

PLANNING STATEMENT

Site:

CHALCROFT NURSERY, CHALCROFT LANE, NORTH BERSTED

Proposed Development:

Continuation of Use of 2no parcels of land by Sussex Reclaim and Supplies Ltd for a Temporary Period of Three Years for (1) the Siting of a Sales Office Portacabin; and, (2) a Storage Yard

Client:

Sussex Reclaim & Supplies Ltd

Agent:

**Stephen Jupp MRTPI
Chartered Town Planner**



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stephen Jupp, Chartered Town Planner, has been instructed by Sussex Reclaim & Supplies Ltd to act as planning consultant, undertake all drawing and planning work, and submit a planning application with accompanying documentation for the *"Continuation of Use of 2no parcels of land by Sussex Reclaim and Supplies Ltd for a Temporary Period of Three Years for (1) the Siting of a Sales Office Portacabin; and, (2) a Storage Yard"*.

2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 The site as a whole has a long and complicated planning permission. However for the purposes of this application the relevant history starts with the grant of a lawful use certificate which confirms the use of the eastern (front) part of Chalcroft Nurseries as use for unrestricted A1 (retail) purposes with associated car parking [BE/156/07/CLE refers]. The extent of the A1 and associated car parking area extends as far back as the commencement of the disused polytunnel greenhouse which is located along the northern boundary.
- 2.2 Subsequently, planning application BE/96/10 proposed *'redevelopment of part of site with mixed development comprising replacement A1 retail garden & aquatic centre, 6 x 2 bed bungalows, 5 x 3 bed houses and 2 x 4 bed houses'*. The application was refused and a subsequent appeal dismissed.
- 2.3 Part of this scheme involved an improved replacement 605 sq m Garden/Aquatic Centre which would be offered by the site owners for rent by the existing A1 retail tenant thereby increasing the viability of their businesses and facilitating the continued delivery of local services by these local firms. The proposed location of this building was on the car parking area on the northern boundary of the front half of the site.
- 2.4 The inspector considered the merits of the replacement garden/aquatic centre building in paragraph 17 of his decision letter and made the following observation:
- "Looking at the proposed garden/aquatic centre building, in isolation (and disregarding the access on which I have commented in my paragraph 9 above) then this would be a pleasing and well-designed building replacing and consolidating the various old and utilitarian structures on-site at present. This is a point in his favour. But that replacement could be addressed in various ways, bearing in mind the CLU; redevelopment with residential elements outside of the settlement boundary is not the only option."*
- 2.5 Planning permission [BE/168/12] was granted on 21 February 2013 for "Erection of showroom for indoor display of conservatories and garden

buildings”.

- 2.6 As part of this permission a new [and marked out] parking area will be provided for the site as a whole. In this regard I attach the permitted site layout in order that an appropriate comparison can be made.

3 THE 'CHALCROFT NURSERY' SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The site as a whole comprises a garden centre and aquatics shop with disused land to the rear. The disused land comprises partially dismantled polytunnels, areas of bracken and piles of builder's waste. There are ditches surrounding the site which are approximately 1m lower than the site.
- 3.2 Open fields lie to the north and west of the site whilst the council owned cemetery is to the south of the site.
- 3.3 Trees and hedges which form the site boundaries provide a strong and dense vegetative screen for the site and any development thereon. Occasional glimpses are afforded between this landscaping but this tends to be along the northern boundary adjacent to the disused polytunnel greenhouse.
- 3.4 To the west and a short distance to the north is housing forming part of the built up area of Bognor Regis.
- 3.5 The site is within designated countryside but is located on the urban fringe of Bognor Regis in what I would consider to be a sustainable location.

4 THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed building is located approximately half way along the northern boundary of the site known as Chalcroft Nursery. The land is currently in a variety of uses: garden centre; graveled car park; outdoor plant and shed display areas; caravan sales area; portacabin and buildings for Tropikoi; and the framework of a disused polytunnel greenhouse.
- 4.2 The sales/office portacabin, subject to this current application, is located within the application site for the new showroom and is located between the Tropikoi complex and the easternmost line of proposed parking for the new showroom and the site as a whole.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that upon completion of the build for the showroom – but prior to its opening – the portacabin sales office will be relocated to a more appropriate location. It is for this reason that a temporary permission for three years is sought.

- 4.4 There will be no change to the current parking arrangements during the period of this temporary permission.
- 4.5 The storage area for materials is in a secure, fenced, compound located to the rear of the main garden centre buildings.
- 4.6 Sussex Reclaim & Supplies Ltd is a new business formed in November 2013. They do not own or rent any other land.
- 4.7 They open 6 days a week and their opening hours are: 7.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to midday on Saturdays. They do not work on Sundays or bank holidays.
- 4.8 They have 4 employed staff with two being part time.
- 4.9 Deliveries to them average one per week but the size of vehicle can vary from a small large to a large lorry.
- 4.10 The business has two vehicles that make deliveries. One is 3.5 ton, the other 7.5 ton. Depending on the size of the delivery they will use either vehicle and on average use each 3 to 4 times a week. Smaller sales are usually achieved with the purchaser collecting the items themselves.
- 4.11 Deliveries of stock to the site and of goods to customers are undertaken within the opening hours set out in 4.7 above. They have 1 HGV a month delivering hardcore materials.
- 4.12 They stock a range of reclaimed and new building materials, including:
- Roof tiles
 - Sand and cement
 - Bricks, blocks, stones and shingle
 - Oak beams and new timber
 - Chimney pots
 - Paving materials and other hard landscaping materials linked to gardening and leisure pastimes
 - Building materials associated with the construction of sheds and conservatories.
- 4.13 It is clear that a high percentage of the goods that they sale have direct relevance to the existing use of the site as a garden centre and sale of sheds and conservatories.

5 **PLANNING POLICY**

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 Paragraph 14 of the framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies 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 Framework policies as a whole or specific framework policies indicate that development should be restricted.
- 5.2 Paragraph 6 of the Framework states that *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 21, taken as a whole, constitute the Governments view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system."*
- 5.3 Therefore the first assessment to be made in respect of the applicability of Framework paragraph 14 is whether or not the development proposed represents sustainable development as a matter of principle.
- 5.4 The application site comprises an existing commercial site which benefits from an unrestricted A1 Retail use. The site as a whole contains permanent structures in A1 Retail use and the site is predominantly within the curtilage of those structures.
- 5.5 Therefore the application site meets the definition of previously developed land given in the Glossary at Annexe 2 to the Framework and whilst it is acknowledged that it should not, therefore, be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed, paragraph 111 of the Framework states that *"Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value."*
- 5.6 The site is not of high environmental value in its own right and the site as a whole is not located within a designated green belt, an Area of Natural Beauty or subject to any other national, regional or local restrictive designation.
- 5.7 Therefore, as a matter of principle it is considered that the proposal represents an effective reuse of previously developed land and that the development represents sustainable development in those terms.
- 5.8 On any plain reading of Framework Paragraph 28 as a whole the reference in bullet points 1 and 2 to the positive support for rural business initiatives, by *"Supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings"* and, *"promoting the development of land-based rural businesses"*. The purpose of this wording is to ensure that Local Planning

Authorities recognize that they need to develop planning policies which also include support for the principle of providing opportunities for rural business development in those circumstances.

- 5.9 In summary, Framework Paragraph 28 makes the governments overall aim of creating a prosperous local rural economy very clear and it is also clear that redeveloping the site for this sort of rural employment facility on previously developed land is precisely the sort of local initiative that would not only support the sustainable growth and expansion of the local business but is also, in principle, a sustainable form of economic development that would be of benefit to the local rural economy generally and should, in principle, be offered positive support by the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.10 Framework Paragraph 28 makes no reference to Transport Accessibility as being relevant to the assessment of whether or not this sort of rural business development represents sustainable economic development as the promotion of sustainable transport is addressed at Framework paragraphs 29 to 41.
- 5.11 It is my assessment that the Sustainable Transport Option to the site is good. It is located on the edge of the built up area of Bognor Regis and is just a short distance to the bus services which run along the A259, linking Bognor town centre to Chichester and then further afield to Brighton and Portsmouth [through the 700 service]. The site is also located on the 'Star 2' route which links the West Meads area to Bognor town centre.
- 5.12 Furthermore travel to a garden centre is nearly always undertaken by car due to the nature of the goods likely to be purchased. In addition there is a clear linkage in the nature of the use and type of person that would visit the site in respect to being on the same site as an established garden centre. This will enable joint trips to be undertaken.
- 5.13 Therefore the site, in these terms, represents a sustainable location for a rural business development.

The Development Plan

The Arun District Local Plan

Employment

- 5.14 The strategic objectives for the proposed development are designed to support and comply with policies contained within the draft Arun District Local Plan. Employment and enterprise forms a key objective of the Local Plan, in particular reducing out-commuting and creating local jobs.
- 5.15 The emerging Local Plan's strategic objective for enterprise and employment is to:

"Strengthen Arun's economic base and provide local job opportunities by increasing, diversifying and improving the quality of employment within the district through the provision of appropriate employment sites, quality affordable accommodation and the development of business support and partnerships." [para 9.0.2]

- 5.16 The allocation of sufficient employment land in sustainable locations to encourage growth in the local economy can support this objective.
- 5.17 Paragraph 9.5.1 makes it clear that protecting and enhancing existing employment sites and premises is important to ensure there is sufficient available floorspace, and good quality modern workspace providing employment opportunities in the district. National policy emphasises the need for a flexible supply of employment land and premises and supports the protection and upgrading of existing sites where these are accessible and there is a good prospect of employment use.
- 5.18 Draft Policy DM5 provides for economic growth outside the built up area boundary where it is for local firms.

Overall Conclusion on Policy

- 5.19 Economic development in rural areas is considered to be a sustainable and beneficial form of economic development, the site is a sustainable location for such a development as it would result in an efficient and effective use of what is previously developed land and users of the new development would have good safe and convenient access to a choice of sustainable transport modes.
- 5.20 Therefore it is considered that the application proposal represents a sustainable form of economic development in a rural area and the presumption in favour of such development at Framework paragraph 14 therefore applies and since the relevant development plan policies are either out of date or provide no clear steer for the proposed development this application should be determined in accordance with its terms.

6 WILL THERE BE ANY ADVERSE IMPACTS?

- 6.1 The presumption in favour of sustainable development at Framework Paragraph 14 makes it clear that any adverse impacts must be demonstrable and significant if they are to outweigh the benefits of the application scheme.
- 6.2 Since the application relates to the use of land, on areas that are not visually obtrusive, it is considered that the only possible adverse impacts that may be said to arise from the development is the need to address any possible adverse impact on the immediate neighbouring residential properties.

The impact of associated activity on amenity of neighbours

- 6.3 The level of activity associated with such a use must be considered against the level of activity that presently arises with the use of the site as a garden centre; that which could exist due to its unrestricted A1 retail use; and that which will exist when the showroom permission is brought into use.
- 6.4 As already established the level of associated travel movements would be insignificant in the context of the comings and goings already taking place in respect of the A1 Retail use which could exist.
- 6.5 The level of traffic generation associated with the proposed use is minimal and it is likely that many customers would make combined visits – to see the showroom, visit the garden centre and buy hard landscaping materials.
- 6.6 I am aware that the current graveled surface is alleged to be causing dust pollution just inside the entrance. Accordingly, in order to ensure that the environment is improved for those neighbours adjacent to that part of the site, it is proposed to replace part of the graveled area with tarmac when the showroom permission is brought into use. This should eliminate any issues with airborne dust. In the meantime the applicants are wetting down the surface in order to minimize dust. They have also recently introduced a speed limit along the access road and into the site of 5mph and a number of signs have been displayed along the entrance and throughout the site.
- 6.7 Moreover whilst the other activities on the site do NOT have time limiting conditions for their activities, it is agreed that the use of the land by Sussex Reclaim can be limited to the times set out in paragraph 4.7 above.
- 6.8 As a result I consider that the impact of associated activity would be negligible and therefore could not reasonably be said to give rise to adverse impacts of such significance that planning permission should be withheld in terms of Framework paragraph 14.

Overall Conclusion on Impact

- 6.9 The site lies in a sustainable location in transport terms on the edge of the built up area of Bognor Regis. The proposed scheme represents a beneficial and sustainable form of rural economic development which framework paragraph 14 states should be granted planning permission unless there are significant adverse impacts which demonstrably outweigh the benefits of doing so or specific Framework policies indicate that development should be restricted.
- 6.10 It is considered that I have demonstrated that there would be no significant

adverse impacts arising from the development which demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme and that there are no specific framework policies which indicate that development should be restricted.

6.11 Indeed policy and national and local level is supportive of such a scheme.

6.12 Therefore it is respectfully requested that the Council support this application and grant planning permission requested in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Framework.

Permitted layout
of showroom
and associated
parking

