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# Welton Bremner Partnership

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CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND SURVEYORS

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Our reference: RMW/DS

Ref.

4th August 2005

Planning Manager  
Rochford District Council  
The Planning Department  
AcaciaHouse  
South Street  
Rochford  
Essex SS4 1BW

Dear Mr Steptoe

**Proposed Replacement Dwelling-house  
Former Pumping Station Site, Blatches Chase, Eastwood**

We act on behalf of Mr and Mrs J. Moody for the purposes of obtaining full (town) planning permission for this development. Please accept the following in support of the proposal.

**1. The Proposal**

- 1.1 To demolish the existing dwelling and replace it with a two-storey four-bedroom house.
- 1.2 It is proposed to site the replacement dwelling further towards the centre of the site to take full advantage of the extensive views of this valley location. This siting is shown on the accompanying 1:200 block plan.
- 1.3 The proposed building would be of solid construction with clay roof tiles, external wall cladding in Essex horizontal boarding and fair faced brick plinth i.e. from the range of regional materials of Essex. The design would include a chimney stack on the north elevation.
- 1.4 It is not proposed to remove any of the trees or boundary planting from the site and additional tree planting to accord with the character of the area will form part of the development proposal.

**2. Location and Description of the Site and Its Surroundings**

- 2.1 The application site is located at the northern end of Blatches Chase, a privately owned un-made road leading to Blatches Farm and within an area of open countryside known locally as the Upper Roach Valley.

- 2.2 The site comprises a former Essex Water Authority pumping station site of rectangular shape and approximately 0.864 hectare with pump house and two-storey staff house. A staff rest room has been demolished.
- 2.3 The site contains several mature trees of various species including oak, poplar, sycamore, particularly around its perimeter and in close proximity to the existing dwelling.

### **3. The Planning Policy Context**

- 3.1 We have sought support for this development proposal in the following national, regional (strategic) and local policy documents.
- 3.2 For the purposes of this proposal the 'development plan' comprises the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (RSP) adopted April 2001 and the Rochford District Local Plan First Review (RDLPR) adopted April 1995, a review of which has commenced.

#### **3.3 The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan contains the following policies relevant to this appeal:-**

##### **3.3.1 Topic Policy C1 – General Extent of the Green Belt – restates the five main purposes for including land within the Green Belt as follows:-**

1. to prevent the outward spread of London's built- area up;
2. to prevent neighbouring towns located within the Belt from merging into one another;
3. to assist in safeguarding the open countryside surrounding London from encroachment by urban development;
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns located within the Belt; and
5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land located within existing urban areas.

##### **3.3.2 Topic Policy C2 – Development Within the Metropolitan Green Belt – restates the general presumption against inappropriate development except in very special circumstances. Development comprising limited replacement of existing dwellings may be accepted provided it preserves the open character of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the main purposes of including land within it. Any development permitted should be of a scale, design and siting such that the character of the area is not harmed.**

#### **3.4 The Rochford District Local Plan First Review contains the following policies considered relevant to this proposal:**

##### **3.4.1 Policy GB1 - Development within the Green Belt, states that within the Green Belt permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings for purposes other than agriculture, mineral extraction or forestry, small-scale facilities for outdoor participatory**

sport and recreation, institutions requiring large grounds, cemeteries or similar uses, which are **open in character**.

3.4.2 **Policy GB8 - The Rebuild of Dwellings in the Green Belt**, states that rebuild is acceptable in principle subject to the following criteria being met:-

- (i) the total size of the new dwelling is no greater than:
  - A) 35 square metres **floor area** above the size of the **habitable floor-space** of the original dwelling, or
  - B) the size of the original dwelling together-with the maximum permitted development allowance provided for by the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order, or
  - C) the size of the habitable floor-space lawfully existing at the time of the application.
- (ii) the **condition** of the original building;
- (iii) the new dwelling will **normally** be expected to be of a similar type to the original;
- (iv) the replacement dwelling will **normally** be expected to be **sited in the same location** within the plot as the original. Resiting will be considered where the result would be an **improvement** in the relationship with other dwellings and/or the general appearance of the plot;
- (v) where resiting is agreed, the arrangements made to secure the demolition of the replaced dwelling and its outbuildings and the reinstatement of their site, and
- (vi) criteria set out in Appendix 1 - Housing Development -Design and Layout.

We have noted that:

- 1. that original floorspace is defined as the size of the habitable dwelling existing on 1st July 1948 or as built after that date, and
- 2. floor area will be measured **gross** between the **unfinished** internal faces of external walls ( excluding garage space).

3.4.3 **Policy RC5 - Roach Valley Conservation Zone**, states that development prejudicial to the **retention and management** of important wildlife habitats and their inter-relationships will not **normally** be permitted.

3.4.4 **Policy RC7 - Special Landscape Area**, states that there will be a presumption against development unless its location, siting, design, materials and landscaping accord with the character of the area.

3.5 **National planning policy guidance** of particular relevant to this proposal is contained in the following **Planning Policy Guidance Note**.

3.5.1 **PPG2: Green Belts** issued January 1995, which states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development, which by definition is harmful to the Green Belt. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. However, the limited replacement of existing

dwelling is considered appropriate development in the Green Belt providing the new dwelling is not **materially larger** than the dwelling it replaces.

- 3.6 So that, the onus on us is to show that the proposal is not inappropriate and why permission should be granted contrary to the normal presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Inappropriate development by definition is harmful to the visual amenities, the open character and appearance of the Green Belt, and the purpose for including land within it.

#### **4. The Applicant's Case**

- 4.1 The two main issues in this case are (1) whether the proposed development represents reasonable replacement and is appropriate in this Green Belt location, and (2) whether, if the proposal is not strictly within the local plan guidelines, it would cause demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area..
- 4.2 We would ask the DC to accept that the proposal is appropriate construction of a new building in the Green Belt, as it is replacement of an existing dwelling and not be materially larger than the dwelling it replaces. The submitted drawing makes a clear comparison between the footprint of the existing dwelling and that of the proposed house. To the footprint of the existing (original) dwelling, 35sq.metres net floor area may be added (a further *two reasonably sized rooms extension*).

#### Very Special Circumstances

- 4.3 We feel that the "development" passes the test for openness. The formerly positioned individual buildings on the land would be removed and replaced by a single centrally located structure thereby achieving a more open appearance to the site.

#### Character and Appearance of the Area

- 4.4 The proposed dwelling has been designed in a similar idiom to the essential vernacular style of the area. The various elements have been carefully integrated within the form of the building and architectural principles are not offended. The resultant composition is considered acceptable and characteristic of this part of the County.
- 4.5 The volumes making up the block form of the replacement building would be proportioned and related to create a satisfactory composition. The fenestration shown is well-proportioned and related to the elevation of the building.
- 4.6 The proposal would retain the presence of a building of pitched roof form at this location and the proposal would reflect the domestic scale of similar replacement dwellings in the Green Belt areas of Rochford District. External finishes in particular would be sympathetic in colour and texture to the Essex vernacular range and to this location and be used in a visually appropriate

manner.

- 4.7 The proposal reasonably satisfies the detailed guidance for one-for-one replacement of existing dwellings contained within the District Local Plan and has been designed to create a satisfactory relationship with its surroundings.
- 4.8 The proposal would be plainly visible from within the Roach Valley Conservation Area but it is intended that any visual impact would be minimised by retaining existing mature landscaping at the site and to carry out further planting of indigenous species.
- 4.9 We feel that the new dwelling would satisfactorily fit in with the character and appearance of the area and cause no serious harm to this particular area of Green Belt.

#### Protection of Existing Trees

- 4.10 The foundations of the new dwelling will be designed in accordance with the NHBC Practice Note 4 with reference to the mature height, species and distance from the dwelling. The intention is to provide the greater distance from mature trees with invasive root systems. We were advised that this would be in the best interests of the trees - their continued protection, and desirable from a building construction perspective.
- 4.11 We feel that the redevelopment of the site with a new building sited and designed as proposed would have no more harmful effect on the established trees and the landscape policy objectives of the District Local Plan would be satisfied.
- 4.12 The District Local Plan states quite positively that “ *The provision of a replacement dwelling in the Green Belt provides an opportunity to implement ..... a substantial planting scheme incorporating new trees of indigenous species.....*” and “ *the opportunity to achieve an improvement in the appearance of many dwellings in the Green Belt.*”
- 4.13 As previously stated, it is not intended to remove trees or important landscape features. We are fully aware that these features make an important contribution to the environmental quality of the area and that their retention would serve to minimise any impact of the new development. All existing important landscape features on-site would be safeguarded and physically protected by appropriate measures during the course of demolition of the existing and construction of the new buildings.

#### Conclusion

- 4.14 We feel that the proposal fully accords with national, regional, strategic and local planning policy with regard to the replacement of existing dwellings in green belt locations.

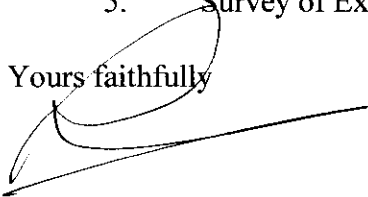
- 4.15 The proposal represents appropriate development being the replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling not **materially larger**.
- 4.16 The existing house and associated buildings would be replaced with a development which would enhance the local vernacular without overdeveloping the plot. The re-siting would provide a more appropriate context for the new dwelling from both an internal and external perspective.
- 4.17 We feel that the proposal would preserve the open character of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the main purposes of including land within it. The proposed development would be of a scale, design and siting such that the character of the area would not be harmed.
- 4.18 Accordingly we will ask the District Council to grant us planning permission subject to conditions, which they deem fit.

## **5. Documents**

5.1 The following documents are enclosed:

1. 1:200 Site Plan showing the siting of the proposed dwelling and the existing complex of Pumping Station buildings.
2. 1:50 Plans of the Proposed House.
3. Location Plan showing details such as the position of the access to the site.
4. Photographs of the former Pumping Station buildings.
5. Survey of Existing Trees.

Yours faithfully



M.R. Welton  
Chartered Architect