



*"Speaking up for Cranleigh"*

13 July 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: WA/2016/0846 Stennetts Ltd - Erection of mixed use building to provide B1 Offices and 2 dwellings following demolition of existing dwelling and associated outbuildings at Gaston House, Guildford Road, Cranleigh GU6 8QZ

I am writing to you with regard to the above planning application which I believe could place the green belt protection within the entire borough of Waverley at risk from speculative development.

This important application on our Green Belt at Gaston Gate for the erection of mixed use building to provide B1 Offices and 2 dwellings following demolition of existing dwelling and associated outbuildings by Stennetts Ltd has received no publicity in the village as it is somewhat of an anomaly in the Ward of Cranleigh North and Shamley Green, but in the parish of Wonersh.

As you are aware Cranleigh is under attack on all sides from significant development and we have very little protection afforded by our green belt, unlike other settlements in Waverley. This lack of environmental protection has been the main reason that expansive developments have been approved on our green fields.

At present Cranleigh's rural character is completely under threat and now it seems so is our green belt. This substantial development is clearly against Waverley's policies and that of the NPPF, which has a presumption against development on the green belt. There are no special circumstances that can justify such a departure from the council's statutory duty to protect the Green Belt, its openness, and the visual amenity of what is the rural fringe of Rowly.

Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: **034 Reference ID: 3-034-20141006** in answer to the question "In decision taking, can unmet need for housing outweigh Green Belt Protection?"

States that "Unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt."

This application has been presented previously and officers have been minded to refuse it, I would ask you what has fundamentally changed about this application to make it now appear that it has "very special circumstances" that make it now acceptable?

The previous application for 4 flats was not granted, in fact this application has been before the Eastern Planning Committee at least twice and was not approved, the last time it was withdrawn WA/2015/0004. This is a matter for members' judgement to decide whether the claimed "very special circumstances" of the development outweigh the damage and permanent loss of green belt.

The justification for development of this site appears to be to prevent a loss of employment. Members could be confused by the site plan which includes the adjacent "Stennett Yard" which is not part of the site. However, to clarify there is a family-sized residential property currently on this site, it does not have commercial usage and therefore a refusal will not result in a loss of



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employment on the site. The site description within the pack confirms that "The lawful use of the site is a dwelling house (Gaston Gate House)" with access across common land. As well as the approval to build the flats there is also a request for a change of usage to commercial and yet there is no supporting evidence base for a B1 classification.

The Officer's report also states that "The proposed building has been designed so that it looks like a large detached house sitting within the street scene." This is inconsistent with an argument to promote business usage, as there appears to be no need to hide this as a dwelling house, or is this simply taking advantage of an opportunity to traverse planning policy and build an extremely large residential dwelling with inadequate parking provision, as outlined in Waverley's adopted parking guidelines, within the valuable green belt.

This is a substantial development and is contrary to policy **RD2A - Replacement of Dwellings** in the Countryside. This building is much larger in scale, bulk and height than the existing residential dwelling. There is no apparent justification for building housing on the green belt in Cranleigh which to gain a net one dwelling even if there is unmet housing need. This is speculative development which sets a dangerous precedent for more development on our green belt and further significant infill, threatening the very nature of Rowly and piling even more pressure on Cranleigh as the nearest service centre.

Although there was only one lengthy objection against the yesterday morning, this number is now growing. However this does mean that in accordance with your public speaking guidelines no one is able to speak against this application this evening. The lack of response is explained by the fact that it was not until yesterday circulated within Cranleigh, it did not come before Cranleigh Parish Council, although it will affect Cranleigh Parish, and only 3 other properties were officially notified (the fourth property notified being owned by the applicant).

I believe that it is crucial that members understand that this is removing a family home from Cranleigh's green belt to be replaced by a mixed use site, that appears to be a very large house, with inadequate parking. It is in direct contravention of Waverley's own planning policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in addition to Planning Practice Guidance, which all provide substantial weight to any harm to the green belt. Once again, I would stress that this not only sets a dangerous precedent for Cranleigh's green belt if approved, but will open Waverley up to costly appeals across all green belt areas in the borough should they refuse other similar applications in the future.

Yours faithfully

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