



Corinna Griffiths  
Swale Borough Council  
Swale House  
East Street  
Sittingbourne  
Kent ME10 3HT

26 November 2021

Dear Mrs Griffiths ,

**LAND AT HILL FARM, BOBBING**  
**UPDATE TO PLANNING APPLICATION REF 21/501740/FULL**

We write in respect of the above referenced planning application and further to the planning committee held on 14 October 2021 where the application was 'called-in' by the Head of Planning.

We understand the application is returning to Committee on 09 December 2021 and we provide you with an update on our position to the application.

Following the debate by Committee Members, we have stopped, looked and listened as to how we, as the applicant, can positively address some of the matters raised.

We have worked extremely hard with Demelza prior to the Committee and even harder since the meeting to try and offer a scheme that Members can support.

**1. S106 Contributions**

As per the officer recommendation report, it was confirmed to Members that the S106 contributions payable under this application were £20,995 for air quality mitigation and £7,615 for SAMMS. Whilst this was greater than the extant 20 unit scheme, we heard a number of Members cite concern over the lack of other general S106 contributions.

As you are aware, the agreed Viability report demonstrated that the scheme could not carry any/limited S106 Contributions, and fundamentally the KCC and NHS requests are not affordable. These amount to approx. £16,174 per dwelling or £485,229 in total (we note that there was a significant typo in the committee report in respect of the primary school contribution which was quoted as £16,800 per dwelling and should have been £6,800 per dwelling - which we trust will be rectified in the revised report).

The lack of wider contributions was clearly a concern for some Committee Members and after listening to the debate, we fully recognise that there is a desire to provide for a more balanced application between delivering the Demelza facility (and its longer-term financial stability), with mitigating the wider public impact the scheme



may have. In this regard, we have held a series of design reviews with Demelza, along with our own technical team to undertake a review of internal specifications.

We have worked together to reduce some elements of the internal fit out of the development to generate some cost savings (such as revised kitchen appliance specification and sanitaryware suppliers etc) for both the nurses accommodation and the residential units. Our goal was to be able to provide a meaningful offer of S106 contributions, demonstrating our willingness to work with Members and acknowledging their concerns.

In this regard, we have worked hard to generate a contribution value equivalent to the requests for the additional 10nr dwellings (i.e. the additional amount this application seeks over and above the extant scheme). This amounts to approx. **£161,743**. We are therefore in a position to revise the contributions sought from this scheme (without prejudice) as follows;

- Air Quality Mitigation - £20,995 (as before)
- SAMMS - £7,615 (as before)
- KCC (incl Education, Libraries, Youth etc) - £150,511
- NHS - £11,232

This now totals a S106 contribution of **£190,353**, an improvement of £161,743, representing the full value of S106 requests for 10nr dwellings.

We would like to reassure both Officers and Members that the cost savings exercise will not detract from our usual high-quality development and will still meet our expectations as an SME developer.

We have worked extremely hard with Demelza and our supply chain to deliver this cost saving and trust the offer of the full contribution for the additional 10nr dwellings provides for a more balanced application in respect of the need to mitigate against the scheme's impact.

## 2. Air Quality

The comments made in respect of Air Quality were noted and we recognise that this is a significant area of concern for Officers and Members – and was a topic explored fully at the application stage. Whilst reference was made to the Pond Farm decision, we understand that the legal position has substantially and importantly materially moved on since the Pond Farm Judicial Review decision. This specifically includes that the Council has adopted specific Air Quality and Planning Technical Guidance in May 2021 and superseded the planning position from when the Pond Farm Judicial Review was made.

This Technical Guidance highlights a list of specific measures that can be implemented as mitigation (set out in Table 2 page 13).

In addition to the S106 contributions which are being sought on Air Quality from this scheme, we are also achieving the requested 50% carbon reduction in the dwellings (a matter not affected by the above S106 position) as well as providing 100% electric vehicle charging points. The scheme also achieves a 27% net gain in biodiversity and an increased landscape buffer of 8-10 meters from the previous scheme which only offered 5m.



We also note that the Evidence Base to the Regulation 19 Local Plan that was consulted in April 2021, identified within the Air Quality Modelling Report (Dec 2020) that Newington and Keycol Hill will see improvements to Air Quality, as shown in Figure 2b and 2c, identifying the majority of receptors (all but 3) will show a net improvement. This reflects the then Regulation 19 spatial strategy and the likely take up of electric vehicles over the coming years.

### 3. Character and Design

We noted in the minutes to the committee meeting that reference was made to over-intensification of development for the character of the area.

As you are aware, we have sought to bring forward a development that reflected the previous approval in respect of its design and layout, albeit modified to reflect the known constraints as well as provide for a greater range in housing mix and thus provide more lower cost homes to be delivered. This has increased the dwelling numbers from 20 to 30 dwellings, which is a 50% increase, but is only an 18% increase in actual footprint. The proposed density of the development is 11dpha (for the residential area) and 13dph excluding the SuDs/ecology zone which is not out of character with the adjacent development at Rooks View (a density of 15dph) and Bobbing Close (density of 20dph).

The increase in units therefore still represents a less dense scheme than the surrounding area and cannot be considered out of keeping with the character or an over-intensification of the site.

### 4. Demelza Hospice

Attached to this note is a letter from Demelza Hospice which outlines further detail as to why this proposal is so important to them. They highlight that this scheme is more than simply 3 nurses' accommodation, but a scheme that will deliver an on-site income generating facility through the use of the site for charity events. This will help secure the long-term future of the charity, which relies solely on donations.

### 5. Conclusion

We hope the above clarifies our position and that it demonstrates our willingness to work with the Council to deliver this much needed scheme in the light of the Council's Housing Land Supply position and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The site is relied on in the Council's supply for 20 dwellings already and the approval of this site would allow a further 10 dwellings added to this supply.

The proposal comes with significant benefits, not least the long-term opportunity for Demelza as a Charity (not just the Nurses accommodation).



Another substantial benefit is the overall highway improvement to the Rooks Lane junction. This is a significant improvement to the overall safety of the area and is again where this current application improves upon the previous scheme.

We trust the above is helpful for you and your officers in preparing the report for Committee and would be happy to discuss the above if required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "AW", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Andrew Wilford**  
**Head of Planning**

ENC. Letter from Demelza Hospice



24<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Paul Henry  
c/o Esquire Developments  
Sent by email

Dear Paul,

I am writing to you following the recent planning committee decision and wanted to provide some further information on the work we do and how beneficial to us and the wider community the proposals would be, which goes beyond just nurses' accommodation.

The Hill Farm project will ensure that Demelza is able to continue to support the wider health and social care economy that is struggling to cope with demand in Swale and the surrounding areas.

Demelza spends over £6.3 million per year on services for life limited and life threatened children and support to their family members including parents and carers, siblings, grandparents and other family members.

We rely almost entirely on voluntary donations through charity fundraising in our local community. We receive limited statutory funding and what we do receive is not a guaranteed or predictable, making it difficult to plan for our services.

Many of Demelza's services enhance, support or replace those offered by the NHS and Local Authorities, releasing resources such as hospital bed capacity, community nurses, social care workers and mental health support – all of which were stretched beyond their current capacity, particularly in Kent and Swale, and have been for many years.

Demelza relieves capacity on local primary care services, particularly in Swale which has the highest GP to patient ratios in the UK.

Demelza also reduces the burden on NHS mental health services by providing emotional and psychological support for life limited and life-threatened children and their family members. Our bereavement service also provides emotional support for families prior to and after the death of a child. Waiting lists for mental health services in Swale and Medway extend to many months and even years.

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If Demelza is unable to attract and retain nursing staff, we will not be able to provide the breadth and range of nursing care to the children in the Swale and surrounding areas that need it. Affordable vacant accommodation is virtually non-existent in the borough or surrounding areas. Demelza is about to attempt further overseas recruitment to try to sustain our vital services. We will have to secure accommodation at considerable expense which will not be sustainable in the longer term.

In addition, the event space offers Demelza the ability to undertake increased fundraising activities 'on-site', improving the financial stability of the Charity. An onsite venue would also allow the participation of our nurses, patients and their families as well as raising the profile of Demelza in the local community.

The versatile accommodation units, event space, parking and safer road access at our Sittingbourne site is an amazing package that will support and enable all the local economy benefits above.

This project is far more than "just 3 units"; it is quite simply a lifeline to our charity that has increasing demands for our services that the NHS and local authority statutory provision cannot provide or fund.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you require any further details on any aspect of our services.

With kind regards,

Lavinia Jarrett  
Acting Chief Executive

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