

LOCATION: FRIMHURST FARM, DEEPCUT BRIDGE ROAD, DEEPCUT, CAMBERLEY, GU16 6RF

PROPOSAL: The continued use of the existing industrial centre (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and movement between these uses. (Retrospective). (Additional Plan Rec'd 21/09/2016).

TYPE: Full Planning Application

APPLICANT: Mrs Halford
FFIC Ltd

OFFICER: Emma Pearman

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application relates to the continued use of part of the industrial centre at Frimhurst Farm for flexible use classes B1, B2 and B8. The existing use of land and buildings at the site for industrial and employment purposes is currently unauthorised, notwithstanding Unit 5 and Compound F3 which have an agreed lawful use by virtue of Certificates of Lawful Development for Existing Use (SU13/0882 and SU13/0826 respectively).
- 1.2 A similar application 15/0849 was refused in January, and an appeal is currently ongoing in respect of this, and the Enforcement Notices issued in October 2015 for part of the D and E areas, with a joint Inquiry scheduled for 8th November 2016. The differences between this application and the previous application is that a revised access has now been removed from the proposal, with the existing access proposed to still be used; and the D and E areas which are the subject of Enforcement Notices have also been removed from the application site boundary, and as such the applicant now seeks permission only for a smaller area of the site.
- 1.3 It is considered that the re-use of buildings within the historic core of the site is acceptable, as stated in previous applications on this site, as shown on Annex 1. Additionally much of the area outside this historic core is also likely to be exempt from enforcement action given the period of time it has been in situ. However this application includes areas of the site outside the historic core which have not been in situ in excess of 10 years and as such it is considered that this represents harmful and inappropriate development in the countryside. While the site does provide some economic benefits, it is not considered that these outweigh the harm to the countryside for the site as a whole. The County Highway Authority has also objected to the proposal, stating that it has not been demonstrated by the applicant that the impact of the proposed development can be adequately accommodated on the adjacent public highway, and have raised concerns about the suitability of the existing access. It is therefore considered that permission should be refused.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Frimhurst Farm is located between the settlements of Frimley Green and Deepcut within a rural location characterised by woodland and mature landscape features. The site is located to the west of Deepcut Bridge Road and is served by an access in close proximity to Deepcut Bridge to the south. It is located in Countryside Beyond the Green Belt as identified by the Proposals Map of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2012.

- 2.2 The site benefits from a long access that leads into the site approximately 90 metres away from the public highway. To the eastern edge of the site, in close proximity to the site access are fairly large warehouse buildings divided into business units. Beyond this area are large compound areas characterised by a large number of informal buildings including portacabins, shipping containers and other free standing structures. This area is also tenanted and as such divided into compound units characterised by a mixture of mesh wire and wood panel fencing. The commercial tenants sore various types of building materials, machinery, scrap metal and other forms of industrial material.
- 2.3 The site access runs through the centre of the site and also serves Frimhurst Farm Cottages. The area surrounding the site is of a wooded rural character although the vegetation immediately surrounding the site is in poor form.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The site was originally a farm with the agricultural buildings concentrated to the east and open fields to the west. In the 1990s the site was re-used for commercial purposes. Between 1998 and 2006 the site expanded significantly to the west with commercial activity. By 2009 further buildings had been erected and hardstanding laid and there was an associated intensification in site activity. Since 2009 the following applications have been received:
- 3.2 SU/09/0843 Formation of a driveway and access onto Deepcut Bridge Road
Refused 07/06/2010 due to the adverse impact upon the character and setting of Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area and the wooded countryside location by providing an urbanising feature within the rural location.
Dismissed at Appeal APP/D3640/A/10/2141599
- 3.3 SU/12/0809 Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing Class B1 use of units 1, 1A, 2, 3, 4 and 8.
Not Agreed 25/03/2012
- 3.4 SU/13/0822 Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing Class B1(c) use of unit 5.
Agreed 24/01/2014
- 3.5 SU/13/0826 Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing Class B8 use of compound F3.
Agreed 20/01/2014
- 3.6 SU/14/0605 Application relating to the continued use of the existing Industrial Centre for use classes B1, B2 and B8 and movement between these uses as well as a revised vehicular access onto Deepcut Bridge Road
Refused 18/11/2014 due to the impact of the areas west of compound F1 resulting in a proliferation and intensification of commercial uses and activity into former undeveloped land and having an adverse impact on the countryside; and, the proposed access would also be harmful to the countryside.

- 3.7 SU/15/0849 The continued use of the existing Industrial Centre (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) and movement between these uses as well as a revised access onto Deepcut Bridge Road (Part Retrospective).

Refused 15/01/2016 for the following reasons:

1. *The proposed development by reason of the compound areas created to the west of compound F1 (comprised of hardstanding, wire mesh fencing and industrial storage of materials and containers) results in a proliferation and intensification of commercial uses and activity that encroaches into former undeveloped land and has an adverse impact on the rural and intrinsic character of the countryside, contrary to the objectives of the countryside as set out in Policies CPA, CP2, DM1 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies as well as the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.*
2. *The proposed access by reason of its urbanising and intrusive design and siting within a rural location would have an adverse impact on the rural landscape and intrinsic character of the countryside. This visual harm would not be offset by the stopping up of existing access and would therefore be contrary to the objectives set out in Policies CPA, CP2 and DM1 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies as well the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

The applicant has appealed this decision.

- 3.8 16/0528 Certificate of Lawful Existing Use for the use of the E areas (E1B, E2, E3, E4A and E4B) as B8 (Storage and Distribution)

Not yet determined

- 3.9 Enforcement Notices (Material Change of Use and Operational Development) were served on the 30th October 2015, relating to the areas west of compound F1, and the applicant lodged an enforcement appeal which has now been co-joined with the planning appeal for 15/0849. A Public Inquiry has been scheduled for November 2016.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The application proposes a retrospective change of use of part of the site to an industrial centre comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) uses. The application site boundary excludes those areas which are subject to an enforcement notice (D5, D6, D7, E1B, E2, E3, E4A and E4B). The applicant seeks a flexible permission allowing change of use between these three use classes.
- 4.2 In support of this proposal the applicant has submitted the following information:
- Planning, Design and Access Statement
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Plan showing 'Historic Core' and Plan showing layout

- Photos
- Traffic Survey
- Highways Vehicle Tracking plan.

5.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

5.1	Surrey County Highway Authority	Objection – it has not been demonstrated that the impact of the proposed development can be adequately accommodated on the adjacent public highway.
5.2	Council's Arboricultural Officer	No objection subject to condition.
5.3	Surrey Wildlife Trust	Not able to fully comment given that no ecological report has been provided.
5.4	Council's Heritage and Conservation Officer	No objection – satisfied the structures do not harm the setting of the Basingstoke Canal conservation area.
5.5	Basingstoke Canal Authority	No response received.
5.6	Mytchett, Frimley Green and Deepcut Society	Objection – site is on rural land, antisocial in terms of noise, causes damage to the environment – trees, wildlife, pollution, they work outside normal working hours, causes HGV movements on small roads, has a negative effect on properly run business centres, has a negative impact on the canal SSSI.
5.7	Local Lead Flood Authority	No objection – low risk and existing drainage system not being altered.
5.8	Council's Environmental Health Officer	No objection – subject to conditions regarding a Noise Impact Assessment, working hours and vehicle movements. No evidence of serious pollution and if there was likely to be dealt with under statutory nuisance legislation.
5.9	Council's Economic Development Officer	No objection – there is a shortage of B2 and B8 units within Surrey Heath and Frimhurst Farm supports niche businesses.
5.10	Canal and River Trust	No comments to make – falls outside statutory consultation regime.

6.0 REPRESENTATION

- 6.1 At the time of preparation of this report 25 letters of objection have been received (many of these are identical).

The issues raised in objection to the application are as follows:

Impact on Countryside/location [see section 7.3]

- They have established it on designated rural land, within an area of outstanding natural beauty, adjacent to the Basingstoke Canal SSSI
- Pollution of Basingstoke Canal with waste, sewage, diesel, noise and light pollution
- Impacts on visitors to the area including the Basingstoke Canal and revenue visitors bring to economy
- Detrimental to the rural nature of Deepcut
- Entirely inappropriate in this location

Economy [see section 7.4]

- Has impact on other locally run industrial centres that are unable to fill vacancies

Highway Safety and Parking [see section 7.5]

- Causes additional road movements by HGVs, in a rural area with small roads already overcrowded and overburdened, causing unacceptable damage to roads
- HGVs cause safety issues with cyclists

Residential amenity [see section 7.6]

- Have caused residents upset in the past through antisocial noise caused by the activities of the units and outside working hours
- Not appropriate for industrial noise in this rural area
- Causes noise, vibration and air pollution

Trees/Ecology [see section 7.7]

- Have caused and continue to cause damage to the environment (trees, shrubs, local wildlife) and impact on flora and fauna of Canal itself

Other matters

- Public opinion very strongly against the presence and spread of the site *[Officer comment: Noted, however, the application has to be considered against existing planning policies with objections taken into account also]*
- Owners write to residents and make promises they do not keep for example cutting down trees *[Officer comment: Cannot be taken into account as part of the application]*
- Owners have no regard for local environment *[Officer comment: The impact on the environment has been considered as part of the application].*

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATION

7.1 The application is to be considered against policies within the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2012 (CSDMP), and in this case the relevant policies are CP1, CP2, CP8, CP14, DM1, DM9, DM11, DM13 and DM17. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a relevant consideration.

7.2 The main issues to be considered are:

- Impact on the Countryside beyond the Green Belt;
- Impact on local economy;
- Highway impacts;
- Residential amenity; and,
- Other matters including heritage, ecology, flooding and drainage, landscaping and CIL.

7.3 Impact on the Countryside Beyond the Green Belt

7.3.1 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that core planning principles include conserving and enhancing the natural environment, recognising the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside, and encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) provided that it is not of high environmental value.

7.3.2 The supporting text to Policy CP1 states in paragraph 5.6 that inappropriate development within the Countryside will include proposals that cause harm to its intrinsic character and beauty, landscape diversity, heritage and wildlife. Policy CP2 states that development is required to ensure that all land is used efficiently within the context of its surroundings and respect and enhance the quality of the urban, rural, natural and historic environments. Policy DM9 reflects this advice, indicating that development should respect and enhance the rural character of the environment.

7.3.3 The application site began use as a farm until the early 1990s when commercial businesses began to operate from the site. It is the case, however, that the scale of the site has expanded substantially from what was the historic core of the pig farm. The historic core of the site is considered to be the areas/buildings which were part of the original farm (excluding the open fields). The applicant has submitted a plan called Appendix 1 – Historic Core but it is not considered that all of the areas marked in this plan can be considered to be the historic core. Officers have produced a plan [See Annex 1] based on aerial photos, and the planning history, of what is considered to be the historic core of the site, which is largely the areas to the east of compound F1, although the use of this part of the site has intensified since it was a farm. Lawful Development Certificates are in place for F3 and Units 5A and 5B within this area.

7.3.4 Policy DM1 supports the re-use of existing buildings within the historic core of the site, and previous planning applications, 15/0849 and 14/0605, deemed that the commercial re-use of the agricultural buildings within the historic core of the site was acceptable, and once again this is considered to be the case. However, the development beyond the historic core is considered to be inappropriate in this countryside location and has caused harm incrementally, over time, to the rural and intrinsic characteristics of the countryside.

- 7.3.5 The Planning Authority had sufficient evidence to ascertain that a breach had occurred for those areas west of compound F1 to serve Enforcement Notices, so only those areas were served with a notice, which are outside the application site boundary of this application. The current available evidence shows that most of the areas within the application site boundary, which are beyond the historic core [see Annex 1], are likely to have been in use in excess of 10 years and as such it does not appear to be expedient to take enforcement action, and in the officer's opinion it is considered beneficial to regularise these areas through a full planning application such as this, rather than through certificates of existing lawful use. Unlike a certificate which can only determine whether a use was lawful, a planning application allows greater controls to be imposed on the site through the imposition of conditions.
- 7.3.6 However, since the issue of the Enforcement Notices, available evidence now shows that there are some areas which are known as D2, D3A, D3B, D4A, D4B, D4C and E5, which clearly have not been at the site in excess of 10 years. No enforcement notices were served on this part of the site previously, however the Council will consider whether it is expedient to now do so. Aerial photos of this part of the site in 2006 and preceding that date show open fields which were formerly part of the farm [see aerial photos in Annex 2], and as such the compounds and built development in this part of the site represent encroachment into the countryside. This part of the site is clearly outside what can be referred to as the 'Historic Core' [see Annex 1] and as such it represents inappropriate development in the Countryside. The site cannot be considered to be previously developed land (PDL) given that it was previously in agricultural use, and this part of the site in any case did not have any development present until these compounds were erected sometime after 2006. As such this encroachment has cumulatively had a harmful impact on the rural and intrinsic characteristics of the countryside.
- 7.3.7 It is therefore considered that the re-use of the buildings within the historic core of the site for B1, B2 and B8 purposes is considered to be acceptable. The remainder of the site is considered to be inappropriate development in this countryside location, however much of the site beyond the historic core has been in situ for more than 10 years and as such it is not expedient to pursue enforcement action. However, this application includes an area which is clearly outside the historic core and has not been in situ for more than 10 years. As such the proposal is considered to be harmful to the countryside and contrary to Policies CP1, CP2, DM1 and DM9 of the Core Strategy as well as the NPPF.

7.4 Impact on local economy

- 7.4.1 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF supports the diversification of agricultural and other rural businesses. Policy DM1 (Rural Economy) supports the re-use, adaptation or conversion of buildings for economic purposes, subject to 6 criteria. Criterion (iii) is of most relevance and this requires the scale and use of any diversification or economic purpose including cumulative impact to not conflict with wider countryside objectives. Moreover, supporting paragraph 6.14 of Policy DM1 recognises that conflicts between economic objectives and maintaining the character and function of the countryside can arise, but in these circumstances, development for economic purposes will not be permitted where it is considered to be an inappropriate form of development or where its scale and use conflicts with wider countryside objectives.
- 7.4.2 The applicant states that the site (as a whole, including areas subject to enforcement action) supports 42 businesses and employs 239 people. They state that the vast majority of businesses at the site have local coverage and additional information submitted shows that the tenants at the site have been located there for between 2 – 28 years. The applicant maintains that Frimhurst serves as a location for half of Deepcut's 84 businesses and so makes an important contribution to the local economy.

- 7.4.3 The Economic Development Officer has been consulted and has confirmed that Frimhurst Farm accounts for half the businesses in Deepcut, and all of those on the site can be classified as 'micro', employing up to 9 people. He states that many of the businesses just use the site as storage and work remotely and there are a number of niche businesses based on site which have been attracted by the low rents and would be unlikely to be able to afford the charges on more developed sites. The majority of the units on the farm qualify for rate relief because of their small size, and the consequence of the Chancellor's autumn statement means that only one business will be liable for rates from 1st April 2017. He has also stated that the Local Enterprise Partnership published a study earlier this year on the availability, type and demand of commercial property across the local region, and it was reported that there was a shortage in B1, B2 and B8 units. A more local report considering Surrey Heath, Hart and Rushmoor produced in 2015 stated that in the period up to 2031 the demand for B class uses will increase and in particular there is likely to be a shortage of B2 and B8 uses.
- 7.4.4 It is therefore considered that the site does serve a useful purpose in terms of offering space from which small local businesses particularly can be based or store equipment etc. As set out in the report to the previous application 15/0849 however, the applicant has stated the regularisation of the site is necessary as they are keen to secure funding to upgrade the site, though have not set out what impact this funding may have on rental charges. Additionally, objectors have cited vacancies in local sites in more sustainable locations, offering the same use, which are currently vacant. Notably, the applicant has again not supplied any information in terms of supply, vacancies and rental charges of other similar units in the area in support of their application.
- 7.4.5 The applicant states that Policy CP8 and CP13 support the B1, B2 and B8 uses at the site. Policy CP8 states that on "other employment sites", redevelopment to provide small flexible B1 units will be promoted, however this site cannot be considered to be an "other employment site" as there is no lawful use as an employment site, and there is no redevelopment of existing PDL. Policy CP13 states that outside Core Employment Areas and Camberley Town Centre, development for Class B uses will generally be restricted to extensions, alterations or additions to existing buildings or operations in employment use, redevelopment of an existing building or operation in employment use, or specific sites allocated for employment use or mixed use development in a Site Allocations DPD. Again this site is not an existing operation in employment use given that it is not lawful, and while the conversion of the existing buildings may be supported, the site has already had extensions that have substantially spread beyond this area.
- 7.4.6 It is considered therefore, as stated in section 7.3 above, that the re-use of buildings within the historic core of the site for B1, B2 and B8 purposes is considered to be acceptable, and much of the site outside the historic core is exempt from enforcement action. However a balance must be struck between the economic and environmental objectives as set out in the NPPF and Policy DM1, and a line has to be drawn to prevent the continuous encroachment of the site into the countryside. As such, while there are clear economic benefits from the site, the scale and intensification of the site has increased substantially from the size of the original pig farm [see aerial photos in Annex 2] and this application includes areas outside the historic core that have not been in situ for in excess of 10 years. It is not considered that accepting the use of most of the site as B1, B2 and B8 justifies allowing even further extensions into the countryside, and therefore the cumulative encroachment into the countryside is not considered to be fully outweighed by the economic benefits the site provides.

7.5 Highway Impacts

- 7.5.1 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people. Policy DM11 states that development which would adversely impact the safe and efficient flow of traffic movement on the highway network will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that measures to reduce such impacts to acceptable levels can be implemented.
- 7.5.2 No change is proposed to the existing access road from Deepcut Bridge Road, close to the bridge, which would continue to be utilised as the single access to the site. It should be noted that given that there is no planning permission for the site, the existing access has never been assessed as being suitable for the traffic that operates from the site, nor information provided previously to the Local Planning Authority as to the numbers of vehicles accessing the site. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition that each HGV is limited to two movements to and from the site per day, and restriction on the hours of loading and unloading vehicles, for amenity purposes.
- 7.5.3 The County Highway Authority were consulted and requested further information on the likely increase in traffic movements to and from the site once the use has been formalised, the available visibility splays from the existing access in both directions, and the provision of tracking plots/swept path analysis for entry and exit to the site for the sizes and types of vehicles that will be used. In response to this the applicant provided a traffic survey which showed over the course of one day that there were 157 movements (including tenants, deliveries, staff and other) in the morning and 117 movements in the afternoon. The applicant states that there will be no increase in movements or changes to the access as application seeks to regularise the existing use only. The applicant also provided a plan showing visibility of the site and tracking for an HGV.
- 7.5.4 The County Highway Authority did not consider that the plan was sufficiently detailed or provided enough information to accurately assess the proposal and requested further information which the applicant declined to provide. The County Highway Authority has said that while the site benefits from Vehicle Operating Licences, the County Highway Authority has objected to the issue of these licences, and the Traffic Commissioner has a smaller remit of issues that can be taken into account. As such the issue of Vehicle Operating Licences does not indicate that the existing access is suitable. The County Highway Authority has therefore raised objection to the proposal, stating that the access is single width with inadequate geometry and does not provide simultaneous entry and exit for two vehicles, that there is restricted visibility and large vehicles would require land beyond the carriageway to access the site. As such it has not been sufficiently demonstrated by the applicant that the impact of the proposed development can be adequately accommodated on the adjacent public highway, given that the County Highway Authority do not have sufficient information to assess what, if any, adjustments to the access might be necessary to accommodate the vehicles.
- 7.5.5 It is noted that there are lawful development certificates on the site in respect of Unit 5 and Compound F3 and planning permission for the telecoms mast at E1A, and as such the existing access would continue to be utilised by the occupiers of those units. However, these form a very small part of the site as a whole, and the remainder of the site is currently unlawful, and while the applicant states that those units that have been there in excess of 10 years would continue to use the access, this application is a full planning application and not a Certificate of Lawful Use and as such highway matters can be considered. It is therefore considered reasonable to uphold the objection by the County

Highway Authority and given that insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the existing access is suitable for the use, it is considered that the proposal is not acceptable in terms of its impact on highways and access and as such is contrary to Policy DM11 in this regard.

7.6 Residential amenity

- 7.6.1 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Policy DM9 states that development will be acceptable where it respects the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and uses. It is necessary to take into account matters such as overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light and an overbearing or unneighbourly built form.
- 7.6.2 The nearest neighbouring properties to the site are the residential property to the front of Frimhurst Farm, adjacent to the existing accesses and the Frimhurst Farm Cottages to the north. Further away are the homes on Lake Road, the other side of the Basingstoke Canal; the gardens of which lie over 70m from the northern edge of the site. The previous applications 15/0849 and 14/0605 found that the distances between the properties and the site would not have a significant adverse impact on the amenities of the occupiers of these properties, notwithstanding views into the site during the winter months. There has been nothing submitted as part of this application which would change that conclusion and the proposed access has been removed from the application which was closer to these properties.
- 7.6.3 Concern has been raised locally about the noise and air pollution arising from the site, as well as working hours. The Environmental Health Officer has been consulted and has stated that a noise impact assessment will be required by condition to assess the impact on local residential properties and from the traffic associated with the site, which should also propose any mitigation measures necessary. He has also recommended a condition controlling working hours and the number of vehicles accessing the site (two movements per vehicle per day), and a condition to restrict the hours of use for loading and unloading goods vehicles. In terms of Air Quality he had commented in respect of the previous application that pollution from road vehicles drops off quickly with distance from source and as such the impact would be minimal.
- 7.6.4 It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity, subject to conditions, and is in line with Policy DM9 and the NPPF in this regard.

7.7 Other matters

- 7.7.1 Policy CP14A of the CSDMP seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The application site is approximately 120m south of a Site of Nature Conservation Importance on the northern side of Lake Road and 50m south of the Basingstoke Canal SSSI. The applicant has not provided an Ecological Assessment with this application, however no additional development is proposed from that existing so it is not considered that protected species are likely to be affected any further by the proposal to regularise the use. However, large areas of open countryside have been built upon and as such enhancements to biodiversity could be provided to go some way to compensate for the loss of habitat. Surrey Wildlife Trust has stated that an ecological report should again have been provided and it is considered that had this application been acceptable in other respects then this would have been asked for before determination of the application, though if Members choose to approve it, given that there is not likely to be further impact

on protected species then it could be requested by condition. Surrey Wildlife Trust has raised concern this time about potential pollution of the canal, as have residents. However no comments have been received from the Environment Agency in this respect and the Canal and River Trust have stated that the development is too minor to be within their remit. Environmental Health have not raised objection in respect of contamination and have said that there is no evidence of pollution at this time and it is not likely to be more than the previous use of the site as a farm. If there were any incidences of pollution it is likely to be dealt with under statutory nuisance legislation.

- 7.7.2 Policy DM10 of the CSDMP states that in order to manage flood risk, development within Flood Zone 1 on an area of 1ha or more will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal would reduce risk to and from the development or at least be risk neutral. The applicant has submitted a short Flood Risk Assessment, which has been considered by the Local Lead Flood Authority. They have stated that the site is considered to be low risk, and as the drainage is not changing from existing then it is considered to be acceptable in this regard. As such, it is considered the proposal would comply with the intent of Policy DM10.
- 7.7.3 Policy DM17 of the CSDMP states that development which affects any Heritage Asset should first establish and take into account its individual significance, and seek to promote the conservation and enhancement of the Asset and its setting. The proposal is close to the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area, which is located approximately 55m to the north. The Council's Heritage Officer has been consulted however has not objected stating that the buildings although of utilitarian form, would not harm the setting of the conservation area.
- 7.7.4 Policy DM9 requires that trees and other vegetation worthy of retention is protected and high quality hard and soft landscaping provided where appropriate. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has been consulted, however given that this application is for the regularisation of the site only, no impact on existing vegetation is envisaged. However, given the clearance of large areas of open countryside to make way for the existing structures, it is considered appropriate that a landscaping scheme to provide additional planting could be required by condition if the proposal was acceptable in other respects.
- 7.7.5 Class B uses are not CIL liable and as such the proposal is not required to contribute towards infrastructure or other development funded by CIL.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is considered that the site contributes positively to the local economy and the principle of the re-use of buildings within the historic core for economic purposes is acceptable. Those buildings outside the historic core also contribute to the local economy and although the proliferation of the site has over time harmed its character and landscape quality, much of this area is now likely to be exempt from enforcement action through the passage of time. However, areas which are outside the historic core and which have not been in situ for over 10 years have been included within the application site boundary, and these areas represent inappropriate development in the countryside, harmful to the intrinsic rural character and quality of the countryside. It is not considered that the economic benefits of the site outweigh the harm to the countryside for the application site as a whole, nor that the acceptability of the historic core justifies further extensions than those already existing.

- 8.2 Additionally, insufficient information has been provided in this case to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the County Highway Authority and the Local Planning Authority that the existing access is suitable for the vehicles that currently access the site. The County Highway Authority has raised concerns with a number of aspects of the existing access. As such it is considered that the application is not acceptable in terms of its impact on highways and access.
- 8.3 It is therefore considered that the application is contrary to Policies CP1, CP2, DM1, DM9 and DM11 and as such permission should be refused.

9.0 ARTICLE 2(3) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) ORDER 2012 WORKING IN A POSITIVE/PROACTIVE MANNER

In assessing this application, officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner consistent with the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the NPPF. This included the following:

- a) Provided or made available pre application advice to seek to resolve problems before the application was submitted and to foster the delivery of sustainable development.
- b) Provided feedback through the validation process including information on the website, to correct identified problems to ensure that the application was correct and could be registered.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reason(s):-

1. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated by the applicant that the impact of the proposed development can be adequately accommodated on the adjacent public highway, nor that the existing access to the site is suitable for the proposed use by virtue of its width. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy DM11 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposed development by reason of the compound areas known as D2, D3a, D3b, D4a, D4b, D4c and E5 (comprised of hardstanding, fencing and industrial storage of materials, containers and other structures) results in a proliferation and intensification of commercial uses and activity that encroaches into former undeveloped land and has an adverse impact on the rural and intrinsic character of the countryside, contrary to the objectives of the countryside as set out in Policies CP1, CP2, DM1 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies as well as the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.