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16 April 2022

Chief Planning Officer
Mole Valley District Council
Pippbrook
Dorking
Surrey,
RH14 1SJ

Dear Sir

Application No: MO/2022/PLA – MAJOR
Location: Marsden Nursery and Garden Centre, Pleasure Pit Road,
Ashtead KT21 1HU

I refer to the above planning application on behalf of the Association for development on Metropolitan Green Belt.

In considering the proposal to demolish and remove existing buildings and structures prior to the erection of 26 dwellings with associated access we have given due diligence to the numerous accompanying reports.

From the Planning Statement – “3 Planning History” the applicant has itemised the planning history demonstrating how the site has evolved but an important application had been omitted. Perhaps by more than coincidence is the exclusion of planning application MO/2003/1285 also for the demolition of the site but for the erection of 47 houses. The application was refused by the Council and a subsequent appeal was withdrawn. The planning reasons for refusal were as follows: -

- Inappropriate development in conflict with the policy for the preservation of the Metropolitan Green Belt
- Undesirable extension of residential development beyond the confines of the built-up part of Ashtead thereby leading to an unwarranted encroachment into the countryside to the serious detriment of the character and appearance of the area
- The proposed layout considered unsatisfactory and detrimental to the amenities of the locality including the amenities of Sunnyside, Pleasure Pit Road

- The site is an unsustainable location where there is limited opportunity for using public transport and where there is sporadic street lighting and footway provision resulting in no alternative modes of transport other than the motor car

In reality nothing has changed.

Furthermore, planning application MO/2006/0524 to erect a substantial contemporary single dwelling on the site was refused and dismissed on appeal citing primarily development on the Green Belt.

The site consists of 1.23 hectares within the Green Belts which adjoins The Woodcote Stud on the northern boundary and the Green Belt extends further towards Epsom Downs and represents a broad band, deliberately established to limit urban sprawl between Ashted and Epsom. However, the Planning Statement describes the site as Brownfield that has come about due to the site being expanded with semi-agricultural structures for which planning approval has been granted with use as a garden nursery. However, there is no justification for reclassification. The site must remain classified as Green Belt since it is additionally in place to protect Ashted House, listed Grade 2, located within the Ashted Park Conservation Area and backing on to the site.

It is possible the Planning Application is in response to the Mole Valley Local Plan. The Draft proposal – Marsden Nursery site reference SAO4 was allocated to provide potentially 20 dwellings within the Regulation 18 draft, but subsequently withdrawn from the updated Regulation 19 draft due to a decrease in the allocated supply. The reduction has been justified by a lesser number of dwellings to protect the character of the district and vast areas designated as Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposed development represents density of 22 dwellings per hectare with the larger detached houses on the eastern boundary being low density and the smaller two- and three-bedroom semi-detached houses described as medium density. Such scale is out of character with dwellings in the immediate locality of Ashted and The Ridge and RAC Estate, off Wilmerhatch Lane, located in Epsom & Ewell BC. The surrounding area is represented by dwellings erected on substantial plots distanced from each other which is contrary to the cramped form of overdevelopment proposed for the site of the Marsden Nursery.

Whilst we do not have the qualifications to necessarily challenge the composition of the Ecological Reports/Assessments we are surprised that conveniently there is no evidence of badgers. However, they are known to roam the open spaces adjoining the site with evidence sadly found on the roadside. We do note the reference to bats and the protection afforded to them.

As mentioned above, with reference to the previous planning application for residential development, there remains a limited service of public transport. The only bus route is the E5 from Epsom to Langley Vale. It operates an irregular timetable of between every two and three hours from 8.20 am to 16.45 pm Monday to Saturday with no service on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The applicant refers additionally to a

618 bus route, but this is a school service once a morning and afternoon from Walton-on-the-Hill for students attending St Andrews RC School, Grange Road, Ashtead and Therfield School Leatherhead. The motor car remains the most convenient form of transport from this locality not least because there are inadequate facilities for pedestrians.

In summary we wish to object to the planning application for 26 dwellings located on a Green Belt site for the following reasons: -

- The proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in conflict with the policies for preservation of the Metropolitan Green Belt
- The proposed development would be an undesirable expansion and intensification of the existing pattern of development in this locality and detrimental to the character and appearance of the area
- The proposal constitutes an undesirable extension of residential development beyond the confines of the built-up part of Ashtead thereby leading to an unwarranted encroachment into the countryside to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area
- Although itself within the Green Belt the proposed development by reason of its form and siting would result in an undesirable intrusion of development, prominent in the view from the surrounding Green Belt
- The proposed layout by reason of disposition of dwellings about the site is considered unsatisfactory and would be detrimental to the amenities of the locality including those adjoining properties which include Ashtead House a Grade 2 listed building, forming part of The Ashtead Park Conservation Area.

In addition the scheme fails to meet the following policies of the Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan:-

- **AS-H5 : Maintaining Build Character.** The development does not visually integrate with the surroundings and the design does not show regard towards the character of the local area
- **AS-En3 : Retaining Character.** In addition to policy AS-H5 the development is cramped with plots and resultant green space/gardens out of character with the local area

We are of the opinion this is an ill-conceived planning application that has failed to consider the character of the immediate locality. It represents unnecessary development of the Green Belt and could establish a precedent. In the circumstances we recommend in the strongest possible terms that the application must be refused.

Yours faithfully

Roger Bennett

Roger Bennett
Planning Officer