



SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

The Estate Yard, Chiddingstone Causeway, TN11 8LE

March 2019

SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

In support of an application for the
**redevelopment of the site; including the conversion of two commercial buildings
to dwellinghouses and the erection of a semi-detached pair of dwellinghouses**

at

The Estate Yard, Chiddingstone Causeway, TN11 8LE

On behalf of

The Trustees of the Redleaf Trust

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement is prepared on behalf of The Trustees of the Redleaf Trust, in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of the Estate Yard. The proposal includes the conversion of the main barn/former workshop to a residential dwelling, along with the replacement of the existing extension and the conversion of the small barn/former office to a residential dwelling. The demolition of the existing storage building and the erection of a semi-detached pair of dwellings is also proposed, infilling some of the street frontage adjacent to 6 Camp Hill Cottages.
- 1.2. This statement considers the proposed development in relation to the context of the site, relevant local and national planning policies and all other material planning considerations.
- 1.3. This application follows pre-application discussions with the Council and takes into account the recommendations made.

Supporting documents

- 1.4. This application is supported by the following:
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal produced by KB Ecology Ltd on 27 April 2018, Reference number 2017/04/03;
 - Structural Appraisal, produced by Lambert and Foster January 2019;
 - Heritage Statement, produced by Lambert and Foster January 2019;
 - Contamination Report produced by Soiltec on 4 May 2017;
 - Arboricultural Impact Appraisal produced by Owen Allpress on 5 March 2019;
 - Site and block plan drawing number P001B;
 - Existing large barn to be converted drawing number P010;
 - Existing small pitched roof barn to be converted drawing number P011;
 - Existing storage building to be demolished drawing number P012;

- Proposed semi-detached pair of dwellings, drawing number P002A;
- Proposed large barn conversion, drawing number P003B;
- Proposed small barn conversion, drawing number P004A.

2. The site & its surroundings

- 2.1. The application site consists of a 0.167 hectare parcel of brownfield land on the south side of Camp Hill. The site is a former estate yard/builders yard with a central hardstanding area, flanked by commercial buildings. There is a redundant joinery workshop/main barn in the north east corner, an office building to the eastern side, adjacent to the common boundary with the residential dwellinghouse Stonelake, and an open storage building to the west, which abuts the common boundary with no.6 Camp Hill Cottages, a residential dwellinghouse.



Google Earth image of site

- 2.2. The application site holds a prominent location on the eastern side of Camp Hill, when entering the village from the north.
- 2.3. The site is bounded by residential dwellings to the north, east, west and south. To the north of the application site are three low level residential dwellinghouses constructed from black weatherboarding, with a brick plinth and clay tiled roofs. These buildings were formally commercial buildings in connection with the estate yard, and were converted to residential use in excess of 15 years ago.

- 2.4. Adjacent to the eastern boundary is the curtilage area of Stonelake, a Grade 2 Listed residential dwellinghouse.
- 2.5. To the south west of the application site are 1-6 Camp Hill Cottages, which are two storey residential dwellings. These dwellings are traditional in design, incorporating render at ground floor level with tile hanging at first floor level and tiled, hipped roofs. No.6 Camp Hill Cottages has a two storey front projection, incorporating a hipped roof towards the main dwelling. This is an original feature of the dwelling and mirrored by No.4 Camp Hill Cottages at the opposite end of the terrace.

Locational sustainability

- 2.6. Chiddingstone Causeway is a rural village 4 miles west of Tonbridge. The village benefits from local amenities including a local shop with post office, public house, a village hall and church.
- 2.7. It is served by Penshurst mainline train station, and also by the 231 and 233 bus routes, which link Lingfield, Edenbridge and Tunbridge Wells via Bidborough.
- 2.8. Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2018, seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas. It notes that housing should be located where it will “*enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities*”. Paragraph 79 seeks to avoid isolated new homes in the countryside.
- 2.9. Due to the location of the site within the village and existing facilities it is not considered that the site is isolated.

Relevant planning history

- 2.10. In November 2000, consent was granted for the change in use of redundant estate yard store and stable to form two lettable residential units and one small B1 unit (reference SE/00/02633/LBCALT).
- 2.11. In January 2004 subsequent applications were approved for the change of use of the B1 building within the estate yard to a bed-sit dwelling and minor alterations, under reference SE/04/00178/FUL and SE/04/00185/LBCALT.

Pre-application advice

- 2.12. Pre-application advice was sought from Sevenoaks District Council in 2018, regarding the conversion and re-use of the existing buildings for residential use. Council Officers advised that the principle of the development could be acceptable provided that the new use, along with any associated use of land surrounding the building would not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt or harm the existing area. Officers also advised that it would need to be demonstrated that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction, which would detract from their original character.
- 2.13. In respect of the proposed new dwellings (which were shown at pre-application stage as a single, detached dwellinghouse), it was advised that a new dwelling here could constitute limited infilling within a village. It is noted that the design of the development should be in keeping with the area and preserve the amenities of adjoining residential properties.

Other relevant applications

- 2.14. Outside the application site, to the north east of the estate yard, is a dwelling known as "Pucknells". This building was granted planning permission for conversion from a tackle shed/barn to residential use in 2007, under reference SE/07/03588/FUL. In October 2017 planning permission was granted for a two storey side extension to this dwelling, under reference SE/17/02412/HOUSE, which resulted in an increase in residential floorspace of around 46.9%.

3. Proposed development

- 3.1. This application seeks planning permission for the holistic residential redevelopment of the estate yard, through the conversion of two of the existing buildings and the construction of a semi-detached pair of dwellings, following the demolition of the existing storage building.

The semi-detached pair (plots 1 & 2)

- 3.2. The proposal includes the erection of a semi-detached pair of dwellinghouses, infilling the road frontage with Camp Hill, and making best use of this previously developed site.
- 3.3. This section of Camp Hill consists of a mixture of residential dwelling styles, with a semi-detached converted commercial buildings to the north and terraces of two storey dwellinghouses to the south. Further along the village in Richards Close there are a combination of terraces and semi-detached pairs of dwellinghouses. Planning permission was recently granted for the erection of a semi-detached pair of dwellings on the corner of Camp Hill and Richards Close, which have been constructed, along with a semi-detached pair of dwellings to the rear of Nos 1 & 2 Camp Hill Cottages.
- 3.4. This semi-detached pair have been designed to be in keeping with the neighbouring properties; incorporating a mix of brickwork at ground floor level, with tile hanging at first floor level, a set back at first floor level and hipped, pitched roofs.
- 3.5. Internally the dwellings will each accommodate a hallway, WC, kitchen and living/dining room at ground floor level, with three bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor level.
- 3.6. Two parking spaces are provided for each dwelling adjacent to plot 2.

The main barn conversion (plot 3)

- 3.7. The redundant main barn was formerly used as a joinery/workshop in connection with the builder's yard. It has an existing single storey extension to the eastern elevation. The proposals include the demolition of this extension, which is wholly out of keeping with the original barn, and the erection of a modest, single storey extension, sympathetic to the main building. The materials of the extension are to be in keeping with the existing building and its rural location, consisting of timber cladding and a clay tiled roof.

- 3.8. Internally the building will accommodate a hallway, utility room, WC, study, kitchen and living/dining room, with three bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor level.
- 3.9. The curtilage area for this dwelling will wrap around the building from the north east to the west, with parking for two vehicles to the western side of the curtilage.

The small barn (plot 4)

- 3.10. This single storey small barn located to the east of the site was formerly used as an office in connection with the builder's yard. It is modest in size, incorporating a pitched roof, with the ridge running from side to side. The building is timber clad with a felt tiled roof. The proposals to convert this building to a residential dwellinghouse include the retention of the existing window openings within the front (north west) elevation and within the flank (north east) elevation, overlooking the property's proposed garden area. The existing high level windows within the rear (south east) elevation are to be removed.
- 3.11. Internally this building will accommodate a living/dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom.
- 3.12. The curtilage area for this dwelling is located to the north east side and to the north west (front) of the dwelling, where parking can also be provided for two vehicles.
- 3.13. Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) allows for the conversion of offices to residential, subject to certain criteria. As this building has been used as an office in connection with the established business for in excess of 30 years, a prior notification application could be submitted to change the use of this building to a residential unit. However, in this instance it was determined to submit a scheme for the holistic redevelopment of the site, rather than adopting a piecemeal approach.

4. Policy

Policy overview

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 advises that “*a determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”.
- 4.2. For the purpose of this planning application, the Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, the Allocations and Development Management Plan and Sevenoaks District Council Supplementary Planning Document: Development in the Green Belt.
- 4.3. In addition to the development plan the Government published the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2018. The NPPF replaces previous National guidance, sets out the Government’s requirements and policies for planning in England and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration. Of particular importance is Annex 1 of the NPPF, which sets out the weight to be afforded to existing development plan policies. Paragraph 213 states that “*existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*”.
- 4.4. This section of the statement highlights the relevant parts of the NPPF and Council’s development plan in respect of this application, along with the weight that should be afforded to the existing adopted policies.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.5. Overall the general thrust of government guidance remains the same, with the presumption in favour of sustainable development being the core objective for the planning system, with the premise that sustainable development should go ahead without delay.

- 4.6. In all respects, the NPPF seeks to maximise opportunities for the supply of housing in appropriate locations, that can contribute towards housing supply, along with maintaining and enhancing the vitality of existing communities. The key objective of sustainable development is expressed within paragraph 7 to be “*meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”.
- 4.7. Paragraph 8 refers to the three overarching objectives to sustainable development; namely economic, social and environment, which give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:
- contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, through the rights types of development in the right places;
 - supporting 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
 - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land.
- 4.8. Paragraph 10 details that “*at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, with Paragraph 11(b) reiterating that for plan-making this means that “*strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other land uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas*”, with Paragraph 11 (c) and (d) stating that for decision-taking this means:
- c) *Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- d) *Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:*
- i. *The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

- ii. *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework when taken as a whole.*

4.9. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF requires strategic policies to set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision of housing (amongst others). Footnote 12 clarifies this to be *“in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development”*.

4.10. In respect of housing supply, Paragraph 59 adds further that *“to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay”*. In this regard Paragraph 117 refers specifically to making effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, with Paragraph 118(d) stating that planning policies and decisions should *“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained...”* Footnote 45 acknowledges that this should include bringing empty homes and other buildings back into residential use.

4.11. Paragraph 78 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to promote sustainable development in rural areas, with housing located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It notes that *“planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services”*.

4.12. The NPPF sends out a very clear message that the Government considers planning to play a vital role in building our economy and encouraging growth in both urban and other areas and that significant weight should be attached to the advice set out within it. This planning application fully accords within advice set out in the Framework, on the basis that it complies with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which makes it clear that where relevant policies in the development plan are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as a whole and unless specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

- 4.13. In respect of design, the NPPF identifies that good design is a key aspect to sustainable development (paragraph 124), with Paragraph 127 detailing that planning policies and decisions should ensure developments:
- a) *Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;*
 - b) *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - c) *Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;*
 - d) *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;*
 - e) *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and*
 - f) *Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future.*
- 4.14. With specific regard to development within the Green Belt, Paragraph 145 states that whilst a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as ‘inappropriate’ development within the Green Belt, that there are exceptions to this; including “*limited infilling in villages*” (criteria e), with Paragraph 146 stating that other forms of development which are not considered to be ‘inappropriate’ include “*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*” (criteria d)
- 4.15. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authority’s to approach decision-taking in a positive way, encouraging decision-takers to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (paragraph 38).
- 4.16. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF advises that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are *necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.*

The Development Plan

Core Strategy

- 4.17. The Core Strategy is the key strategic planning document that underpins the Local Plan and sets the principle for development in the District over the period to 2026. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2011, prior to the publication of the NPPF, in line with regional policy in the now deleted South East Plan. It is, therefore, in parts inconsistent with current national planning policy within the NPPF.
- 4.18. The Core Strategy sets out the general approach to scale and location of development but does not deal with specific development sites or detailed policy issues, which are addressed in subsequent supplementary planning documents.
- 4.19. Policy LO7 refers to development in rural settlements and provides a hierarchy of where development will be permitted; with the main urban areas being the areas where most development is focused (Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge); Local Service Centres (New Ash Green, Otford and Westerham) having some modest development; Service Villages (Brasted, Crockenhill, Eynsford, Farningham, Halstead, Hartley, Hextable, Horton, Kirby, Kemsing, Knockholt Pound, Leigh, Seal, Sevenoaks Weald, Shorham, South Darenth, Sundridge and West Kingsdown) are acknowledged as having restricted scope for further development within their settlement confines and as locations only suitable for small scale development, limited infilling and redevelopment, where consistent with the local village character. The remaining smaller villages and hamlets are noted as having a very restricted range of services, with development in some of these locations being limited to small scale infilling only.
- 4.20. Policy LO8 details that the extent of the Green Belt will be maintained, and the countryside conserved. Development that supports the rural economy and vitality of local communities will be supported if it is compatible with policies for protecting the Green Belt, the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB.
- 4.21. Policy SP1 is the strategic design policy and requires all new development to be of a high quality, responding to distinctive local character.

Allocations and Development Management Plan

- 4.22. The Allocations and Development Management Plan was adopted in February 2015 (post-NPPF) and allocates specific sites for new development, defines protected sites, designates Green Belt boundaries, contains detailed planning policies and replaces all remaining saved policies from the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, 2000.
- 4.23. Policy SC1 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan reflects the requirements of the NPPF and states that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It refers specifically to instances where there are no policies relevant or relevant policies are out of date at the time of decision-making.
- 4.24. Policy EN1 is the general design policy and seeks that all proposals create a high quality design compatible with the area.
- 4.25. Policy EN2 seeks to provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupants of the development, whilst also safeguarding the amenities of occupants of nearby properties.
- 4.26. Policy GB1 refers to extensions to properties within the Green Belt and the criteria that must be met for proposals to extend a dwellinghouse. Point c) advises that the floor space of the proposed extension and any previous extensions, alterations and outbuildings must not result in an increase of more than 50% above the floor space of the original dwelling.
- 4.27. Policy GB7 details that criteria that proposals for the re-use of a building in the Green Belt should meet, including:
- The proposed new use, along with any associated use of land surrounding the land, 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
 - 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.

- 4.28. Annex 2 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan details the current parking standards for the Borough.

Development in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document

- 4.29. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document for development within the Green Belt was adopted in 2015 (post-NPPF), to provide detailed guidance for development located within the Green Belt.
- 4.30. This document concurs with national policy restrictions for development within the Green Belt and Paragraph 3 of the development in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document refers specifically to limited residential infilling within villages in the Green Belt and defines Infill development as *"the completion of an otherwise substantially built up frontage by the filling of a narrow gap normally capable of taking one or two dwellings only"*.

Local Plan Review

- 4.31. Work has commenced on a new Local Plan to cover the period 2015 to 2035 and to supersede the Local Plan. This process will review and establish the number of homes and level of economic development that needs to be accommodated over the plan period. It will also identify how and where development will be distributed, including strategic sites if necessary.
- 4.32. The joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment published in September 2015 provides a key piece of evidence to underpin the planning of future housing developments within the District and identifies that the Objectively Assessed Need for market and affordable housing within Sevenoaks District between 2013 and 2033 amounts to 12,400 dwellings, which equates to 620 homes per year. This significantly exceeds the District's Core Strategy housing target. The housing need calculated for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council also significantly exceeds the Borough's Core Strategy targets.
- 4.33. Both Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are in a similar Local Plan position, with their Core Strategy adopted prior to the publication of the NPPF and a new Local Plan currently under preparation.
- 4.34. In a recent appeal made against Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (reference APP/M2270/2228680), the Inspector noted

“...the latest draft SHMA suggests that the objectively assessed need is for 648 additional homes per year in the borough. Whilst this will be considered in the preparation and testing of the new local plan, which is in the process by which an up to date housing requirement figure will be established, it is an appropriate benchmark against which to assess whether needs are currently being met and are likely to be in the future... It is clear that policies for the supply of housing set out in the existing local plan and core strategy are out of date and that housing needs are not currently being met in the borough”.

- 4.35. This is relevant as the Inspector detailed that the OAN for housing detailed within the SHMA was an “*appropriate benchmark*” against which to assess whether housing needs are being met.
- 4.36. Therefore, whilst Sevenoaks District Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land measured against the housing requirement within their Core Strategy it cannot demonstrate a Framework compliant supply of housing land in line with the 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- 4.37. The District Council have noted within their Authority Monitoring Report 2016 – 2017 that the Local Plan evidence base will be updated and a new housing target will be identified taking account of the OAN set out within the SHMA.
- 4.38. On this basis, it is determined that Sevenoaks District Council has a significant undersupply of housing for the Borough and does not have an up-to-date supply of housing based on its OAN. Policies relevant to the supply of housing do not, therefore, comply with NPPF requirements and are out-of-date. This is a material planning consideration within the determination of this application.

5. Planning considerations

Principle of development

- 5.1. As already detailed within section 4 of this statement Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that “*a determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”.
- 5.2. For the purpose of this application policy LO7 of the Core Strategy represents the core strategic policy for directing development and includes a desire to focus development within the main urban areas. However, this policy is entirely out of date with the Government’s objectives for planning and the desire to increase housing provision to meet full objectively assessed need. The restriction of development outside the village boundaries is particularly out of date because it does not reflect the more permissive stance to appropriate forms of development within the countryside, especially in respect of recently introduced powers to allow re-use of offices, agricultural buildings, storage buildings and light industrial buildings for residential use within the open countryside. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF is also clear that only isolated new dwellings should be avoided.
- 5.3. Notwithstanding concern over the validity of policy LO7, Paragraph 20 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to make “sufficient provision” for housing. Footnote 12 notes that this should be “*in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development*”.
- 5.4. Furthermore, paragraph 63 of the NPPF supports “*the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped...*”. The application site would comprise previously developed land by virtue of it having an established commercial use.
- 5.5. As set out in preceding sections of this Statement, whilst Sevenoaks District Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land measured against the housing requirement within their Core Strategy, the Core Strategy was prepared prior to the NPPF and the Council cannot demonstrate a Framework compliant supply of housing land in line with the results of the 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which they had carried out.

- 5.6. Therefore, policy LO7 and other policies relating to the supply of housing are out-of-date. Accordingly, the application must be considered in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.7. Paragraph 11 is clear that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that for decision-taking this means:
- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
 - d) where there are no relevant plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.8. Footnote 7 states that point d) includes *“for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites...”*

Whether specific policies provide a clear reason for refusing the proposed development

- 5.9. Turning to the first point of paragraph 11 d), restrictive policies are stated within the Framework to include those relating to land designated as Green Belt, amongst others.
- 5.10. Whilst the application has to be considered in the context of sustainable development, it also has to accord with National Green Belt policies and not conflict with other policies contained within the Framework.

- 5.11. Section 13 of the NPPF details the great importance which the Government attaches to Green Belts, with the fundamental aim being to prevent urban sprawl, by keeping land permanently open. Paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF describe certain forms of development that are not inappropriate within the Green Belt provided that they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. One of the exceptions included within paragraph 145 is for “*limited infilling in villages*”. Paragraph 146 details other forms of development which are not considered to be inappropriate, which includes “*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*”.
- 5.12. Core Strategy Policy LO7 concurs with national policy and sets out that infilling and redevelopment on a small-scale will be permitted in rural areas, providing that the scale and nature is appropriate to the village concerned.
- 5.13. The south side of Camp Hill is predominantly characterised by residential dwellings, with the application site adjoined by residential dwellings on the north, east and south boundaries. The proposed semi-detached pair of dwellings are shown to be sited on the western periphery of the site, infilling the gap in an otherwise built-up street frontage. This element of the proposed development will therefore fall within the exception of “*limited infilling in villages*” of paragraph 145 and does not, therefore, constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
- 5.14. The proposals to convert the existing buildings fall within the exception of “*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*”. Thus, this element of the development complies with one of the exceptions of paragraph 146 and does not constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
- 5.15. In respect of the conversion of the existing main barn and former office buildings (small barn), one of the exceptions within paragraph 146 of the NPPF is “*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*”. Local policy GB7 concurs with this, providing that “*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 reconstruction that would detract from their original character*”.

- 5.16. This application proposes the conversion of these two existing buildings, along with minor alterations in respect of the replacement of doors and windows and the replacement of the existing extension to the barn will with a smaller single storey lean-to addition, more in keeping with the rural character of the building. This element of the proposal therefore falls within one of the exceptions of paragraph 146 of the NPPF, thus would not conflict with either national Green Belt policy or policies GB1 or GB7 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- 5.17. A structural appraisal has been undertaken by Lambert & Foster, and a detailed report produced on the potential to convert the buildings to residential use is provided in support of this application.
- 5.18. To summarise, this report recognises that the buildings are of sound and permanent construction and capable of conversion to residential units, without major or complete reconstruction. Therefore, there would be no conflict with paragraph 146 of the NPPF or with Policy GB7.

Impact upon openness in the Metropolitan Green Belt

- 5.19. As detailed above, as the proposed development represents a combination of limited infilling, in respect of the proposed semi-detached pair, and the reuse of existing buildings, it does not constitute inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt
- 5.20. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the five purposes of the Green Belt are;
- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

- 5.21. The proposed development would not conflict with any of these purposes, through the infilling of a gap within a substantially built up frontage and the change of use of some existing buildings and the demolition of a redundant store. As such, the development would comply with Core Strategy Policy LO8, which requires the extent of the Green Belt to be maintained and the countryside conserved.
- 5.22. The proposal site does not lie within any other designated planning areas; such as a Conservation Area or AONB and is not subject to any nature designations, such as being an SSSI. The site does not contain, and is not within close proximity to, any physical constraint such as an area at risk of flooding. Accordingly, no policies of the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Whether any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits

- 5.23. The second point of paragraph 11 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework, emphasises that it is not appropriate only to weigh the positive impacts against the negative impacts, but that it is also necessary to demonstrate whether any adverse impacts would *significantly* and *demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development. Where the decision-maker considers that there would be adverse impacts, it is necessary to consider if these would significantly outweigh the benefits, otherwise the Framework makes it clear that the balance should tilt in favour of approving the development.
- 5.24. In this case, it is necessary to consider whether this proposal for a semi-detached pair of dwellings, infilling a section of land adjacent to existing dwellings and built form, and the conversion of the two existing commercial barns would result in any *significant* or *demonstrable* harm to the area.
- 5.25. In this respect it is presented that, in relation to the following material considerations for this application, there would not be any adverse impacts arising from the proposal which would *significantly* and *demonstrably* outweigh the benefits, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework;
- Amenity, including existing neighbours and prospective occupiers;
 - Parking and Highways;

- Flood Risk;
- Heritage;
- Land contamination;
- Flood risk and
- Ecological considerations;

5.26. These matters are considered in detail below.

Use

5.27. The application site was formerly used as a builder's yard, most recently operating within the three existing buildings (used as a workshop, office and storage building) with the courtyard area being used predominantly for open storage and vehicle parking.

5.28. In recent years elements of the builder's yard have been redeveloped, including the buildings adjacent to plot 3 which were granted permission for conversion to three dwellings.

5.29. The site is now surrounded by residential dwellings, with the proposed residential use being much more in keeping with the immediate vicinity than the existing, historical use.

Amount

5.30. This application seeks to convert two of the existing, redundant commercial buildings each to a single residential dwelling house along with the erection of a semi-detached pair.

5.31. The proposal includes the removal of the barn's existing extension and the erection of a modest single storey lean-to extension, along with the conversion of the existing roof area to additional habitable living accommodation. Whilst the alterations will result in a marginal increase in floor area, having regard to the use of the existing roof space, there is a net reduction within the overall volume of the building from approximately 765 cubic metres to 662 cubic metres.

5.32. The proposal also includes the removal of the existing single storey storage building, located to the south of the site, adjacent to where the semi-detached pair are proposed, which has a floor area of approximately 149sqm. The proposed semi-detached pair of dwellings, which will replace this building, have a combined floor area of approximately 172sqm. Thus, there is a marginal increase in floor area of 23sqm.

Layout

5.33. Plots 1 and 2 have been positioned so that they front Camp Hill, with their private garden areas located to the rear. This is more in keeping with the adjacent residential dwellings and reduces the spread of built form within the site.

5.34. The two barns, which are to be converted are sited around the central hardstanding area, and will each have a private garden and parking for two cars. The existing expanse of hard standing will be reduced by approximately half, and used as an access road and as the gardens for the new dwellings.

5.35. The village contains a mixture of plot sizes, and the proposed development is comparable with the surroundings.

5.36. The existing hard standing area will be significantly reduced in size to provide access to the new dwellings, and increase the soft landscaping within the area.

Design & scale

5.37. Section 12 of the Framework identifies that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

5.38. Local strategic policy SP1 of the Core Strategy requires that all new development is of a high quality, responding to distinctive local character. Similarly, policy EN1 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan reflects this and seeks all proposals to create a high quality design compatible with the surrounding area.

- 5.39. The proposed semi-detached pair have been positioned to reflect the existing spatial pattern of the immediate area, reflecting the relationship between neighbouring houses. Their ridge heights, bulk and mass are comparable to the directly adjacent properties along Camp Hill, and the roofs have been designed to be ridged and hipped in keeping with these properties. The proposed materials include bricks at ground floor level with tile hanging at first floor level and clay tiled roofs.
- 5.40. The main barn and office/storage (small barn) buildings have been in situ for many years, thus already form part of the spatial pattern of the area and have a rural character in keeping with the area.
- 5.41. The proposals include the demolition of the existing extensions to the main barn, 'plot 3', which wraps around the building's front and side elevations. These additions are undoubtedly out of character with the original barn and detract from its appearance and the surrounding area. The proposals include a modest, single storey lean-to extension to the east elevation, and the provision of full height glazing to the front elevation, following the removal of the existing flat roofed porch. The proposed extension is subservient to the main building in terms of its height and proportions and has been designed with materials to match the main building, enabling it to be readily integrated. The proposed glazing to the front elevation will add some additional character to the building, in a contemporary manner.
- 5.42. In respect of the small barn, 'plot 4', the proposed alterations are relatively minor, designed in a sensitive manner, sympathetic to the main building, with the main openings staying the same with a change of roof materials. The character of this building will therefore be retained and enhanced by the change of use from office to residential use.
- 5.43. The proposed development, in its entirety, has been carefully considered to ensure that the rural character of the existing buildings and surrounding area is retained. Therefore, the proposals comply with the requirements of paragraph 56 of the NPPF and policies SP1 of the Core Strategy and EN1 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan.

- 5.44. Within the wider site, the proposal would result in various improvements from a landscaping perspective; including the removal of the external, open storage, which undoubtedly detracts from the visual amenity of the area, the removal of the bramble scrub to the north east of the site and the replacement of the existing large expanse of hardstanding with modest driveways and parking facilities, grassed garden areas and planting.
- 5.45. The existing hedgerows and trees will be retained to the north east and south east boundaries (see Arboricultural Impact Appraisal for further information). Additional trees and shrubs are also proposed to the west and south west of the site to enhance the rural character of the area.

Access, highways & parking

- 5.46. The application site has an existing access from Camp Hill. The access is to be altered slightly to allow the two converted stable buildings, which are outside of the application site, to retain a suitable level of private parking, as shown on the proposed plans.
- 5.47. The access will provide vehicular access to serve all of the proposed dwellings, each of which will have two independently accessible parking spaces, as per the requirements of Annex 2 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- 5.48. The proposed development would not amount to a material increase in traffic numbers, nor to any severe residual cumulative impacts. As such, there would be no requirement for this application to be accompanied by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment, in accordance with Paragraph 111 of the NPPF.
- 5.49. The site is within a sustainable location, where future residents would also have the benefit of using existing public transport in the form of the local mainline station or bus routes.

Impact on residential amenity

- 5.50. The proposed dwellings have been positioned to reflect the existing spatial pattern of the immediate area, reflecting the relationship between neighbouring houses.

- 5.51. The ridge heights, bulk and mass of the new dwellings are comparable to that which exists within the surrounding area, which consists of a mix of single and two storey dwellings.
- 5.52. There are no openings proposed within the side elevations of the proposed dwellings. Therefore, the development will not result in any overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring properties.
- 5.53. Taking account of the separation distance between the proposed dwellings and existing dwellings, along with the specific site circumstances there will be little scope for the proposed semi-detached pair to result in any loss of daylight/sunlight to neighbouring dwellings.
- 5.54. In terms of the buildings to be converted, the external façade of both the main barn and small barn will be altered slightly; in respect of the main barn through the replacement of the extension to one more in keeping with the area, and in respect of the small barn through the provision of some additional windows and the replacement of the existing wooden doors.
- 5.55. The windows in the main barn are to remain predominantly unaltered, although windows are proposed. The building adjoins the neighbouring property to the north west, with a solid wall, thus there are no privacy issues arising in this regard. Due to the orientation of the building in respect of the neighbouring building to the south there will be limited scope for any overlooking or loss of privacy. Furthermore, the two dwellings would be separated by a close boarded fence, with the existing mature trees remaining to provide natural screening.
- 5.56. The former office (small barn) building is to be converted to a two-bed residential unit. As its south and west facades abut the boundary with Stonelake, the residential property to the rear, no new windows are proposed in these elevations. A single window is retained in the east elevation, which overlooks the property's private garden area, with three windows and a door in the front elevation, overlooking the property's front garden area. As such, the proposed new windows would not cause any loss of privacy to neighbouring residents.

5.57. The submitted plans show that dwellings could be provided at this site with adequate space and amenity provision for prospective occupants in keeping with the surrounding area and without prejudicing the amenities of existing residents. Therefore, it is submitted that the proposals accord with policy EN2 of the Core Strategy and National requirements.

Structural Appraisal

5.58. A structural appraisal was carried out by Lambert and Foster in January 2019. A copy of this report is produced in support of this application, as **Appendix 1**.

5.59. This appraisal sought to establish the potential for conversion of the main barn (plot 3) and the small barn (plot 4) to residential units, and detailed the method statement proposed.

5.60. The conclusions reached within the report were that the existing buildings are structurally sound and are of permanent and substantial construction, capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

Heritage assessment

5.61. As the application site adjoins the site of a Stonelake, a Grade II Listed Building, a heritage assessment of the proposals has been carried out, and is produced as **Appendix 2**. The application site and buildings themselves are within separate ownership from Stonelake, thus are not deemed to be curtilage listed.

5.62. The conclusions reached within the assessment are that the proposals provide the holistic redevelopment of the Estate Yard, with the proposed extensions being considered more sympathetic and in keeping with existing buildings and surrounding area than those which currently exist. Therefore, it is considered that these changes will enhance the main and small barns, and in turn enhance the setting of the former Estate Yard and preserve the significance of Stonelake.

5.63. In respect of the proposed new dwellings, it is noted that these have been designed to relate sympathetically to the traditional vernacular feature of the nearby Listed Building, thus will not result in a detrimental impact.

5.64. It is therefore submitted that the proposals fully accord with national and local planning policies and requirements, in respect of conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Contaminated land assessment

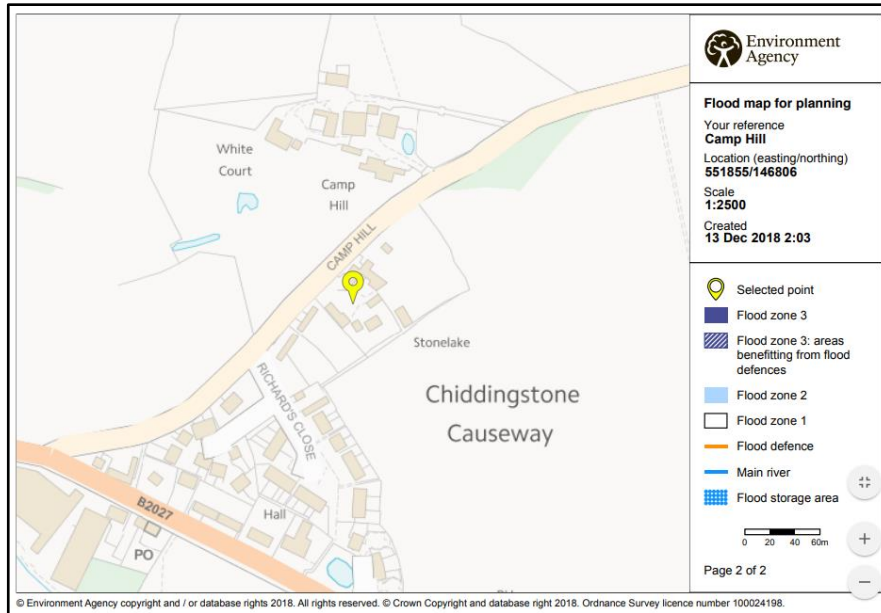
5.65. A Phased 1 Environmental Assessment (Desk-top Report) was carried out by Soiltec for the site in May 2017. A copy of this report is produced in support of the application, as **Appendix 3**.

5.66. Having regard to the historic uses on the site, and from the investigations carried out by Soiltec, it noted that it is possible that there could be sources of contamination on the site, although it is noted that the risk to human health and new dwellings could be classed as very low to moderate.

5.67. With this in mind, Soiltec recommend that a detailed phase II intrusive investigation of the site is carried out. Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to agree, a condition could be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring this.

Flood risk

5.68. The proposed development site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Environment Agency flood map. The site is, therefore, noted as being at very low risk of surface water flooding. Additionally, the large expanse of hard standing which currently exists will be reduced to provide a laid to lawn garden to the eastern side of the site.



Environment Agency flood map for the application site

Ecological enhancements

- 5.69. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF seeks to encourage the incorporation of biodiversity in and around developments.
- 5.70. Ecological enhancements are proposed in the form of additional tree planting along the south western boundary and also to the side of plot 2 and the installation of woodcrete bat boxes and bird boxes.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.71. The proposed development is liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy charge and form O has been completed and submitted accordingly.

6. Conclusion

Economic benefits

- 6.1. The proposed development would provide economic benefits by supporting local businesses in terms of the needs of the occupiers. There would be an investment in local trades and suppliers. The 'Plan for Growth' published by HM Treasury in March 2011 confirms that a successful construction industry is vital for sustainable growth in the UK and sets out that this includes the construction and maintenance of homes. It notes that providing new homes in the right places is vital for economic competitiveness.
- 6.2. Even a purely residential, small-scale project is able to make a contribution to the economic aspect of sustainability. The project would provide employment opportunities for trades-people and a need for building materials, with a number of economic benefits from the construction process likely to be felt at the local level.
- 6.3. Therefore, with regards to the economic dimension of the sustainability agenda, the proposal would provide benefits by supporting local businesses in the short term, and would act to enhance the economic vitality and viability of the area in the mid to long terms.
- 6.4. As such there are no known economic disadvantages which would be comparable to the positive impacts of the proposed development.

Social benefits

- 6.5. With regard to the social dimension, the proposal would provide benefits in the form of one two-bed dwelling and three family dwellings of three-bedrooms, which would make a valuable contribution to local housing supply, without detriment to neighbouring residential amenities.
- 6.6. As to whether the site represents a sustainable location for housing, paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework says, "to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities".

- 6.7. The site is located within the village of Chiddingstone Causeway and abuts residential development on the north, east, south and west. Due to its location amongst existing built development, the site benefits from a main line train station, local bus routes and a local shop. There is also a public house, village hall and Church within the village. There are nursery schools and primary schools within neighbouring villages of Chiddingstone and Penshurst.
- 6.8. The site cannot be considered to be 'isolated' given the fact that it is surrounded by residential properties to the north, east, south and west. To the contrary, the site's position adjacent to the existing residential area makes it a legitimate and logical infill plot, which could readily accommodate two new dwellings without compromising the quality or character of the area.

Environmental benefits

- 6.9. This proposal is for the redevelopment of a brownfield field site, which adjoins existing residential dwellings to the north, east, south and west.
- 6.10. The layout of the site and detailed design of the dwellings have been carefully considered. The submitted drawings illustrate how this residential redevelopment could provide a layout and design consistent with the character of the surrounding area which contains a mix of house types and styles. It is therefore submitted that the proposed development could be carried out in a manner which integrates successfully into this rural location, retaining the rural character of the area.
- 6.11. Enhancements to the site will also be carried out through landscaping improvements, including the reduction of hard standing area and the provision of private garden areas, retention of existing trees and the planting of new trees.
- 6.12. Given the sustainability of the location and as the proposal can be designed in a way which ensures there would not be any significant visual impact, there is not known to be any environmental disadvantages which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the overall benefits.

Final Conclusion

- 6.13. It is submitted that this proposal would constitute a sustainable form of development when compared against the three dimensions to be considered in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF, namely the economic benefits, the social benefit, including the sustainability of the location, and the environmental benefits, including landscape and visual impacts.
- 6.14. Additionally, there are no material considerations which indicate that this application should be restricted.
- 6.15. The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with local and national planning policies and requirements, particularly in regard to paragraph 38 of the NPPF, which states that local planning authorities should approach decision-making in a positive and creative way and advises that they should use the full range of planning tools available, seeking to approve applications to sustainable development where possible.
- 6.16. As such, we trust that this application can be considered favourably.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Structural Assessment, produced by Lambert and Foster

Appendix 2: Heritage Statement, produced by Lambert and Foster

Appendix 3: Contaminated Land Desk Top Study, produced by Soiltec