

From: Liam Ryder | Code DP
Sent: 10 August 2023 12:06
To: Terrence Garner
Cc: Mark Sperrin; Mike Carpenter | Code DP
Subject: Land east of Rayleigh Road, Thundersley - planning application reference 23/0085/OUT
Attachments: 230810 ALC&C Aug 23.pdf

Dear Terry

Further to receipt of Natural England's initial consultee response, on 28 March 2023, we have instructed the preparation of an agricultural land classification survey for land east of Rayleigh Road, Thundersley. The final version of the report is now attached. Unfortunately, the particularly dry weather conditions throughout May, June and July hampered our consultant's ability to undertake the survey, further to their instruction, which is why we have not been able to submit the report sooner.

I would highlight the following particular conclusions of note (and our comments) contained within the report:

- Only 19.3ha out of 27.9ha of the site is agricultural land – the rest is made up of non-agricultural uses, such as grassland for equestrian use, a fishing lake, former farm buildings and field boundaries. .
- With regard to whether the agricultural land is 'best and most versatile' (BMV), the land has been classified as comprising of 0.6ha (2%) Grade 2, 17.3ha (62%) Grade 3a, 1.4ha (5% of Grade 3b, with the remaining 8.6ha being land that is not classified due to not being agricultural. We note it is only grades 1 – 3a which qualify as best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The total amount of BMV land on site is 17.9ha, which falls below 20ha. Natural England sets the threshold for consultation, regarding whether the loss of BMV land is significant, at 20ha or more. Due to the proportion of non-agricultural land, the quantum of BMV land within the site is under the 20ha threshold for consultation with Natural England.
- Kernon Countryside Consultants has determined the economic value of the BMV land to be less than £6,000 per annum. The report itself concludes that these economic benefits are 'limited' in nature. The submitted planning statement is clear regarding the associated economic benefits of the proposed development, including the economic and employment benefits arising from the construction of the scheme, the additional purchase power of new residents which will help to boost the local economy further to the completion of the development and the other employment benefits, such as the new jobs generated by the proposed new community uses. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear, in paragraph 174, that the economic benefits of the any BMV land should be recognised in the overall planning balance.

I wrote to you yesterday afternoon, in light of the consultee responses received to the application, to summarise our view of the comments raised and to share an updated overall planning balance, ahead of the determination of the application. In light of the above, the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land must be weighed alongside the potential impact of the scheme on the Green Belt, and the identified minimal landscape and visual harm. However, whilst the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land on site is noted and weighed as an adverse impact, I am clear that the particular material considerations in favour of this application cumulatively combine to demonstrate very special circumstances exist which outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt and justify this development. The very special circumstances (as outlined within our submitted planning statement) significantly and demonstrably outweigh the adverse impacts arising from the scheme and, therefore, I continue to respectfully invite the council to positively determine our application. My full thoughts on these matters are provided in detail in my letter of 9 August 2023.

I have been keeping Natural England up to date with the preparation of the ALC survey for this application, and will provide the attached document to them separately, although I acknowledge they may not be able to formally respond to the scheme until they have been contacted by you directly.

Should you have any queries regarding the above (or the attached report), please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Liam



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