of families and friends, meaning that there is expected to be that broad range of visitors who want a spectrum of Kent experiences from history, culture, beaches, dog walks, spiritual experiences, food and drink etc. The development provides them with good quality

accommodation attracting them to stay, experience and spend. Therefore, it is considered that that the development supports the CCCALP “Canterbury Experience”¹ and traditional economic strengths in that it aims to bring in visitors, from both the UK and overseas across a range of ages, to experience the culture and heritage of the area plus supports further growth in employment.

The location of the development is ideally placed for visiting Canterbury, Whitstable, Herne Bay etc., as well as further afield to Folkestone and Dungeness for instance. This is further strengthened by the intention to use a Canterbury-based holiday lettings agency, Bloom Stays, who promote the benefits of Kent to visitors, including both amazing food and drink available in the local pubs, restaurants and shops as well as places to visit from large attractions such as Canterbury Cathedral, to small vineyards, specialist shops and conservation projects such as Wildwood. Using a Canterbury-based holiday lettings agency also means that jobs stay in the local area, plus Bloom Stay promote and facilitate the use of local services to visitors such as yoga teachers, caterers and wine tasters.

Employment:

It is important that during the building phase, local Kent contractors are used that then utilise small more specialist businesses and local suppliers, where possible.

The buildings currently on site are not fit for purpose and redundant for modern farming practices. These buildings are not currently used by the farming business. Once the buildings are converted and in use as holiday cottages, there will be a need to employ local workers to help with the running of the business. This would consist of maintenance personnel, cleaning operatives and gardeners amongst others. Bringing these buildings back into use will therefore produce a net employment gain in the area.

By providing accommodation to a number of visitors, it is the intention that this development will bring business to both the local and wider Kent economy. Notwithstanding the contribution to the wider tourism economy, in order for the development to succeed in boosting the local economy it is the intention for the owners of the development to access a broad range of specialist local services in the Canterbury and wider Kent area. As noted above, these would include cleaning contractors, specialist tradespeople and suppliers (including caterers and providers of “in-accommodation” experiences such as yoga teachers and private chefs).

¹ CCCALP Canterbury Experience - This outcome recognised the increasing value from the “Experience Economy” which is broadly defined as using money to enjoy experiences, rather than purchasing goods. This covers a range of activities, including cultural, tourism, heritage, leisure and “spiritual experiences. The aim is to broaden the experience of visitors to Canterbury city, beyond retail, by seeking to improve both the quality of facilities and the visitor experience and customer care. It also aims to increase income from higher and extended spending on such activities. Focus on this outcome would not only benefit Canterbury city centre but the town centres of Whitstable and Herne Bay as they all have something different to offer.

Environmental Performance²

High environmental performance and sustainability is of great importance to us and fundamental to the proposed development. This will be seen at both the development and building stages as well as in the ongoing management of the buildings. This important message will be conveyed to visitors in both marketing literature and the accommodation experience through the provision of such things as EV car charging points, recycling points, information on bats and other wildlife, information on how to access cycling and local footpaths, alongside supporting educational documentation for guests around the positive environmental, cultural and natural aspects of the farming operations that surround the development. This holistic approach to the experience provides visitors with an opportunity to discover more about the importance of farming and wildlife in Kent as well as the rich history of the county and its industries such as viticulture, hop farming and fruit growing.

It is the intention to complete the development works to the highest standards of environmental performance. Whilst it is not proposed to obtain certification such as BREEAM or LEED, it is intended that the development will follow the key principles of these schemes.

Building Repurposing and Materials:

As noted above, the proposed development will be a reuse of existing historical agricultural buildings. To gain the best environmental outcome, it is proposed to be mindful of the materials and methods used in the renovation, such as using high-recycled content and reclaimed materials, avoiding using materials that are difficult to recycle with a focus on renewable materials such as timber and aiming to source materials (e.g. stone) from as local as practically possible. The reuse of the buildings rather than demolishing and rebuilding, also gives a positive impact with regard to preservation of embodied carbon.

Energy:

Consideration has been given to building design to use less energy, notably utilising plenty of natural daylight including roof lights and open plan living, low voltage LED lighting throughout, plus high standards of insulation to reduce heating requirements. Each unit has been designed with a woodburning stove (locally sourced timber will be provided) and solar pv panels and batteries for on-site electricity generation and storage, supplemented by electricity from the grid on a renewable supply tariff. There is no natural gas connection to the site, it is therefore proposed to either use electricity or a green gas alternative for heating and hot water (such as Calor Gas sustainable Futuria liquid gas (previously BioLPG)).

Water consumption and efficiency:

It is proposed that each unit will be built with water consumption and efficiency in mind. This includes rainwater harvesting/grey water recycling and water efficient taps and showers in all units. In addition, we are purposefully not proposing to install hot tubs or a swimming pool thus reducing both energy and water and wastewater production.

² CCCLP Green Economy - This outcome recognised the importance of a vision underpinned by strong environmental principles. This included sustainable building practices, use of renewable energy and green travel. This may also include education and promotion of environmental issues to encourage a more environmentally responsible way of living and working. A green economy would encourage local business that is resource-efficient and socially responsible. Encouraging healthy living enhances well-being, supports green infrastructure and promotes public transport. It also includes environmental knowledge-based and high tech jobs for example in green energy, construction and agricultural services.

Waste:

Effective waste management and minimisation is essential in the construction phase. It is intended to use building contractors who have a clear waste management policy, including effective resource use to reduce waste produced, plus a policy of zero waste to landfill where practical. It is also important to have effective storage of waste on site so as to cause minimal impact to local residents, reducing the risk of blown wastes and reducing lorry movements as much as possible.

During occupancy, segregated bins and information will be provided to visitors to enable them to easily separate waste for recycling, with food waste going for off-site composting. Discreet bin stores have been designed into the scheme to allow visitors to place their waste into a central location, thus preventing unsightly build-up or multiple waste bins outside each unit.

Ecology:³

Conservation and an appreciation of wildlife is of high importance to the family farming business and is therefore reflected in the plans for this development. An Ecological Impact Assessment was undertaken in October 2022 to support the adjacent planning application for Bramling Court Farmhouse and stables and this has been used to inform the ecological value, conservation and enhancement of this adjacent site. Species noted to be present in the October 2022 report include bats (brown long-eared bats and common pipistrelle bats), common lizards and slow-worms. Measures proposed for this application include the incorporation of bat access tiles and bat tubes. In 2023 further bat survey work has been undertaken to inform the supporting EclA, concluding in the incorporation of bat access tiles and bat tubes/roosts. A wildflower planting scheme has also been incorporated to enhance the biodiversity of the site and will provide habitat for reptiles.

A key draw for visitors to Kent is the outstanding countryside and wildlife. It is intended that the development gives an opportunity to provide education to the visitors, through information about the farming practices, wildflower planting, the bat roosts (including the potential to hold bat walks) and other species present (such as common lizards).

Transport:

Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of visitors will be travelling to Bramling by private vehicles, information on public and active transport will be provided and strongly encouraged. For example, there is a bus route along the nearby A257 Canterbury Road, with regular buses into Canterbury taking approximately 15 minutes, or to Wingham Wildlife Park taking a little over 5 minutes. Cycle route 16 is a 10 minute cycle ride away at Adisham, where it links Canterbury to the north-west with Dover to the south-east.

Adisham Railway station is 2.2 miles to the south and Bekesbourne railway station is approximately 3 miles to the south-west. Both have connections to/from London and Canterbury and are a short taxi or cycle ride to the proposed development.

EV car charging has been designed into the scheme, and it is proposed to either provide cycles or a cycle hire option, plus to encourage walking and use of the many local footpaths.

³ NPPF Sept 23 Section 15 174. d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. NPPF Sept 23 Section 15 Habitats and Biodiversity 180 d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.*

References and Planning Background

This document makes reference to:

The National Planning Policy Framework issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, September 2023 [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141442/nppf-2023.pdf) (NPPF) which states that “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.” This is laid out in 3 overarching and interdependent objectives as follows:

a) 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;

b) 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 well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF states that local plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Every local authority is required by the NPPF to produce a local plan for its whole area. Local plans must address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change and should set out the opportunities for development and provide clear policies on what will or will not be permitted. Reference is also therefore made to the Canterbury City Council Adopted Local Plan, 2017 (CCCALP) [Adopted Local Plan | Canterbury City Council](https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/adopted-local-plan).