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H.J. BURT
Chartered Surveyors : Estate Agents

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Our Ref.: RBA/CEA

27th May 2025

NJA Town Planning Ltd
The Beehive,
City Place,
Crawley
West Sussex RH6 0PA

Dear Sirs,

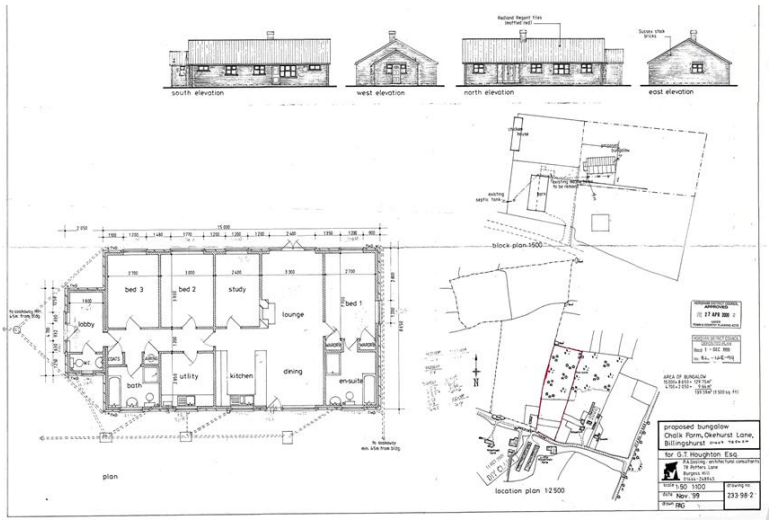
Chalk Farm Bungalow, Okehurst Lane, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9HR

This letter relates to the planning application (ref DC/24/1790) in respect to Chalk Farm Bungalow ("the Property") to remove Condition 3 ("the Condition") imposed by planning permission reference BL/128/99 which restricts the occupation of the dwelling to a person solely employed or retired and last employed in the locality in agriculture or in forestry.

I confirm I am a Chartered Surveyor, qualifying in 2019 as a Professional Member within the Rural Division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, having completed a Masters in Rural Estate Management at the Royal Agricultural University and has since qualified at a Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers. I am a Chartered Surveyor and Registered Valuer for H.J. Burt & Son, Chartered Surveyors & Estate Agents of Steyning and Henfield, West Sussex. I have a number of years' experience in valuing, letting and selling properties and land in West Sussex and the wider South-East.

H.J. Burt & Son is the longest standing independent estate agents in the area, having been established in 1887 and with a team of qualified property experts who are regularly involved in the valuing, marketing and subsequent transactions of agricultural and rural property. In the last 12 months, the agricultural market has been through significant changes brought about by changes in English policy. Prior to this, the agricultural market has been significantly affected by the UK firstly leaving the EU, then by the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by the war in Ukraine and finally more recently the changes to the UK government with a new Labour government. Recent policies include reforms to Inheritance Tax and reductions in Agricultural Property Relief as well as the substantial reductions in subsidies available to farmers. This has meant that farming in the UK is changing and in many instances there has been a significant effect on farm profitability – indeed if there is any profit – and overall sustainable of farm businesses.

The Property is a 3-bedroom single storey dwelling extending to approximately 1,500 sqft situated within a block of land measuring under 6 acres (2.43 Ha), with the majority of the land being mature woodland. The Property is accessed off Okehurst Lane via a shared driveway, shared with Chalk Farm & Nursery.



Previous planning application drawing – showing layout of Property



Photograph showing the Property.

The applicant and owner of the Property, Mr. G. Houghton, is understood to be a retired agricultural worker. The original permission related to a holding which no longer exists due to the majority of the original acres which formed part of the Property having been sold off. The previous holding totalled circa 25 acres but now extends to circa 6 acres following the applicant having sold off old buildings and additional land. The majority of the remaining land comprises mature deciduous woodland which is unsuitable for agricultural practices, but also of a size too small for commercial forestry which could potentially sustain a worker full time and enable them to afford to purchase the Property. The remainder of the land (approximately 0.5 of an acre) is predominantly garden or down to grass but is not large enough to be viable for agricultural use.

With the total holding size of circa 6 acres including land not suited for agricultural or forestry use, if the entirety of the holding were to be established as livestock grazing and using traditional stocking densities, the holding could sustain approximately 10 sheep or alternatively up to 5 cows (Source*: Farmbrite*) At these stocking levels, it would not allow for a commercially viable agricultural enterprise on the Property and which would significantly impact upon the market of potential purchasers for the Property able to comply with the Condition should the owner seek to sell.

The current average wage for an agricultural worker in the UK is in the region £24,000 p.a. which is significantly below the UK average for full time workers at approximately £37,200 per annum (Sources: *Nix Farm Management and Office for National Statistics*). With the average value for a typical 3-bedroom dwelling in West Sussex - typically being semi-detached and without any land - being in excess of £370,000 (Source: *Office for National Statistics*), it would expected that the vast majority of dwellings would be out of reach for the vast majority of farm workers to purchase even if they could obtain mortgage funding to top-up existing private reserves. When taking into account the square footage, location and additional land included with Chalk Farm Bungalow in its semi-rural location, it has a value significantly in excess of these averages which even taking into account an included discount to reflect the occupancy restriction, this value would likely exceed £750,000. This would make it highly unlikely or indeed possible for any farm worker to be able to afford to purchase the Property at its market value.

Within the local area, there are limited opportunities for agricultural workers with many farms having been sold, diversified or redeveloped over the past 5 years due to significant changes in English agricultural policy. With limited support now available to farmers in the form of subsidies for food production, together with rising input costs, many smaller and non-commercial farms in the area have been sold or diversified out of agriculture including for alternative conservation schemes. Many investment buyers for farms and land are looking to alternative land uses including beyond food production and consequently the need for farm workers in the region has reduced which would mean that even should a farm worker be able to afford to purchase the Property, they are unlikely to be able to find work in the locality and would thus be in breach of the occupancy condition.

It is therefore our opinion that the current occupancy condition is no longer reflective of the current size and use of the holding now comprising a property with a dwelling with a modest amount of principally non-agricultural land, rather than as previously when it was as a small farm in a different agricultural environment from 25 years ago when first permitted. Neither does it reflect any demand in the locality for affordable agricultural workers accommodation.

We would therefore conclude that the current occupancy restriction under Condition 3 of permission BL/128/99 is no longer relevant and where there is no longer a demand, financial ability to afford, or need in the locality for such accommodation and it should therefore be removed.

Yours faithfully,



Claire Adcroft MSc MRICS FAAV