

Design and Access Statement

1. Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the change of use and external alterations to existing commercial buildings to create a mausoleum with associated parking and landscaping, at Old Hill Farm, Old Hill, Orpington (the 'Site').

1.2 The statement is set out as follows:

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2. Site Context

2.1 The application site comprises land and premises known as Old Hill Farm, which are located off Old Hill, Orpington. BR6 6BN. The site is irregular in shape and has an overall area of approximately 0.97 hectares.

2.2 Access to the site is via a private gated drive off the eastern side of Old Hill. Adjacent to the entrance and to the right of the access is a hard surfaced area, which is used as a recycling compound in connection with the present use of the site; the sinuous access road then leads to a larger area of hard standing towards the north of the site, which contains two large commercial / industrial style buildings; the remainder of the extensive hard standing is used for parking of cars and commercial vehicles, external storage and the siting of temporary structures (large storage containers and skips) for storage.

2.3 The two existing buildings on the application site are Unit 1 and Unit 2. Unit 1 is approximately 360 sq. m and is currently occupied by Westland Estates, a property horticultural maintenance company. The business entails residential and commercial garden maintenance. There are also tree surgeons that are based at the site. Wood is brought back to site for storage, processing, and recycling. Unit 1 includes storage space for gardening machinery, a workshop for repairs, offices, a

reception area, and other staff facilities. Unit 2 is used as a horticultural storage area and is approximately 180 square metres.

- 2.4 The existing buildings comprise pitched roof commercial / industrial style buildings with grey sheet roofing and light green cladding. Each building is accessed by large double doors, which allow access for commercial vehicles. The buildings also have pedestrian access doors.
- 2.5 Over a third of the site comprises hard standing the remaining less than two thirds of the site is made up of relatively flat grassed area, which is separated from the access road and hard standing areas by tall hedges.
- 2.6 With the exception of the Site access the Site is almost entirely enclosed by a woodland area known as 'Ranus Wood' which acts as a complete and substantial buffer between the application site and nearest residential development. The nearest dwellings are located to the north of the site along Beechwood Avenue, which is a small housing estate located off Shire Lane and existing dwellings located along Old Hill to the South of the site.
- 2.7 There are also a number of public footpaths in the vicinity of the application site that provide pedestrian access to the site. One of the footpaths runs between the application site and Green Street Green High Street bus stops where there are a number of bus services. This public footpath crosses the A21 where there is a pedestrian crossing.
- 2.8 Although the site comprises previously developed land with an existing commercial use; it is within the Green Belt.

3. Details of Proposed Use and Associated Proposals

- 3.1 The planning application is for the proposed change of use of the existing buildings into a Mausoleum, with external alterations and associated soft / hard landscaping works and parking areas.
- 3.2 In recent years families have been using community mausoleums to create lasting memorials for loved ones. Mausoleums are essentially above-ground burial vaults, which date back to the 4th century BC when the first-ever mausoleum was built in honour of King Mausolous of Caria, whose name was then given to all monumental tombs. The applicant is aware that increasingly communities are requesting a greater choice in how loved ones are buried and remembered. As such, a mausoleums is a logical way forward. The facility would create upto 1000 burial crypts. These would also include smaller vaults known as 'Columbarium' which would be used to house internments.
- 3.3 The mausoleum would cater for all faiths and in order to meet that requirement a site located just outside London, which is one of the world's most culturally diverse cities, is ideal. In the UK there are a limited number of mausoleums. There are no specific locational requirements. However, in general they are located in

tranquil and attractive surroundings, which is essential to creating the appropriate ambience for a final place of rest. For the above reasons such sites are mainly found in rural countryside locations. Often these locations are located within the Green Belt. However, a new building in the Green Belt for a mausoleum would be considered ‘inappropriate development’. In this instance the application is for the conversion of existing buildings, which is supported by national and local Green Belt policy.

- 3.4 Having regard for the above parameters; the application site is ideal for the proposed use as it meets all the necessary requirements. The site is outside a built up area of London in a very private, secluded location which offers an attractive and tranquil setting with good transport links. In addition, the site contains two existing large buildings, which can be easily adapted to be used as a Mausoleum. Also the site contains substantial areas of hard standing, part of which can be used to accommodate areas for parking. Furthermore, the wider site can be restored and landscaped to provide a secluded and attractive gardens / environment for visitors.
- 3.5 The internal layout of the buildings to facilitate the proposed change of use would comprise a central access and crypt area and off this on both sides would be burial vaults. The vaults would be at five tiers from bottom to top. The front cover of each vault would comprise a marble, copper or glass plaque, which could be engraved / etched. The mausoleum would feature a calm and tranquil setting.
- 3.6 To facilitate the proposed change of use the buildings would be altered externally. The external alterations are cosmetic and comprise timber and sand stone cladding, green walls and roofs. The proposal would also include converting areas of hardstanding to soft landscaping.
- 3.7 The mausoleum would operate as follows: Monday – Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm; Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays 10:00am – 4:00pm.
- 3.8 The proposed development would provide employment for the equivalent of eight to ten full time staff.
- 3.9 The existing access would be retained and improved. A total of 25 parking spaces are proposed; the visitor car park would be located off the access towards the south of the site, which would contain 20 parking spaces and a cycle storage rack. Three disabled parking spaces and 2 hearse parking space would be located near the proposed mausoleum.
- 3.10 The application drawings contain a site plan, to show the site in the context of the wider area, floor plans and elevations including computer generated images (CGI’s)

4. Design and appearance

- 4.1 Mausoleum design is a niche process; which seeks to strike a balance between high quality design, enhancing the landscape / natural environment; making best

use of the land, whilst meeting the operational requirements of the proposal and most importantly having no detrimental impact on the amenity of residents.

- 4.2 In this instance the existing two large buildings on the site would be converted into a mausoleum. As such, there would be no increase to the size, scale and mass of the existing buildings. However, having regard for the need to create high quality buildings for use as mausoleum and the woodland context of the site; the existing buildings, which are industrial in appearance and out of character with their surroundings would be renovated and updated. As such, the proposals include the cladding of the buildings, with natural materials such as, stone and cedar cladding.
- 4.3 Consequently, the proposed alterations will give the buildings a much more contemporary appearance with the use of predominantly timber, which would also complement and improve the appearance of the building in terms of its woodland setting.

5. Layout

- 5.1 In general, the layout follows the arrangement of the existing site. The access is broadly retained in its original location and a large area of hardstanding near to the front of the site located off the access would be utilised for car parking. The car park would also utilise the existing access road to the buildings. However, this would only be used to access hearse parking and disabled parking spaces, which would be located closer to the mausoleum buildings. The proposals will introduce a pedestrian tree lined pathway from the car park to the building via an existing grassed area between the frontage to the site and buildings to the rear. The scheme also proposes a water feature in this area and additional tree planting. Further within the site the proposed development would utilise the existing buildings and the existing hardstanding areas. However, around the building the areas of existing hardsanding would be significantly reduced to make way for landscaping, additional tree planting and smaller water features.

6. Scale

- 6.1 The scale of the existing buildings would remain unaltered. However, the removal of some storage containers / buildings would result in an overall reduction in the scale of physical development on the site, thus increasing the ‘openness’ and improving the ‘visual amenity’ of this part of the Green Belt.

7. Landscaping

- 7.1 The application site comprises grassed areas and a significant amount of hardstanding. There are a limited amount of trees within the site and a hedge

which goes along the perimeter of a large grassed area within the site. As a consequence of this proposal, large swathes of hardstanding would be landscaped. In addition, the scheme proposes extensive additional tree planting, particularly to the rear of the existing buildings. As such, there will be a significant net gain in landscaping, which will complement the improvements to the site and wider area. The applicant is willing to provide additional landscaping if required by the Local Planning Authority, which would be secured via an appropriate planning condition.

8. Access

- 8.1 The existing access would be retained and improved, which would be more than adequate to facilitate the proposed development. The majority of the proposed parking would be located off this access on an area, which comprises of hardstanding at present, which is already utilised for external storage / parking in connection with the existing uses. Disabled parking spaces are to be located close to the existing buildings for easier access.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The proposed development has been designed having regard to the existing buildings; access; soft / hard landscaping, the surrounding woodland context and the sites Green Belt location. As such, the proposal utilises the existing access and proposes new parking in areas, which are already used for storage / parking. The existing buildings will be retained and significantly improved in appearance and design. Existing large swathes of hardstanding would be removed to be replaced with landscaping, tree planting and water features, which would improve the visual amenity and biodiversity of the site and wider area.
- 9.2 For the above reasons the proposed development is logical in terms of layout and will enhance and improve the site and wider area in terms of design, circulation and landscaping.