

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT HOOK ESTATE, NORTHAW, HERTS

### THE SITE

The previous use of this site when under the ownership of the Greyhound Racing Association was used predominately as greyhound training facilities with associated staff quarters, hospital and training areas.

This is an established use sprawling across the open countryside in total conflict environmentally with the Area of Great Landscape Value in which the site is situated.

The buildings used for dog purposes are scattered throughout the site and are visually intensive as they are mainly single storey flat roofed structures. In addition each structure is associated with concrete hardstandings and wire mesh enclosures in excess of two metres high. Although some distance away there are clear views of the site from Northaw Road West on the other side of the valley.

Access is obtained along a narrow roadway past twelve well maintained and refurbished dwellings, which leads from Coopers Lane Road.

Any alternative use of this site for kennel purposes could lead to general noise problems particularly barking which would be environmentally unacceptable to the twelve adjoining houses which are now in private ownership and do not form any part of the application site.

The adjoining Listed Building, Hook House has its setting destroyed by the existing buildings adjoining close by.

### THE PROPOSAL

TO CLEAR the site of all the derelict buildings previously used for dog use; all associated pens, wire fence enclosures, hardstandings and roadways, tanks, sheds and disused swimming pool.

If consent is granted for five new detached houses then the two residential units adjacent to the isolation wing will be demolished and also the three cottages set some distance from the main buildings. Although these cottages have not been lived in for many years the question of 'abandonment' arises and it is evident that with refurbishment they can be reinstated.

The existing house will be refurbished and the adjoining outbuildings and workshops converted into two separate units of accommodation. These buildings have a certain quality in design terms and are worth preserving. The detailed drawings have taken into account the particular design of the existing building. Each of these units will have their own detached garage, individual gardens and parking spaces.

The area around the kennel staff dormitory block will be cleared of all outbuildings, concrete roadways so that a mews courtyard can be created. Architecturally this block is a failure so it is essential to create a new style and this is achieved by adding two small wings to balance the building and create a sense of enclosure. A feature of the refurbished block will be landscaped communal gardens and individual patio areas to most units. A new car parking area carefully landscaped is to be provided to the west of the building. The total number of units created by this scheme is 35 which in terms of number is not vastly different to the number of staff who used to be accommodated in this block.

The existing access to the site is narrow and frequently obstructed by parked vehicles outside the 12 properties to the left of the entrance. Therefore a new access road will be created to serve the entire development which enables the existing access road to become a cul-de-sac just serving the existing residential properties.

The whole development will be consolidated between the dormitory block and the existing houses.

The cleared areas will be substantially landscaped. The majority of existing trees will remain with new features being incorporated including ponds.

Improved sight lines with Coopers Lane Road will also be included.

This development will compliment the adjoining mansion Hook House and its setting in this area of Great Landscape Value.

### HISTORY

The established use created by the Greyhound Racing Association could create problems if an alternative use for the land cannot be resolved. The site could be used for kennels without further applications but this would cause an environmental problem in close proximity to the private housing, which no longer is associated with the site.

It is agreed that the appeal discussed in September 1986 involving various uses including 220 new units of residential accommodation did not comply with the Structure Plan or District Plan policies and would in essence have created a new housing development in the Green Belt which would seriously prejudice the restraint policies which apply.

However, having said that although the phase two development by the Abbotswood Housing Development appears to be for 'institutional purposes' it certainly takes on the appearance of a housing complex in the middle of open countryside. This development is less than half a mile from the application site. The advantage will be well screened in a mature landscaped setting.

### PLANNING POLICIES

The site is within the Green Belt and an Area of Great Landscape Value. It is considered that paragraph 6 of Circular 14/84 (Green Belt) is applicable to this location.

"This is particularly important in parts of the Green Belt that are close to existing urban development, or between urban areas within conurbations, and which can be especially vulnerable to neglect or damage"

Such areas may form an important part of the Green Belt and if so need to be protected and maintained.

It is considered that these proposals through limited development reinstate the Green Belt in this location.

Policy 22A of the Structure Plan and E9 of the District Plan relate to the Area of Great Landscape Value where special attention must be given to the effect of the development on the surrounding landscape. It is therefore that the improvements to the site and groupings of the buildings have been given special consideration.

Although not overriding the contents of Circular 14/84, Circulars 22/80; 16/84 34/84 and 2/86 suggest more relaxed policies towards redundant buildings in the rural areas. In addition the Minister of Agriculture has recently said the Government is likely to introduce new legislation regarding alternative non agricultural uses to redundant buildings in the Green Belt.

There is therefore the probability that the site could be used for small scale industrial uses or similar if not redeveloped which could in turn create environmental problems in the area, particularly with access which is restricted and runs close to twelve residential properties.

#### PLANNING GAIN

This proposal will remove an established non-conforming use in the Green Belt and solve possible future problems. It is a 'once and for all' development. Development will be consolidated and large areas of derelict buildings will be removed and returned to landscaped countryside. It will certainly improve this area of Great Landscape Value.

A new improved access will safeguard the environment of the existing houses at the entrance to the site and new sight lines will be provided.

#### CONCLUSION

This is a balanced scheme which weighs the cost of major reinstatement against the refurbishment and replacement dwellings.

The overall total numbers of new units of accommodation does in fact compare favourably with what exists on site.

Isolation area 2 units ]	- to be demolished		
Cottages 3 units ]			
		Total	5 units
existing house/flats and adjoining workshops		Total	3 units
existing dormitory block accommodation		Total	55 units
			<hr/>
		Total	<u>63</u> existing
Proposed			
	Dormitory block		35 units
	Convent house/flats/Workshop		3 units
	New houses		5 units
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	Total		<u>43 units</u> proposed

In Circular 14/85 it states: 'There is always a presumption in favour in allowing applications for development, having regard to all material consideration, unless that development would cause demonstrable harm to interest of acknowledged importance.' It is felt that the scheme submitted has been carefully prepared in the light of all current policies and existing established uses for the site.

Would you please ensure that the members of the committee are circulated with a copy of this background statement.

In view of the nature of this development it is suggested that the members visit the site, so please do not hesitate to contact me so that suitable arrangements can be made.

If there is any additional information, alterations or amendments to discuss then please contact me before the application is submitted to the Committee.