

Mereworth (Mereworth) Hadlow, Mereworth And West Peckham	566092 154129	04.04.2005	TM/05/01070/FL
Proposal:	Construction of new stable barn, lean-to stables, two storey office extension, intensive care unit, examination room, scintigraphy room and extra parking		
Location:	Equine Hospital 104 Butchers Lane Mereworth Maidstone Kent ME18 5GS		
Applicant:	Bell Equine Veterinary Clinic		

1. Description:

1.1 With the exception of the proposed office extension, the proposals are all for single storey buildings. They would all be finished externally with materials that match those used on the existing buildings within the site (slate blue metal roofing sheets, timber cladding for the walls). The stable building would accommodate 9 no. additional boxes. The other extensions would accommodate existing facilities within the site which have grown out of their existing accommodation. Additional parking for cars, horse boxes and turning facilities are also proposed. The plans also show that a large belt of indigenous trees would be planted along the eastern and southern boundaries of the application site.

2. The Site:

2.1 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, outside the settlement confines of Mereworth. The site lies on the eastern side of Butchers Lane.

2.2 The site already contains several large buildings, extensive areas of car parking/turning areas and a manege. An extant permission also exists to construct an additional stable building, which the proposed stable building would adjoin.

3. Planning History (most relevant):

3.1 TM/00/02208/FL Granted 22.11.2000
Construction of new stable barn, isolation stables and farriers workshop.

3.2 TM/95/50812/FL Granted 29.11.1995
Extension to provide consultation rooms, office and reception area and isolation stable.

3.3 TM/90/727 Granted 16.10.1990
Equine hospital and ancillary accommodation including stables and storage.

4. Consultees:

4.1 PC: Objection. Whilst supporting local business, the PC wishes to raise the following concerns:

- Over development of the site by the mass, scale, bulk and size of the proposed development.
- It is felt that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact to highway safety.
- Earlier concerns in relation to the development of the site are re-iterated.

4.2 DHH: No comments.

4.3 KCC (Highways): I am satisfied that the details on the plan show adequate parking and on-site turning to serve the site as a whole. The proposal is likely to increase the traffic generation. However, due to its specialist nature and the likely long stay treatments, I am of the opinion that any additional movements are unlikely to adversely affect highway safety and that the adjacent highway network can safely accommodate the movements.

I would therefore support this application.

4.4 Private Reps (including site and press notices): 15/0X/0S/0R.

5. Determining Issues:

5.1 The main determining issues with this application are the principle of the development and whether the additional facilities would have an adverse impact upon highway safety.

5.2 Under Government guidance contained within PPG 2 (Green Belts) and policy MGB 3 of the KSP (policy SS9 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan: Deposit Plan 2003), the proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It therefore needs to be considered whether very special circumstances exist that outweigh any harm to the openness of the Green Belt and any other harm caused by this inappropriate development.

5.3 The site is occupied by an equine hospital which the Borough Council has already considered to be acceptable having granted planning permission for the original facility on this site under ref. TM/90/727. The hospital is unusual in that it provides a very specialist regional service and is considered to be the leading first opinion equine veterinary facility in the south east. It is a centre of excellence in its field. The nearest other facilities in the country are at Potters Bar, north London (Royal Veterinary College) and at Liphook in Hampshire. The very nature of the existing facility is a strong material factor to consider in respect of this application.

- 5.4 The proposed extensions are, in the context of the existing built form on the site, quite modest in nature and would be located against existing or approved buildings and would provide the hospital much need additional accommodation. The buildings would not appear visually prominent from public vantage points due this context and the topography of the land, which severely restricts the views of the site from public vantage points. I therefore do not consider that the proposal would materially harm the visual openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.5 I note the concerns of the PC regarding over development of the site. However, extensive open areas would remain in place should this development be permitted. Furthermore, most of the buildings within the site are and would remain single storey in height, which would not be readily visible from public vantage points due to the topography of the site and adjoining land. The applicant is also prepared to install a significant area of indigenous tree screening around the east and south boundaries of the site to further reduce the impact of the proposed development. I therefore consider that the proposal would not amount to an over development of the site.
- 5.6 I also acknowledge the concerns of the PC with regard to highway safety. KCC (Highways) considers that although the proposal would result in additional vehicle movements to and from the site, due to the highly specialised nature of the facility, such movements are unlikely to cause serious detriment to highway safety. KCC (Highways) also considers the additional parking and turning facilities to be acceptable.
- 5.7 The DHH has raised no objection to the proposal and as such the proposal is unlikely to cause any additional detriment to the amenity of adjacent residential properties.
- 5.8 In light of the above, I consider that the modesty of the proposed extensions in the context of this particular site, coupled with the highly specialised nature of the facility, amount to a case of very special circumstances that, in my opinion, outweigh any harm caused by this 'inappropriate' development in the MGB. As such I believe that this application should be supported.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** as detailed in letters dated 08.03.2005 and 01.04.2005, and plan nos. 05/01, 02, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 All materials used externally shall match those of the existing buildings within the application site.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

- 3 The use shall not be commenced, nor the premises occupied, until the area shown on the submitted layout as vehicle parking space has been provided, surfaced and drained. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved parking space.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking of vehicles is likely to lead to hazardous on-street parking.

- 4 No building shall be occupied until the area shown on the submitted plan as turning area has been provided, surfaced and drained. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting that Order), shall be carried out on the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved turning area.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate turning facilities is likely to give rise to hazardous conditions in the public highway.

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