

***Report to the District Development
Management Committee***



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report Reference: EPF/0232/17

Date of meeting: 10 July 2017

Address: Shottentons Farm, Pecks Hill, Nazeing, EN9 2NY.

Subject: Erection of 24 x 1 bedroom units in two, two storey blocks for occupation by horticultural workers on the nearby nursery.

Responsible Officer: James Rogers (01992 564371).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendation:

(1) That planning application EPF/0232/17 at Shottentons Farm in Pecks Hill, Nazeing be refused permission for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is therefore by definition harmful to its openness and to the purposes of including land within it. The circumstances of this proposal do not amount to very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the identified harm and it has not been demonstrated that the dwellings are essential in this part of the Green Belt. Furthermore the total floor area exceeds 150sqm and therefore the proposal is contrary to policies GB2A, GB7A and GB17A of the Adopted Local Plan and Alterations and with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.**
 - 2. By reason of their size, scale, massing and detailed design, the proposed new buildings will appear overly prominent and incongruous within its setting and will therefore significantly detract from its appearance. The proposal therefore fails to respect the character and appearance of the area and is therefore contrary to policies DBE10 and CP2 of the Adopted Local Plan and Alterations and with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.**
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Report:

1. This application is put to District Development Management Committee since Members of the Area Plans West Sub-Committee voted for it to be referred to this Committee for a final decision.

2. This application was reported to the Area Plans West Sub Committee on 21 June 2017 with a recommendation that planning permission be refused. Following a debate at the meeting, members of the committee voted on the officer recommendation to refuse planning permission, which was defeated. There was no subsequent vote to recommend approval for the proposal, but rather a vote was taken for it to be referred to the District Development Management Committee. As it is contrary to Green Belt Local Plan policies, then District Development Management Committee would need to identify that there are very special

circumstances to outweigh Green Belt harm and any other harm should planning permission be granted. Since there was no recommendation made by the Sub-Committee, the Officers original recommendation to refuse carries forward to this Committee.

3. Officers consider that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be granted planning permission unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated to clearly outweigh the harm caused. In addition to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriate development, the proposal will also cause additional harm to openness through the introduction of two visually prominent, substantial two storey buildings. Such substantial buildings are in direct conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to maintain openness by permanently keeping land free of development. The NPPF is explicit that, in the decision making process, any harm to the Green Belt is attributed substantial weight.

4. Officers consider that the applicant has failed to demonstrate the very special circumstances required to clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt. There is no compelling justification that there is an essential requirement for the quantum of horticultural dwellings proposed to be located within the Green Belt to justify such significant harm to its fundamental purposes of keeping land free of development. The proposal is therefore clearly contrary to GB2A, GB7A and GB17A of the Adopted Local Plan and Alterations and with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. In terms of their detailed design, the proposed units have features reminiscent of a motel, with two external staircases and a 'deck style' first floor which creates a development completely incongruous within its setting. As a result the proposal fails to respect the prevailing character and appearance of the area and conflicts with policies CP2 and DBE10 of the Adopted Local Plan and Alterations and with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion:

6. Whilst Officers recommendation to refuse planning permission was defeated at the Area Plans West Sub Committee, as there was no vote to recommend approval, this recommendation stands at District Development Management Committee. If Members of the District Development Management Committee consider that there are very special circumstances to outweigh the two recommended reasons for refusals and conclude to grant planning permission, then officers consider that it should be subject to the conditions listed below:

1. The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice. Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
2. The occupation of the dwellings hereby approved shall be limited to a person solely or mainly working in the locality in agriculture or in forestry, or a widow or widower of such a person, and to any resident dependants.
3. No construction works above ground level shall take place until documentary and photographic details of the types and colours of the external finishes have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, in writing. The development shall be implemented in accordance with such approved details.

4. A flood risk assessment and management and maintenance plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. The assessment shall include calculations of increased run-off and associated volume of storm detention using WinDes or other similar best practice tool. The approved measures shall be carried out prior to the substantial completion of the development and shall be adequately maintained in accordance with the management and maintenance plan.
5. No development shall take place until details of foul and surface water disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with such agreed details.
6. No development shall take place, including site clearance or other preparatory work, until full details of both hard and soft landscape works (including tree planting) and implementation programme (linked to the development schedule) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall be carried out as approved. The hard landscaping details shall include, as appropriate, and in addition to details of existing features to be retained: proposed finished levels or contours; means of enclosure; car parking layouts; other minor artefacts and structures, including signs and lighting and functional services above and below ground. The details of soft landscape works shall include plans for planting or establishment by any means and full written specifications and schedules of plants, including species, plant sizes and proposed numbers /densities where appropriate. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting or establishment of any tree, or shrub or plant, that tree, shrub, or plant or any replacement is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree or shrub, or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.
7. No development, including works of demolition or site clearance, shall take place until a Tree Protection Plan Arboricultural Method Statement and site monitoring schedule in accordance with BS:5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations) has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved documents unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.
8. No development shall take place until wheel washing or other cleaning facilities for vehicles leaving the site during construction works have been installed in accordance with details which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved installed cleaning facilities shall be used to clean vehicles immediately before leaving the site.
9. All construction/demolition works and ancillary operations, including vehicle movement on site which are audible at the boundary of noise sensitive premises, shall only take place between the hours of 07.30 to 18.30 Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 hours on Saturday, and at no time during Sundays and Public/Bank Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Original Officer Report to Area Plans Sub-Committee West

Description of Site:

1. The application site is a 0.31Ha area of land located just off Pecks Hill, to the south east of Shottentons Farm, which is located within the relatively rural area of Nazeing. Whilst there are a large number of glass houses to the north and a farm complex to the south, currently the site is an open field which has not previously been developed. Access to the site is from a private track which comes off the transition between Pecks Hill and Sedge Green. The application site is located within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt and it is not in a conservation area.

Description of Proposal:

2. The proposed development is to erect 24 x 1 bedroom units in two, two storey blocks for occupation by horticultural workers on the nearby nursery.

Relevant History:

3. There is much history on the main farm complex including various applications for glasshouses and other agricultural buildings. There is only one application which links directly to this site which is:

4. EPF/0152/16 – Erection of 12 x 1 bedroom units for occupation by horticultural workers. – Recommended for refusal by Officers, recommended for approval by Area Plans West and approved by District Development Management Committee.

Policies Applied:

- CP1 – Achieving sustainable development objectives;
- CP2 – Protecting the quality of the rural and built environment;
- CP3 – New development;
- CP6 – Achieving sustainable urban development patterns;
- H2A – Previously developed land;
- H3A – Housing density;
- DBE1 – Design of new buildings;
- DBE2 – Effect on neighbouring properties;
- DBE3 – Design in urban areas;
- DBE8 – Private amenity space;
- DBE9 – Loss of amenity;
- LL11 – Landscaping schemes;
- ST1 – Location of development;
- ST4 – Road safety;
- ST6 – Vehicle parking;
- GB2A – Development in the Green Belt;
- GB7A – Conspicuous Development;
- GB17A – Agricultural, Horticultural and Forestry Workers Dwellings; and
- U3B – Sustainable drainage systems.

5. The above policies form part of the Councils 1998 Local Plan. Following the publication of the NPPF, policies from this plan (which was adopted pre-2004) are to be afforded due weight where they are consistent with the Framework. The above policies are broadly consistent with the NPPF and therefore are afforded full weight.

Epping Forest Draft Local Plan Consultation Document (2016):

6. The Epping Forest District Draft Local Plan is the emerging Local Plan and contains a number of relevant policies. At the current time only limited material weight can be applied to the Draft Local Plan, however the Draft Plan and evidence base should be considered as a material consideration in planning decisions. The relevant policies within the Draft Local Plan are:

- DM9 – High Quality Design;
- SP1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- SP5 – Green Belt and district open land; and
- DM21 – Local environment impacts, pollution and land contamination.

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received:

4 Neighbours consulted – NO COMMENTS RECEIVED

NAZEING PARISH COUNCIL – NO OBJECTION – but if permission is granted then it be subject to the following conditions:

- The accommodation is only used by the horticultural workers employed at the farm. If that use ceases, then the accommodation units are to be demolished

Issues and Considerations:

7. The main issues to consider when assessing this application are the existing housing situation, the potential impacts on the Green Belt, the living conditions of the neighbours, sustainability issues, the character and appearance of the area, parking and access, tree and landscape issues, land drainage, land contamination and affordable housing.

Five-Year Housing Supply:

8. The Council is currently in the process of creating a new Local Plan; which will allocate sites for new residential development. However the Council is clear that it cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply of housing land within the District as required by the NPPF. In this respect, the Council's policies relation to housing provision cannot be considered up to date (in accordance with paragraph 49 of the NPPF). The shortfall in housing land supply within the District carries substantial weight in favour of granting planning permission.

The Green Belt:

9. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, CLG, 2012) attaches great importance to the protection of the Green Belts and states that new residential units are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and should not be approved unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated which **clearly** outweighs the harm and any other harm caused.

10. When assessing applications within the Green Belt, Paragraph 88 of the NPPF also requires that:

'Substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of

its inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations'.

11. There are various exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt as outlined through paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF, however it is common ground between Council Officers and the applicant that the proposal in question does not comply with any of these given exceptions.

12. The starting point for this assessment therefore is that the development is inappropriate in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt:

13. Turning to openness, the first thing to acknowledge is that planning permission has already been granted in 2016 for the erection of 12 agricultural workers dwellings to be housed within two separate blocks. This proposal seeks to effectively double the size of this already approved development by introducing a first floor to both blocks.

14. Clearly the introduction of first floor residential buildings as opposed to single storey buildings will contribute a further erosion of the openness of the Green Belt by significantly increasing the volume and visibility of the development. The proposal will therefore conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to maintain openness in perpetuity by keeping land free of development.

15. It is therefore considered that the proposal is inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and will cause significant harm to its openness.

Other Considerations Relating to Green Belt:

16. Policy GB17A of the Adopted Local Plan Additionally part (i) of policy GB17A of the Adopted Local Plan states that the Council will only grant planning permission for agricultural dwellings where it is completely satisfied that:

The dwelling is essential, taking into account the nature of the enterprise (eg. Presence or otherwise of livestock) possible reorganisation of the existing labour force, the potential offered by existing residential accommodation on the farm or holding, and the outcome of any approach made to the Council as a housing authority under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976. (Underline for Officer emphasis)

17. It is clear that to comply with part (i) it must be necessary for a worker to live within close proximity to the agricultural unit for it to function efficiently.

18. During the previously approved application (EPF/0152/16) Members of the two Planning Committees considered the evidence and contrary to advice from Officers concluded that the quantum of dwellings proposed were essential for the efficient functioning of the business and on that basis the proposal was acceptable in Green Belt terms.

19. Whilst the Council has previously agreed that there is an essential need for 12 workers dwellings on the site, it is not bound to follow this view for a development which seeks to double the number of proposed dwellings on the site.

20. Indeed since this earlier approval of planning permission the Council has received an appeal decision at Lowershott Nursery (APP/J1535/C/16/3153168) which was also

concerned with the erection of horticultural workers dwellings within the Green Belt, where the Inspector concluded that:

There is no compelling evidence to demonstrate that there is an essential need to house these workers at Lowershott Nursery for the proper functioning of the enterprise. Similarly, in the wider context, there is no firm evidence to demonstrate that there is an essential need for these workers to live near their place of employment - even if that happens to be at other local nurseries. It is the requirements of the horticultural enterprise itself, rather than those of the employee, which are relevant in determining whether or not such residential accommodation is justified. Whilst it might be convenient to accommodate horticultural and non-horticultural workers on this site for the benefit of the Lea Valley horticultural industry, there is no compelling evidence to show that it is essential.

21. Officers share this view within this application and contend that the majority, if not all the workers perform unskilled or low skilled jobs, usually not during unsociable hours and a lot of the processes within the glass house run on an automated system. It therefore cannot be the case that it is essential for a worker to live within close proximity to the site for it to function efficiently. Consequently it is not essential for a dwelling to be sited in this location and rather it appears to be for convenience rather than need. The significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt has therefore not been clearly outweighed by this reason.

22. Furthermore part (iv) of policy GB17A states that:

The total floor space (must) not exceed 150sqm

23. The proposed residential development comprises an area of 744sqm of new floor space and as such the scale of the development is clearly contrary to this policy requirement.

24. It is acknowledged that the NPPF promotes sustainable rural businesses and encourages Local Planning Authorities to act proactively when facilitating their viability. The applicant submits that without this development it will not be able to attract and retain the best staff for their horticultural business. Whilst this may be the case, although there is no evidence to substantiate the claim, it does not in any event constitute very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the significant harm to the Green Belt that this development would cause. Furthermore nor will it make its operation unviable, particularly as, by the applicants own admission, the profitability of the business is substantial.

25. Furthermore part (ii) of policy GB17A states that planning permission may be granted if:

Part (i) is inconclusive (and) there is firm evidence of viability of the agricultural, horticultural or forestry enterprise concerned at the time of the application and of continued viability in the long term

26. If the argument is being made that the nursery would be unviable if this development is not built then firm evidence has not been provided of its viability at the time of making the application or its continued long term viability. As such it is clearly contrary to part (ii) of policy GB17A.

27. As mentioned at the beginning of this part of the assessment, Paragraph 88 of the NPPF requires that:

Substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

28. In accordance with this paragraph, the identified harm to the Green Belt is given substantial weight in this assessment

Need for the Housing of Horticultural Workers

29. The applicant submits that due to their unaffordability, the existing dwellings in Nazeing which are available for rent are not suitable for the relatively low paid workers to afford. Furthermore the applicant contends that neither is it suitable for workers to reside elsewhere and then commute given the excessive cost of renting and commuting. As a result of this view, the applicant has provided some internet details of properties available in Nazeing and has disregarded any other location which involves more intensive commuting. This argument was put forward and addressed in the recent appeal decision at Lowershott Nursery (APP/J1535/C/16/3153168), where the Inspector concluded that:

The appellant argues there are no other dwellings suitable or available in the locality. Internet details of properties available in Nazeing are provided in support of this argument. However, there is no evidence to show what steps were taken to find other accommodation prior to the provision of the dwellings subject of the notices. There is no clear evidence to show the extent of enquiries made to local agents concerning the availability of properties to purchase or rent. I am not satisfied the appellant has rigorously investigated the possibility of finding suitable alternative accommodation.

30. Similarly in this case no further details have been submitted which could amount to clear evidence that there are no rental properties available for horticultural workers. Indeed through research conducted on 5 June 2017 on two well-known property search websites, Right-Move and Zoopla it was found that there were 22 properties available for rent within Harlow, Enfield Hoddesdon and Cheshunt all of which are within 8 miles of Shottentons Farm, these were:

- Edlington Road, Enfield - £350 PCM;
- Bouvier Road, Enfield - £360 PCM;
- Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield - £370 PCM;
- Nags Head Road, Ponders End, £399 PCM;
- Bullsmore Lane, Enfield - £412 PCM;
- Bullsmore Lane, Enfield - £450 PCM;
- Thorneycroft Drive, Enfield - £450 PCM;
- Bursland Road, Enfield - £450 PCM;
- Westmoor Road, Enfield - £450 PCM;
- Cussons Close, Cheshunt - £480 PCM;
- Cussons Close, Cheshunt - £500 PCM;
- West Cheshunt - £500 PCM;
- Castle Road, Hoddesdon - £500 PCM;
- Westmore Road, Enfield - £500 PCM;
- Edington Road, Enfield - £500 PCM;
- Brockles Mead, Harlow - £500 PCM;
- Brockles Mead, Harlow - £500 PCM;
- Moorfield, Harlow - £500 PCM;
- Lovell Road, Enfield - £500 PCM;
- Arnold Avenue, Enfield - £500 PCM;

- Ordance Road, Enfield - £500 PCM; and
- Brockles Mead, Harlow - £500 PCM.

(All properties found on Right-Move and Zoopla, accessed 5 June 2017)

31. It is clear that there are many properties available within a commutable distance to the site based on evidence obtained on one day searching for rentals in the locality and this serves to severely undermine the applicants argument that there are none suitable. The question is then addressed as to the affordability of these rentals to horticultural workers.

32. The appellant contends that:

- *“EGL workers could only afford properties available for rent at about £450 per month.”*

33. This statement is based on the fact that the chief executive of Shelter in a BBC interview anecdotally stated that:

- *“The widely accepted test of affordability is that housing costs should take up no more than a third of your income.”*

34. However according to Clifton and Co Estate Agents (Clifton and Co website, Accessed 16 March 2016) and Tenant Verify (tenant Verify website, Accessed 16 March 2016) an annual salary of 17,108 (Annual wage of an EGL worker according to the applicant) should be approximately £570 per Month. Using these figures it is clear that all 22 of the properties found during a single days research would be economically viable for a horticultural worker to reside in.

35. The rental properties which have been identified are within urban areas and therefore generally have a good standard of public transport options including buses and trains. The applicant makes the case that there are only two buses per day and that the times do not coincide with shift patterns. It is accepted therefore that a bus directly to the site may not be a realistic option for workers to utilise. However Broxbourne rail station is approximately 2 miles from the site, which would equate to around a 40 minute walk which is an entirely realistic option for workers.

36. The result of this research is that commuting from urban areas such as Enfield, Hoddesdon, Harlow and Cheshunt will not add a significantly higher cost to the workers of the site and are realistic and viable options for the workforce to explore.

37. In terms of the existing situation the applicant details that:

- *“There are a total of 48 workers at Shottentons Farm at present. Of these 13 are housed on Shottentons Farm in the existing accommodation. Of the remainder 15 are in accommodation on other nurseries in Nazeing/Roydon and the remaining 20 are either renting rooms or in flat shares in Harlow (9, 7 in a house share), Hoddesdon (7, 4 in a single House Share), Edmonton (1), Hatfield (1), Leytonstone (1) and Nazeing (1).”*

38. Whilst some of this accommodation is relatively far from the site and would involve commuting, it has not prevented the employment of workers nor the profitability of the business which by the applicants own admission:

- *“The businesses profit is substantial and is also set to increase in proportion to the increase in turnover”*

39. It also raises the question regarding whether the business could potentially increase the wage paid to its workers, which in turn would increase the affordability of accommodation in nearby areas such as Nazeing, Roydon, Harlow and Waltham Abbey. This in turn would alleviate fears that the business may not be able to attract the best workers in the future viability of the business.

40. The Private sector housing team at the Council are responsible for assisting those in housing need within the District and promoting good relations between tenant and landlords have offered the following comments for the application:

- *“The Private Sector Housing Team is concerned with the provision of suitable accommodation on the district that is safe from hazards and fit for purpose. The proposal to provide 12 units of purpose built single storey bedsit accommodation is welcomed as experience indicates that provision of accommodation for horticultural workers on the district generally is poor. These units would provide satisfactory key worker accommodation, each of which is suitable for individual occupancy. There is nothing on the application to suggest that the scheme would cause nuisance or be the cause of justified neighbour complaint.”*

41. Whilst Officers do not disagree that this sort of accommodation is suitable for horticultural workers and that some horticultural workers may live in unsatisfactory conditions within the District, there has been no comprehensive study nor evidence submitted to prove this is anything other than anecdotal. Consequently it cannot be proved that there is a certain need for this development and even less proof that it should be located on a Green field site within the Green Belt, clearly contrary to both National and Local planning policy.

42. The result of this analysis is that the issues discussed around the need for horticultural workers accommodation does not amount to the very special circumstances required to clearly outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt. Very substantial weight is attached to the harm to the Green Belt which weighs strongly against granting planning permission.

Precedent:

43. Throughout this analysis, the development has been considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, for which there are no very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the harm caused.

44. The Council has previously approved an application for 12 new residential units on this site after Members of the Planning Committee concluded that there was an essential need for the dwellings. Notwithstanding the previous approval, the erection of two, two storey blocks is without precedent within the District as a way of addressing the potential need for horticultural workers dwellings.

45. Were this development to be granted it would set an undesirable precedent for similar types of application in the district and whilst the Local Planning Authority would retain control over these applications and every site is assessed on its own merits, an approval on this scheme would severely compromise the Councils position and could diminish its ability to resist similar such schemes on the future.

46. As previously discussed, this type of decision which is contrary to the development plan should not be made through an ad hoc development such as this but through a genuinely plan led process which involves a rigorous consultation period and engagement with the local community and Parish Council.

Design:

47. The proposed buildings will be located in the same position as those approved under the previous application (EPF/0152/16). The previous report considered that:

The single storey aspect will ensure that it will not appear overly prominent in the context of the site. The detailed single storey hipped roof design is what is expected within this relatively rural setting and will read rather like a large barn, albeit with residential features. As a consequence the development respects the character and appearance of the locality and is compliant with National and Local design policy.

48. This revised design includes a first floor for both buildings, which in contrast to the previously approved scheme will appear very visually prominent and intrusive within the area, significantly detracting from its appearance.

49. In terms of its detailed design, the building has some conventional residential features including a hip ended roof, but which has elements reminiscent of a motel, with two external staircases and 'deck style' first floor which creates a development incongruous to its setting and one which fails to respect the locality as a whole.

50. The proposal is therefore considered to be in conflict with policies CP2 and DBE10 of the Adopted Local Plan and Alterations.

Sustainability:

51. The site is located close to the main settlement of Nazeing which has access to regular bus routes and various shops and other services. Although it is likely that new residents will utilise a private vehicle, the proximity to Nazeing gives them a genuine choice of transportation and therefore the site can reasonably be described as being within a sustainable location.

Parking and Access:

52. The level of parking would be sufficient for this type of accommodation and the proposed access would not cause any harm to the safety or efficiency of the public carriageway given that it utilises an existing access onto the main road. The nearby public right of way runs further south and will not be affected by the development.

Tree and Landscape Issues:

53. There are trees along the boundary with the property to the west. They form an important screen. It should be possible to ensure that they are not impacted upon by development works however tree reports will be required so as to protect the trees and provide a methodology for any works within their rooting areas.

Land Drainage:

54. The development is of a size where it is necessary to avoid excessive surface water run off, this can be secured through planning condition. It is also necessary to include a condition requiring a Flood Risk Assessment given the size of the proposal.

Contamination:

55. This field site was historically used for the grazing of the former dairy herd at Shottentons Dairy Farm and so is unlikely to have been treated with potentially contaminating arable farming pesticides and sewage sludge. Although the field containing the site and the surrounding fields have recently undergone hedge grubbing, topsoil stripping and been heavily trafficked and appear to have been used for waste disposal/storage associated with the new horticultural nursery and development works, aerial photography indicates that the part of the field proposed for redevelopment as studio flats has not been impacted. There is, therefore, unlikely to be any significant contamination present on site.

56. Managed studio flats used by adult employees are not considered a use that is particularly vulnerable to the presence of contamination. As there is unlikely to be any significant contamination present on site and no sensitive receptors are proposed, it should not be necessary to regulate land contamination risks under the Planning Regime by way of conditions.

Affordable Housing:

57. The development proposes 24 new units on a greenfield site over 0.1Ha, within a settlement of less than 3000 people and consequently there is a requirement for 50% of the development to be for affordable housing as it falls within the threshold as required by H6A of the Local Plan. Were Members to consider that this application be approved, it would be recommended that a condition is placed on the development to ensure that it may only be used by horticultural workers attached to Shottentons Farm. Essentially this will restrict its use for what would be for a low paid, low skilled worker which would fulfil a specific need akin to what may be achieved through the provision of affordable housing units.

58. Therefore whilst not strictly in accordance with the requirements of policy H6A, Officers view is that given the circumstances of the development and that a planning condition would ensure that it could only be utilised by horticultural workers, there is no requirement for provision of affordable housing on the site or a contribution in lieu of an approval if given.

Overall Planning Balance:

59. The shortfall in housing land supply within the District is a material consideration which carries substantial weight in favour of granting planning permission. However the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriate development and significant harm to its fundamental purpose to keep land permanently open carries very substantial weight.

60. None of the considerations put forward by the applicant, individually or collectively; clearly outweigh the harm caused by the inappropriateness of the development in the Green Belt and the substantial loss of openness. It is therefore concluded that there are no very special circumstances to clearly outweigh this harm.

Conclusion:

61... The proposed development is inappropriate in the Green Belt which will harm its openness and the reasons of including land within it, for which Officers consider that there are no very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the identified harm or any other harm. It is therefore recommended that planning permission is refused.

References:

http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/property/nazeing/?price_frequency=per_month&price_max=500&q=Nazeing%20C%20Essex&radius=3&results_sort=lowest_price&search_source=refine

<http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent/find.html?locationIdentifier=REGION%5E17925&maxPrice=600&radius=3.0&sortType=1>

Web addresses accessed on 5 June 2017.