

Planning Statement

Site Address: White House
Northwood Road
Harefield
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Our Ref: 21-141

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. MSC Planning Associates Ltd provides this planning statement in support of a planning application for the change of use of White House from a store, garage, office and part-time residence (for up to 50 days a year) to a C3 dwellinghouse.
- 1.2. The purpose of this statement is to set out the details of the proposal, the planning issues relevant to it and the reasons why the application, in our view, should be granted planning permission. The statement must be read in conjunction with all supplementary information, plans, technical reports, and other documentation as submitted.

2. SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The White House is a small, mixed-use building which has historically been used for various purposes associated with the management of Harefield Grove Farm.
- 2.2. The existing building is single storey in height and of timber construction, featuring a shallow dual-pitched roof with felt tiles.
- 2.3. The field adjacent the application site to the west is paddock land occupied by two small stables.
- 2.4. The site is situated within the Green Belt but is not subject to any other significant planning constraints.



Figure 1 - Existing Building at White House



Figure 2 - Paddock land and Stables to the West of Application Site



Figure 3 - Existing Shed and Granular Track



Figure 4 - Existing Access from Northwood Road

3. APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of White House from a store, garage, office and part-time residence (for up to 50 days a year) to a C3 dwellinghouse.
- 3.2. The conversion to residential use would be undertaken within the existing envelope of the building and with minimal internal or external alterations required to allow the building to function as an independent dwelling.
- 3.3. The dwelling would utilise the existing lawful access to the site from Northwood Road, connected to the existing building via an existing granular track. The proposals would include the construction of a formalised driveway, constructed of permeable materials over the existing track to provide areas for parking and manoeuvring adjacent the existing building.
- 3.4. The proposed plans and elevations are set out below.



4. PLANNING HISTORY & BACKGROUND

- 4.1. The site was previously occupied by a dwelling 'Whitehouse Cottage', which was demolished following the erection of a new dwelling on the adjacent site named 'Roundwood House'.
- 4.2. Permission for an alternative structure was granted in 1964 (ref: UX/DC9065) on the approximate site of the demolished Whitehouse Cottage, and planning permission was granted in 1986 (ref: 5221D/86/229) for the retention of a store with a double garage on the site. This building was of sufficient scale to serve as separate residential accommodation and a farm office for which planning permission for a vehicular access was granted in 1998 (ref: 53258/98/1586).
- 4.3. A lawful development certificate was granted in 2009 to use this building as a store, garage, office and part-time residence (for up to 50 days a year) (ref: 66100/APP/2009/1268), which is now known as 'Whitehouse'.
- 4.4. A prior approval application for the change of use of the building from B1 offices to a C3 dwellinghouse to create one self-contained flat was refused on the basis that the building could not demonstrate an existing lawful B1 use.
- 4.5. The planning history available on the London Borough of Hillingdon's website relating to the site in question is limited to the following four applications:

Ref No	Development	Decision
53258/APP/2010/91	Construction of new vehicular access with associated hedgerows, timber fencing and gates	APPROVED
53258/98/1586	Formation of a means of vehicular access to the highway with the installation of a 1.5-metre high gate and posts	APPROVED
66100/APP/2009/1268	Use of existing single-storey building as store, garage, office and part-time residence (for up to 50 days a year) (Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use or operation or activity)	APPROVED
66100/APP/2014/548	Change of use from B1 (Offices) to C3 (Dwellinghouses) to create one self-contained flat (Prior Approval)	REFUSED

5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF “Framework”) and Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”) define the national planning policy. Great weight is afforded to an ‘up-to-date’ Local Development Plan (“the Local Plan”), which accords with national policy.
- 5.3. **Decision-making** should focus on the **acceptability of land-use purposes** rather than the control of processes or emissions (para 183). They **should seek to approve applications consistent with sustainable development principles** (Para 10 and 47). Planning Authorities (“LPA” or “Council”) should also approach decisions on proposed development positively and creatively (Para 38),
- 5.4. If LPAs **cannot demonstrate an up-to-date Local Plan or where the relevant policy/ies are not up-to-date, then the application must be approved unless:**
 - I. the policies in the Framework for protecting areas or assets of importance provides a **clear reason for refusal**; or
 - II. any **adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits** when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.5. Regarding emerging policies, these will attract an appropriate weighting value according to:
 - a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced, the greater the afforded weight);
 - b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant these are, the greater the weight that may be given)and
 - c) the degree to which the policies are consistent with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)
- 5.6. LPAs should consider using **conditions to ensure that development’ is controlled but only where those conditions according to the ‘Conditions Tests’**. If this is not possible, then “planning obligations” should only be used if it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition (Para 54).
- 5.7. The NPPF should be used in conjunction with the LP, and both should be used as an objective and reasonable response to decision-making (Para 9).
- 5.8. The policies derived from the NPPF are outlined below:

Section 2: Sustainable Development

- The heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11)
- Local Plans must adhere to the 3 objectives (outlined in the above paragraph) and consider local circumstances to reflect the character, needs and opportunities, align toward growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects

Section 9: Sustainable Transport

- Significant development should be focused on locations that can be made sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes—helping to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health (para 105).
- Opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be considered in both plan-making and decision-making

Section 11: Effective Land Use
(para 120)

- Give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs and support opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded derelict, contaminated or unstable land.
- Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, significantly if this would help meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained. Available sites could be used more effectively (for example, converting space above shops and building on or above service yards, car parks, lockups, and railway infrastructure); and e) supporting opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial areas premises for new homes.
- They should allow upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well-designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards), and can support safe access and egress for occupiers

Section 12: Design (para 126)

- Good design is a crucial aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities
- Design Codes and guides should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations for the development of their area, considering the guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.
- Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals

Section 13: Protecting Green Belt Land

- Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure 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 inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The Development Plan

5.9. The site lies within the London Borough of Hillingdon, for which the Development Plan for that area will prevail. The London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan was adopted as part of the borough's development plan at full Council on 16 January 2020 and is therefore afforded full weight.

5.10. The following policies are of direct relevance to the proposed development:

DMEI 4: Development in the Green Belt or on Metropolitan Open Land

DMEI 7: Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement

DMEI 9: Management of Flood Risk

DMHB 11: Design of New Development

DMHB 12: Streets and Public Realm

DMHB 14: Trees and Landscaping

DMHB 18: Private Outdoor Amenity Space

DMT 2: Highways Impacts

DMT 6: Vehicle Parking

6. ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

6.1. Policy DMEI 4 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan, *'Development in the Green Belt or on Metropolitan Open Land'* states that:

- A) Inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances.*
- B) Extensions and redevelopment on sites in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be permitted only where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, and the purposes of including land within it, than the existing development, having regard to:*
 - i) the height and bulk of the existing building on the site;*
 - ii) the proportion of the site that is already developed;*
 - iii) the footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site;*
 - iv) the relationship of the proposal with any development on the site that is to be retained; and*
 - v) the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.*

6.2. Paragraph 150 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These exemptions include:

'd) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;'

6.3. As defined in para 138 of the NPPF, the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- 'a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'*

6.4. The proposals relate to the re-use of an existing building in the Green Belt. The proposed development is acceptable in principle, provided that it can be demonstrated that it would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Impact on the Openness of the Green Belt

- 6.5. The proposals relate to the conversion and change of use of an existing building used as a store, garage, office and part-time residence to permanent residential use. The building is already occupied for residential purposes (albeit for a limited number of days per annum), and has all the necessary utilities necessary to function as a permanent C3 dwellinghouse. The building can therefore be converted to function as a C3 dwelling without extension or significant external alteration which could potentially give rise to adverse impacts on the Green Belt. Any potential adverse impacts of the proposals on the openness of the Green Belt are therefore limited to those associated with the change of use and any ancillary works.
- 6.6. The site is visually well contained, and the change of use of the site would not be perceived from public vantage points adjacent the site given the presence of the existing mature hedgerow and landscape features on the boundary of the site with Northwood Road. The residential curtilage of the converted building would constitute the field within the existing building sits, along with a small timber shed structure, on the southern part of the application site. This part of the site cannot be seen from the access point on Northwood road.
- 6.7. In terms of the prominence of the site in the context of longer distance views, the site is bounded by agricultural fields to the north and west, of which there is no public access. The presence of a significant area of woodland at Pearsons Wood to the north effectively screens the site in the context of longer views from the north. There is public footpath to the south of the site on the opposite side of Northwood Road which connects the eastern end of Harefield to Jackets Lane adjacent the Willow Farm travellers site. This is the only public right of way within close proximity of the site, and does not provide any long distance views of it.
- 6.8. On this basis, the potential visual impact associated with the permanent residential use of the land and introduction of additional residential paraphernalia are minimal given the very limited prominence of the site in the surrounding countryside. In any case, the erection of any additional structures on the site following the proposed conversion to permanent residential use could be controlled via the removal of relevant permitted development rights as appropriate.
- 6.9. The site is currently served by an existing vehicular access from Northwood Road, approved under application ref: 53258/98/1586. The proposed development does not seek to alter the existing access point and gated access from Northwood Road.
- 6.10. In respect of ancillary works, these are essentially limited to the formalisation of the existing internal access track which is currently a granular track comprising hardcore material. The proposals would improve this to provide a permeable compacted gravel driveway with associated areas for parking and manoeuvring adjacent the building.

- 6.11. The site is clearly distinct from the agricultural land to the north/west, marked by hedgerows and the presence of building/use of the land as paddocks. The use of the area of land immediately surrounding the building could be utilised as residential garden space without the need for additional means of enclosure/boundary treatment.
- 6.12. The existing building is set within a generous plot which would remain largely free of built development following the proposed conversion to residential use. In this respect the proposals would in no way impact upon the spacious and rural character of the existing site and its countryside setting.
- 6.13. In conclusion, the proposals would facilitate the conversion of the existing building to permanent residential use without increasing the height and bulk of the existing building, the proportion of the site which is already developed or the footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site. The proposals would not materially impact upon the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt and would therefore comply with the requirements of Policy DMEI 4 of the Local Plan.
- 6.14. Furthermore, the proposals do not undermine any of the five purposes for including land in the Green Belt. As a conversion of an existing building in the Green Belt, achieved without increasing the extent of build development on the site, the proposals would have no discernible impact in respect of any of the aforementioned criteria defined in the NPPF.

Design

- 6.15. The proposed conversion would be undertaken without extending the existing built envelope the building or materially altering its overall character.
- 6.16. The conversion would be achieved primarily via internal alterations to the existing building and provision of additional and upgraded fenestration as set out in the submitted plans.
- 6.17. The proposals would utilise the existing timber shed adjacent the boundary of the site and existing access track to provide garden storage.

Highways

- 6.18. Minimal increase in vehicular movements given the limited scale of the converted building
- 6.19. Existing access provides sufficient visibility splays such that any minor intensification in the use of the site would not give rise to any highway safety concerns.

Amenity Considerations

- 6.20. The existing building is well separated from surrounding residential development and, given the single storey nature of the existing building, the proposed development would not give rise to any adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.21. Para 163 of the NPPF states that “all planning applications should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere,” i.e. off-site and, where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment subject to exemptions.
- 6.22. According to the EA flood data, the application site lies within Flood Zone 1.
- 6.23. Given the proposals relate to the conversion of an existing building, and the construction of a permeable drive on an area of existing hardstanding, they would not therefore give rise to any measurable increase in flood risk.
- 6.24. Further details could be secured by imposing suitably worded planning conditions, if necessary.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. The proposal for the change of use of White House from a store, garage, office and part-time residence (for up to 50 days a year) to a C3 dwellinghouse.
- 7.2. The proposals relate to the re-use of an existing building in the Green Belt which is acceptable in principle in accordance with relevant national and local policy.
- 7.3. The proposals would facilitate the conversion of the existing building to permanent residential use without increasing the height and bulk of the existing building, the proportion of the site which is already developed or the footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site. The proposals would not materially impact upon the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt and comply with the requirements of Policy DME1 4 of the Local Plan.
- 7.4. The proposals provide adequate on-site car parking following the adopted standards and would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety.
- 7.5. The proposed development would not unacceptably harm the amenities of existing residential development in the area.
- 7.6. We consider that the proposal conforms with the Local Development Plan, the Framework, read as a whole and accords with Practice Guidance as set out in the relevant PPG and any other material consideration as may be appropriate. As such, and for the reasons outlined above, we respectfully request that this application be approved.

8. APPENDIX 1 – SITE LOCATION & CONTEXT

