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Your Ref: 20211118
Our Ref: APP/K2230/W/22/3294958
Date: 04 November 2022

Sent by email:

Dear Ms Bickerstaff

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 (SI 571/2017) ('THE EIA REGULATIONS')

Appeal by: Mr Gordon McQuade

Site Address: Willow Tree Farm, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0AH

I refer to the above appeal. The Secretary of State has considered the application in accordance with Regulation 14 (1) of the above Regulations.

The development proposed, namely, demolition of existing Holly Cottage, creation of new shared access route, and the re-building of a replacement 4 bedroom chalet-bungalow with detached double garage on the site frontage and erection of 7 no. new 4 bedroom houses with integral double garages in gated development to the rear of the new Holly Cottage, and part rear garden of Willow Tree Farm falls within the description at 10(b) of Schedule 2 to the above Regulations by virtue of the site falling within, partly within or near 'sensitive sites' as defined in Regulation 2 of the above Regulations. In the opinion of the Secretary of State, having taken into account the criteria in Schedule 3 to the above Regulations, the proposal would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The 'sensitive sites' defined in Regulation 2 are:

- North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – 3.2km from site (within ZoI)
- Hailing to Trottscliffe Escarpment Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – 3.2km from site (within IRZ)
- Cobham Woods SSSI – 4.3km from site

- Trottiscliffe Meadows SSSI – 6.2km from site

The site is within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) /Zone of Influence (ZoI) for the above designated sites, where indicated and therefore there is potential risk of impact from emissions vehicles and recreational activities. However, any effects are likely to be localised.

The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is 440m to the west of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site is therefore within the 2km buffer zone for the AONB. Although the site is previously developed land, the proposal would result in intensification of buildings on the site and the proposal is likely to harm the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal is shielded by the existing development to the east so will not impact on the AONB.

The Proposed Development has potential to impact the following protected species - nesting birds, bats, reptiles and hedgehogs. Proposed protection and mitigation measures include – sensitive lighting (for bats), vegetation works outside of nesting season, further surveys for reptiles, if found a reptile mitigation plan to be submitted, sensitive lighting and trenches with ramp or covered at night to prevent trapping of hedgehogs. These measures can be secured by condition.

The proposal includes loss of trees and hedging – an Arboricultural Report should be submitted to ensure retained trees are protected.

The Proposed Development is located adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building and adjacent to the south of the Meopham, The Street Conservation Area boundary. The site is also located within an area of multi-period archaeological potential (evidence of Romano-British settlement immediately to the south of the site) and may impact on any remains. The proposal is likely to result in a degree of harm to the setting of the adjacent listed building and conservation area. To protect any remains, Archaeological site investigation works should be implemented. This can be secured by condition.

Considering the nature, scale and location of the Proposed Development and nature of the receiving environment, whilst there may be some impact on the surrounding area and nearby designated sensitive areas as a result of this development, it would not be of a scale and nature likely to result in significant environmental impact.

Accordingly, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Secretary of State by Regulations 14(1) and 7(5) of the above Regulations, the Secretary of State hereby directs that this development is not Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development.

Under regulation 28(1) of the above Regulations, the relevant planning authority must take steps to secure that this screening direction is placed on the part of the Planning Register which relates to the application in question. I would be grateful if you could do so to ensure that the Secretary of State's view is publicly available.

(This direction does not affect any duties of the appellant under other legislation, including The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.)

Yours sincerely

Jon Hawkins

JON HAWKINS
Associate EIA Advisor
(Signed with the authority of the Secretary of State)

cc: Mr Alex Martin, Lyondale Ltd

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