

Urgent response required to another Norwood Farm application

Those who objected to earlier applications for a rural business centre at Norwood Farm, Old Common Road, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1BS may have received notification of an amended proposal (**application no. 2015/4567**). Looking at this, your Planning Team find that apart from relatively small detail, little has changed in terms of the proposed scale, nature and design of the development from the previously refused application (**2014/1993**).

This is another instance where the Developers use process to wear us down. We must try not to let them succeed. Further objection is required as an objection made last time is not carried forward. **Please write again and when objecting it is also important to state that your letter is one of objection and not just comment.**

The proposal is still to build a large commercial office development of 2,766sq metres (30,000 sq ft) with car parking. As before, the application form refers to 65 car parking spaces but we believe that has now become 80. That form fails to list the number of additional new employees who would be working there. It would be over 150. The Trust is looking for urgent clarification on these matters which indicate general sloppiness on the part of the developer.

There is no justification for a large development in the Green Belt on what was a farm. The present collection of buildings is low key, involving 17 employees and there is no doubt that the proposed new development will have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings and uses.

When refusing the application in August 2014, the Council said that “the site is located in an unsustainable location in terms of access by non-car modes of transport, and the intensification of activities on the site in terms of comings and goings of vehicles would result in harm to the character and openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development that would be harmful to the character and openness of the Green Belt contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.”

The proposed access, as with the refused application, would be via Elvedon Road off and onto Portsmouth Road. The location is far from reliable or convenient public transport.

The Applicant suggests that following meetings with Surrey County Council, the reasons for refusal have been overcome based on a revised Travel Plan involving

- 2 mini-buses from Walton and Cobham for a period of 9 years. The refused application proposed a shuttle bus to and from Esher Station. The Walton bus would now access through Burhill Golf Club from the Hersham side (adding a new dimension to the proposed development in the Green Belt)

- A driveway shuttle service to allow staff to access local bus services and facilities in peak hours

- Providing spaces for car sharers and two pool bicycles

- Provide an electric vehicle charging point

The Trust take the view these relatively modest travel adjustments do not start to justify permitting a large scale development identical to the one that the Council found to be harmful to the character and openness of the Green Belt in 2014. And even then there is no prospect of proper enforcement. Employees will commute from other directions. How long before employees supposed to use a bus take to their cars. Alongside numerous regular deliveries and visitors these would be added to already heavy local traffic. Peak hour traffic, especially in the morning, is exceptionally heavy on the Portsmouth Road at its junction with Fairmile Lane close to the ACS access. Many of you will have first-hand experience of traffic congestion in the area which you might like to include in your letter of objection.

The proposed development will bring no benefit whatsoever to Cobham, only harm by additional traffic generation. It will detract from Cobham as a business centre while too far away for shops to benefit.

The Trust is of the opinion that this application for a significant development flies in the face of policies settled by the Core Strategy in 2011 and Green Belt objectives. If permitted it could set a dangerous precedent for pending Green Belt development.

It is very important therefore that the significant number of letters of objection lodged in respect of the refused application (78 in total plus a petition) is maintained and we would ask you to respond to write to Elmbridge on this new application.

Please note that the closing date for submissions to the Planning Department, Elmbridge Borough Council – tplan@elmbridge.gov.uk is 25 March 2016. If you would like to discuss the application, please email to david.bellchamber@cobhamheritage.org.uk or call 01932 866770.