



North Cray Residents Association

www.northcrayresidents.org.uk

TO: Mrs Susan Clark, Head of Development Control

FROM: Jean Gammons, Hon Secretary, c/o 43 Parsonage Lane Sidcup DA14 5EZ

Dear Mrs Clark

28 January 2015

15/00015/FUL Orchard View 63 Parsonage Lane: demolition of existing buildings and erection of 3x4 bedroom detached dwellings with detached garages and associated amenity space

This letter is to register our strong objection to the above application on the grounds that the site lies in Green Belt and Heritage Land and the proposed new dwellings would be an inappropriate development, one that would significantly alter the character of the area and have a greater impact on the Green Belt.

Secondly, we regard the proposal as one that falls outside the exceptions set out in para 89 of the NPPF since (a) the proposed residential buildings to replace what is there at present would not be “in the same use” and (b) their creation (albeit some of the site has been previously developed by the building of a kennels unit and work unit) would have a greater impact on the Green Belt, not least upon the rural character of this part of Parsonage Lane which is Heritage Land as well. How can the land in question be classified as being previously developed in terms of residential development? It might have been partially developed for light industrial use, but it is still Green Belt. Therefore, we argue that this is not a brownfield site for multi-residential development in any reasonable interpretation of of para 89. It also falls outside ENV2, which states that “*Other than in very special circumstances, there will be a strong presumption against permitting the construction of new buildings inside the Metropolitan Green Belt for purposes other than...the replacement of existing dwellings...*”. ENV4 stresses that “*...the proposed development“ should not detract from the appearance and function of the Green Belt...*”, which the creation of a housing estate at No. 63 certainly would do.

Here, we would like to point out that the government recently (in October 2014) issued a press release under the title “Councils must protect our precious green belt” and which went on to say that “*the government has been very clear that when planning for new buildings, protecting our precious green belt must be paramount. Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl ...*”. It then stressed that Councils should consider how they will protect and preserve important sites in their area, “*especially green belt sites*”. And stated, very clearly, that “*housing need...does not justify the harm done to the green belt by inappropriate development*”.

North Cray has already seen recent intrusions into its precious Green Belt and Heritage Land – notably, the as yet unforgiven permission given last year for the building of a small housing estate at No. 139 North Cray Road; and the equally disappointing decision in 2013 to allow much of the land at *Honeydale Farm* to be built upon for a large polytunnels development,

despite this farmland also being classed as important Green Belt and Heritage Land. And all this against what people were led to believe by Bexley's *Core Strategy* would be honoured by Bexley.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in the case of No. 139 North Cray Road once the owner of this land had succeeded in his application to build two detached dwellings he then submitted an application to build five – and has now obtained permission for six! Will this step-by-step strategy be repeated at No. 63 Parsonage Lane? There is certainly enough land there for more than the three dwellings currently being applied for.

Thirdly, if approved, this housing development would set a serious precedent for others to follow (in particular the owner of the adjoining land, who we understand also has hopes of obtaining permission to build several houses there if the application in respect of No. 63 succeeds). And Bexley is currently facing pressure from *Little Acre* in Bunkers Hill (and by association from *Little Haven*) to further breach our Green Belt and Heritage Land by seeking permission for a Private Gypsy Pitch for residential use.

Fourthly, we feel very strongly that this particular application for three dwellings should not be looked at in isolation but in the light of the two other dwellings already being planned for at this location: (a) the rebuilding of the Old Snail Farm (No. 65?) and (b) the applicant's intention to demolish and rebuild her bungalow (No. 63). Taken together, these five new dwellings would constitute a new housing estate in what is now Green Belt and Heritage Land. The creation of such an estate would certainly have an impact on this land – and change in a harmful way the character of this rural part of Parsonage Lane - one which is not only used by local people for walking their dogs but is also enjoyed by visitors for leisure pursuits such as walking and riding as it leads on to Joydens Wood and to a Public Footpath across Little Mascal land – something we thought was an important part of Bexley's policy.

Fifthly, we reject the argument that there would be less vehicular traffic along Parsonage Lane, Cocksure Lane and Bunkers Hill. Three additional dwellings in upper Parsonage Lane (each with the potential for several trips a day plus delivery vehicles etc.) certainly *would* generate more traffic along these narrow lanes (which have no pavements) than at present - or as it was in the past from people just visiting the dog kennels, or coming or going to the 'industrial' units, which we believe were mostly in use by people working on the Old Maggot Farm to repair its vehicles. And additional dwellings on this site would certainly create even more problems for those living in upper Parsonage Lane, and for pedestrians and riders where there is always a conflict between them and motorists or the drivers of large delivery vehicles etc. The present drainage system, too, is already inadequate (I know this personally as several times over the past year raw sewage has backed up from the drains in Parsonage Lane on to my garden).

Finally, should you for any reason, and despite all that we have said above, consider granting permission for this housing development - contrary to all government guidance and what local people want- we would, at the very least, expect your support as regards our concerns about some of the features of what is being applied for. These are taken in turn below.

Size of proposed new dwellings: we see that these are to be four-bedroom chalet bungalows, ie large capacity dwellings on *two* levels. These would have a greater impact on the openness of this site than would be the case if the dwellings were in the form of two/three-bedroom bungalows on one level.

Garages: we also see that what is proposed are *detached*, two-car garages. Again, we consider that there would be far less visual impact if they were to be built as an integral part of each new dwelling.

Design of new dwellings: contrary to what is claimed in the Planning, Design & Access Statement, there are only two chalet-bungalows in Parsonage Lane (one being a small cottage converted to two levels), neither close to the application site. And the architecture of what is proposed for this development (a modern 'Executive estate' style) is both inappropriate for this location, and bears little or no resemblance to the architecture of nearby buildings, the majority of which are timber clad. We ask you to please take this into consideration and, if permission is granted for these new houses, to reject the architectural style of what is being proposed in favour of something that is not that of suburban/urban 'executive style' houses but a style and design more in keeping with their setting and the local environment.

Positioning of new dwellings: we feel very strongly that, if allowed, these should be set further back from the access road. Doing so, would further limit their visual impact. Looking at both block plans, there would seem to be land within the applicant's curtilage to allow for this.

Access road: we are pleased to see from the plan of what is proposed that entry/exit from these new dwellings would be restricted to the existing internal roadway, and we would wish this to be a strict Condition attached to any planning approval.

Landscaping: again, we are pleased to see that the applicant would agree to the retention of the hedge screening the site from Parsonage Lane, and we would wish this, and a landscaping scheme, to form part of the Conditions.

Permitted Development rights: we are pleased that the applicant is amenable to a Condition removing these Rights. We pressed for the following to be made part of the Conditions imposed for the new housing estate at No. 139 North Cray Road (13/01779/FUL), which is a similar intrusion of housing in Green Belt and Heritage Land: open-plan gardens at the front of each dwelling (ie no fences or dividing walls); no fences at the rear higher than 1metre; and no garden buildings such as gym rooms and summerhouses, and only one small shed in each rear garden. We would like these same Conditions to be made part of any planning permission for No. 63 Parsonage Lane; but, hopefully, permission for the three new houses will not be granted.

Yours sincerely

Jean Gammons