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Date: 10th May 2018

C/O Banks Solutions – Mr Chris Banks
64 Lavinia Way,
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West Sussex,
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Dear Mr Bore,

**GUILDFORD BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY AND SITES EXAMINATION
WRITTEN HEARING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ASHILL LAND LTD
REP No. 15805921**

I write on behalf of Ashill Land Ltd, in respect of their interest in “Land north of Keens Lane”, Worplesdon, Guildford. This follows the representations made through the preparation of the Local Plan and the last targeted regulation 19 consultation in July 2017.

The site at “Land north of Keens Lane, Worplesdon’ is a draft site allocation which is proposed for release from the Green Belt in the draft Local Plan Strategy and Site as submitted to the Inspector for Examination Public (EIP). From the evidence reviewed to date we note that the Inspector has an understanding of the site, however, we have provided a site location plan at **Appendix A** which corresponds with this.

This Hearing Statement has been prepared ahead of the EIP of Guildford Borough Council’s (GBC) Local Plan Strategy and Sites which is due to commence on 5th June. This Hearing Statement responds to the specific matters and issues identified in the inspectors ID/3, specifically focusing on the above site and draft site allocation A22 and covers:

- Matter 1 - Plan Preparation;
- Matter 4 - Housing Trajectory;
- Matter 5 - Five Year Housing Land Supply;
- Matter 6 - Homes for All;
- Matter 9 - Spatial Strategy, Green Belt and Countryside Protection; and
- Matter 11 - Site Allocations.

Plan Preparation and Sustainability Appraisal

Ashill consider that the Sustainability Appraisal which underpins the Local Plan to be sound in regard to the land identified as “Land north of Keens Lane” for the following reasons:

1. It is deemed as a ‘tier 9 Green Belt around Guildford’ (2017), this is considered a location at which to maximise growth around the edge of Guildford Urban Area. It follows the sequential approach and the first tier to consider development of Green Belt (with the exception of developing previously developed land in the Green Belt and countryside beyond the Green Belt).
2. The Sustainability Appraisal deems the release of this site from the Green Belt for residential development as a ‘given’ for the purposes of developing the spatial strategy. Accordingly it is



identified to deliver 150 dwellings when assessing all spatial strategy alternatives (options 1 - 8).

- In addition, within the housing site options appraisal findings, it scores the majority of green and amber against the key appraisal criteria with regards to distance/impact as shown below (Table C: Housing Site Options Appraisal Findings, Appendix 4).

Location	Ward	Site name	LAA ref	Area (ha)	1. European biodiversity	2. SSSI	3. SINCI or LNR	4. Key employment site	5. Flood risk	6. Surface water flood	7. Healthcare facility	8. Recreation facility	9. District/Local centre	10. Primary school	11. Secondary school	12. Historic Park/Garden	13. Scheduled Monument	14. Archaeology	15. Listed building	16. Agricultural land	17. AONB	18. PDL	19. A road	20. Railway station
		Land north of Keens Lane, Guildford	126	5.25	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

On this basis we consider the sustainability appraisal adequate in terms of supporting the spatial strategy with regards to the proposed release of ‘Land north of Keens Lane’ from the Green Belt. It is clear that the site provides a sustainable opportunity to contribute towards housing need within Guildford.

Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply

The ‘land at north of Keens Lane’ has been identified in housing trajectory to be deliverable within the first five years of the plan period. Ashill wholly endorse this. A detailed planning application is about to be submitted for the site which should be determined before the end of 2018 and thus the first homes should be deliverable in 2019. However, we share concerns raised by the Inspector regarding the stepped trajectory. It is not positive in delivering a wide choice of high quality homes within the plan period in accordance with paragraph 47 of the NPPF and does not take account of under delivery pre-adoption.

It is important to note that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply (5YHLS) and at April 2017 it was confirmed as 2.36 years. The Council have accepted that it has a record of persistent under delivery and therefore should plan for a 20% buffer. This therefore presents a severe lack of 5YHLS alongside consistent under delivery which has exacerbated the need for housing within borough.

The West Surrey SHMA: Guildford Addendum Report (2017) takes account the latest population projections to calculate the objectively assessed need (OAN). It confirms that there is a requirement to deliver a ‘minimum’ of 654 homes per year. However, this does not take into account the persistent under delivery of homes. Therefore, there is a critical need to facilitate the delivery of additional new dwellings within the next five years in order to meet the Borough’s OAN. We note that the draft Local Plan is unambitious with its minimum requirement and should look to exceed this given the persistent under delivery alongside meeting unmet housing need within the HMA.

Homes for All and Self-build and Custom Build

Draft Local Plan policy H1 ‘Homes for All’ states that self-build and custom housebuilding will be supported if the proposed development has no adverse effect on the local character. It further states that on development sites of 100 homes or more 5% of the total homes shall be available for sale as self-build and custom housebuilding plots whilst there is an identified need. The draft site allocation (A22) for ‘land north of Keens Lane’ includes the provision of self-build and custom house building plots.

It is noted that in accordance with the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016), the Council are required to keep a register of individuals and associations who are seeking to acquire serviced plots for their own self-build and custom housebuilding. The draft policy notes that '5% of total homes shall be available.....where there is an identified need'. However, at present the Council cannot demonstrate an identified need for this type of housing. They have not published their register, which relates to the draft policy and how developments should plan for appropriate plot sizes in response to the eligible applicants on the register.

The Council have not yet applied the additional eligibility criteria and there does not appear to be a set timeframe for this to take place. In addition, following discussions with the Council it appears that further options have been considered in order to determine proof that applicants to the self-build register. . The additional eligibility criterion for the Council's self-build register is as follows:

- applicants have been living in the Borough for at least five years prior to their application; or
- applicants have been working in full-time employment (greater than 16 hours per week) in the borough for at least three years and continue to do so
- applicants have the financial ability to purchase land for their own self-build or custom house-building project

This therefore highlights that the 'identified need' for these plots as referred to in the draft Local Plan Policy H1 is uncertain. It is likely that when the new eligibility criteria is applied that the number of eligible applicants will decrease given its restrictive nature.

It is noted within the 2015 SHMA that the Council commissioned housing needs assessment survey work which revealed a very low level of interest in self-build in the Borough. Albeit that this was 2012, the evidence base has not been further updated in this respect. At paragraph 9.90 of the 2015 SHMA it states that it is likely to be difficult to demonstrate concrete evidence of demand at local level; albeit local authorities could develop registers of those with an interest in doing so. The Council noted in their Housing Topic Paper (2017) that there is a growing interest in self-build, but this is not substantiated. Further to this there is no quantitative information regarding the level of self-build included within the evidence base supporting draft policy H1 nor for the draft site allocation A22 (SHMA 2015/2017).

On this basis the requirement to deliver 5% of self-build homes on the net provision of housing is unsound and not underpinned by a robust evidence base which supports the 'identifies need'. At the very least this should be applicable to market housing provision only as it is not possible to deliver affordable self-build homes given the eligibility criteria that Guildford have applied to their register. Furthermore, from Ashill's experience Registered Providers will not acquire self-build plots to deliver housing. This is likely to further impact the delivery of housing and particularly affordable housing. This is in line with paragraph 65 of the draft NPPF and Part C which identifies an exception in respect of the delivery of affordable housing being prejudiced by these types of homes.

Furthermore, the Inspector queried the latest position on the self-build register within their initial questions, of which the Council did not respond to. We would therefore question the soundness of this policy requirement included in Policy H1 and A22 for self-build housing given the lack of evidence base and the absence of a self-build register. Thus we consider that the 5% requirement to hinder the delivery of a wide variety of quality homes to provide for the needs of the community and reduce housing supply.

Spatial Strategy, Green Belt and Countryside Protection

We believe that it is clear that the evidence underpinning the draft Local Plan supports the release of the site at 'Land north of Keens Lane' from the Green Belt. The site formed part of the potential

development area defined as Parcel J3. The GBCS confirmed opportunities to accommodate appropriate development at the site without significantly comprising the purposes of the Green Belt as defined by paragraph 79 of the NPPF. This wider site highlighted on the accompanying 'Potential Development Areas surrounding Urban Areas and Villages Plan' as a 'potential development area surrounding an urban area'.

Furthermore Appendix 2 of the GBCS includes the sensitivity assessment in terms of Green Belt purposes of the identified sites across the Borough. The site is identified as a 'medium sensitivity site' on the urban edge of Guildford. It should be noted that surrounding sites to the application site were identified as 'high sensitivity' and due to a number of factors deemed inappropriate for future development. The draft Local Plan therefore strategically directs housing to the right places in respect of 'land north of Keens Lane' for the following key reasons:

1. The site is adjacent to Guildford's Urban Area and therefore provides a natural extension to the existing residential area in terms of spatial distribution.
2. Given the site's location sustainable movement patterns will be promoted.
3. Green Belt and landscape impact will be very limited given the existing defensible boundaries and the fact residential development exists to the north, east and south.
4. There are no infrastructure constraints.

The benefits of releasing this site outweigh the harm that may be caused by removing this land from 'medium sensitivity' Green Belt. The exceptional circumstances that exist to support the release of this site from the Green Belt are detailed under the next section under the site allocation.

Site Allocations – A22 'Land north of Keens Lane', Guildford

Traffic and Access issues and measures

The Inspector has questions specifically what traffic and access issues arise in respect of the site and what measures are proposed in relation to them. As noted earlier, a planning application has been prepared for the site and it has been reviewed in terms of access, transport impacts, junction capacity, road safety and the need for mitigation measures by Surrey County Council and Ashill's transport consultant.

To inform the access strategy for the release of the site for housing, details relating to the design of the accesses and associated visibility splays have been agreed through pre-application consultation with Surrey County Council and incorporated into the design of the proposed accesses. In terms of traffic and access, these have been assessed through the development of a scheme for the site and neither of these has presented issues. Principal vehicular access to the site is proposed from Keens Lane, via two points of access (with further private drive accesses also accommodated). Visibility splays for the proposed accesses have been assessed in accordance with the methodology set out within the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets (MfS) and Manual for Streets 2 (MfS2). In summary the proposed access strategy includes accesses that have been designed with appropriate geometry and visibility splays, all in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Authority and in accordance with guidance set out within MfS and MfS2.

The transport impacts associated with the redevelopment of the site have been assessed through a combination of traffic surveys (to assess baseline conditions and existing travel patterns) and TRICS based analysis. A detailed assessment of 'peak hour' traffic impacts has been undertaken to assess the impact of the development proposals at times when the adjoining highway is subject to the highest levels of traffic and where capacity issues may arise. In respect to vehicular trips it is anticipated that the development proposals could generate 72 trips (arrivals and departures) and 83 trips (arrivals and departures) during the respective AM and PM peak periods. The vehicular trips

associated with the site have been distributed onto the highway network in accordance with the traffic distribution methodology. The impact of the resultant traffic movements associated with the development proposals on key junctions (including the site accesses) has been assessed through utilisation of appropriate junction modelling software.

Further independent assessments have also been made in respect to future demands for passenger transport and impacts and any impacts arising in respect to pedestrian and cycle movements. Having assessed transport impacts it is concluded that the release of the site for housing will result in additional vehicular movement within Keens Lane, which is subject to carriageway width restrictions. In addition, the proposals will result in increased pedestrian movements, which will need to be accommodated, particularly pedestrian trips between the site and bus stops that are located to the east (within Cumberland Avenue). To address these residual impacts a scheme of mitigation measures are proposed to mitigate the residual transport impacts associated with the development proposals. In accordance with the guiding principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) a package of mitigation measures has been designed to maximise sustainable travel opportunities, with a focus on enhancing pedestrian facilities, access to public transport facilities and minimising conflict between traffic and pedestrians or cyclists.

The mitigation measures proposed in support of the release of the site from the Green Belt are as follows:

1. Carriageway widening within Keens Lane;
2. Provision of a footway on the north side of Keens Lane;
3. Two informal pedestrian crossing points within Keens Lane (tactile paving and dropped kerbs);
4. Improvements to the existing pedestrian footway on the south side of Keens Lane, including dropped kerbs and tactile paving;
5. Two traffic calming features (road narrowing) at either end of Keens Lane; and
6. Provision of a zebra crossing within Worplesdon Road (A322).

With the above strategy in place it is concluded that the site can be accommodated without prejudicing road safety, the free flow of traffic within the neighbouring highway or sustainable travel objectives. Therefore there are no traffic or access issues that arise with respect of the development of the site and mitigation measures are proposed which are deemed reasonable which will be delivered with the forthcoming planning application.

Proximity to the TBH SPA

The Inspector has questioned 'how is the draft site allocation intended to deal with the proximity to the SPA?' In response to part of the site being located within the 0 – 400m catchment of the TBH SPA, the site designation includes for the provision of a care home. This will be sited within the 400m exclusion zone and is proposed to have a number of restrictions placed upon it to restrict the likely significant effect on the interest features of the SPA, these include:

- No staff accommodation will be permitted within 400m of the SPA, and
- Any new car parks must not increase access to the SPA and must provide sufficient certainty that it will be utilised by the care home only, and
- The use class of the property to be limited to that of C2 with occupants of only limited mobility such that they are unlikely to access the Thames Basin Heaths SPA for recreation, and
- A covenant will be placed on the care home restricting pets.

These are deemed acceptable by both the Council and Natural England with respect to preventing activity within the TBH SPA.

The residential development proposed within the 400m – 5km zone will deliver avoidance and mitigation measures and this will be a combination of provision, improvement and maintenance of SANG and strategic access management and monitoring (SAMM), this will be allocated to either Riverside or Chantry Wood, each of which have sufficient capacity (4.69ha and 23.37ha respectively).

Exceptional Circumstances to justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt

The Inspector has questioned ‘what are the exceptional circumstances at a local level that justify the removal of this site from the Green belt?’ Through the preparation of Guildford’s draft Local Plan exceptional circumstances have been provided to justify the amendments of the Green Belt boundaries in accordance with paragraph 83 of the NPPF.

It is noted that the Council’s evidence base identifies a high level of need for market, affordable housing and employment land. The Green Belt designation currently extends over 89% of the Borough and given the lack of sufficient, suitable and deliverable sites located outside the Green Belt is leading to a significant undersupply of homes compared to the identified need. This is reaffirmed by the Land Availability Assessment (October 2017) and the position of the 5YHLS at 2.36 years. This situation is further exacerbated by the existing consistent undersupply of housing within the Borough and wider housing market area (HMA). This could therefore lead to an adverse impact on economic growth in the Borough.

Alternative options have been carefully considered and this inevitably means that some carefully selected Green Belt sites should be released for development to help create a more balanced, desirable and prosperous community. This has been informed by a robust evidence base which predominantly includes the GBCS (2014). The exceptional circumstances that exist to support the sites release from the Green Belt are summarised below:

1. It is deemed a medium sensitivity site and suitable for release;
2. The site scores 7.71 in terms of its sustainability credentials and ranked 13th in the GBCS. It scored highly on the key thresholds to local facilities;
3. It will deliver housing within the first 5 years of the plan period to meet the overall spatial strategy;
4. The release of the site is not reliant on infrastructure; and
5. Its release does not impact the 5 purposes of the Green Belt.

Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

Sprawl is normally regarded the spread of built form over an area in an untidy and irregular way. Advantageously the site at land north of Keens Lane has a well-defined existing boundary, which enables future development to be enclosed providing a natural extension to the existing built up area, which forms part of Guildford Urban Area. The new proposed Green Belt boundary will follow this existing defensible boundary which will prevent future sprawl in this area. This will check any unrestricted sprawl of the built up area in respect of the draft site allocation.

Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The site at land north of Keens Lane is well contained to both the east and west by existing residential developments and provides an infill to this area and the defined Guildford Urban Area. The settlement of Worplesdon is 1.6km to the north of the site and the settlement of Fairlands which is 1.4km to the east. Between these settlements and the site there is open countryside. The draft site allocation does not protrude into open country side and due to the size of it and distance to surrounding settlements, it will not contribute to the merging of settlements.

Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The land north of Keens Lane includes fields, grazing land and redundant stables. Whilst it comprises in part open agricultural land, it is well contained with existing development to the east, south, east and west. The site is low value agricultural land and used mainly for horse grazing, it can be regarded more as land which is part of the edge of the urban area rather than being an area of open countryside.

Given the existing defensible boundary to the north of the site, which is proposed to be enhanced through the forthcoming planning application, there will be no encroachment into the countryside.

Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The land north of Keens Lane is not located within a historic town therefore the release of the site from the Green Belt will not prejudice the setting or special character of historic towns.

Purpose 5: to assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban Land

The Council have already identified land within the urban area which would be capable of development and have therefore already factored in the need to first encourage the development of existing urban land. The site therefore achieves this purpose.

Summary

In summary, the Sustainability Appraisal is adequate in terms of supports the spatial strategy with regards to the release of 'land north of Keens Lane' for housing development. The housing trajectory is realistic and deliverable with regards to the 'Land north of Keens Lane' within the first 5 years. However, concerns are shared with the stepped approach and the reliance on key infrastructure improvements for other sites to be delivered later in the plan period.

The requirement of the delivery of self-build and custom build housing on net delivery of housing is not underpinned by robust evidence which identifies need nor are the Council in a position to publish their register of interest. Therefore we would recommend on the basis of the uncertainty of the 'identified need' that the draft policy is scaled back and this requirement is solely on market housing. It is not possible to deliver affordable self-build and the requirement to do so will hinder the potential for its delivery. This approach is consistent with paragraph 65 of the draft NPPF.

The GBCS confirms that the site is 'medium sensitivity' and strategically its release from the Green Belt is supported. Furthermore, the site is sustainably located on the edge of Guildford Urban Area and any impact on the Green Belt will be limited given the defensible boundaries and existing residential areas surrounding it. Therefore the benefits of releasing this site outweigh the harm that may be caused by removing this land from 'medium sensitivity' Green Belt.

It is concluded that there are no traffic or access issues with regards to the development of the site and this has been confirmed by assessments undertaken to support the forthcoming planning application. A number of mitigations measures are proposed alongside this which will not prejudice road safety, the free flow of traffic within the neighbouring highway or sustainable travel objectives.

Appropriate measures are draft policy requirements of site allocation A22 which deal with the sites proximity to the TBH SPA. This includes covenants on the care home that will be secured via s106 and avoidance and mitigation measures for the residential development. This will be a combination of provision, improvement and maintenance of SANG and strategic access management and monitoring (SAMM).

Exceptional circumstances exist which justify the removal of this site from the Green Belt. This includes the fact that it is deemed medium sensitivity and this is confirmed by the GBCS and its scores of 7.71 in terms of sustainability credentials. Within the plan, it is considered to deliver housing in the early part of the plan within the first 5 years which is supported by the fact its release and delivery is not reliant on infrastructure. Furthermore, the sites release from the Green Belt does not impact upon its 5 purposes as dictated by paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

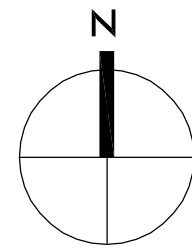
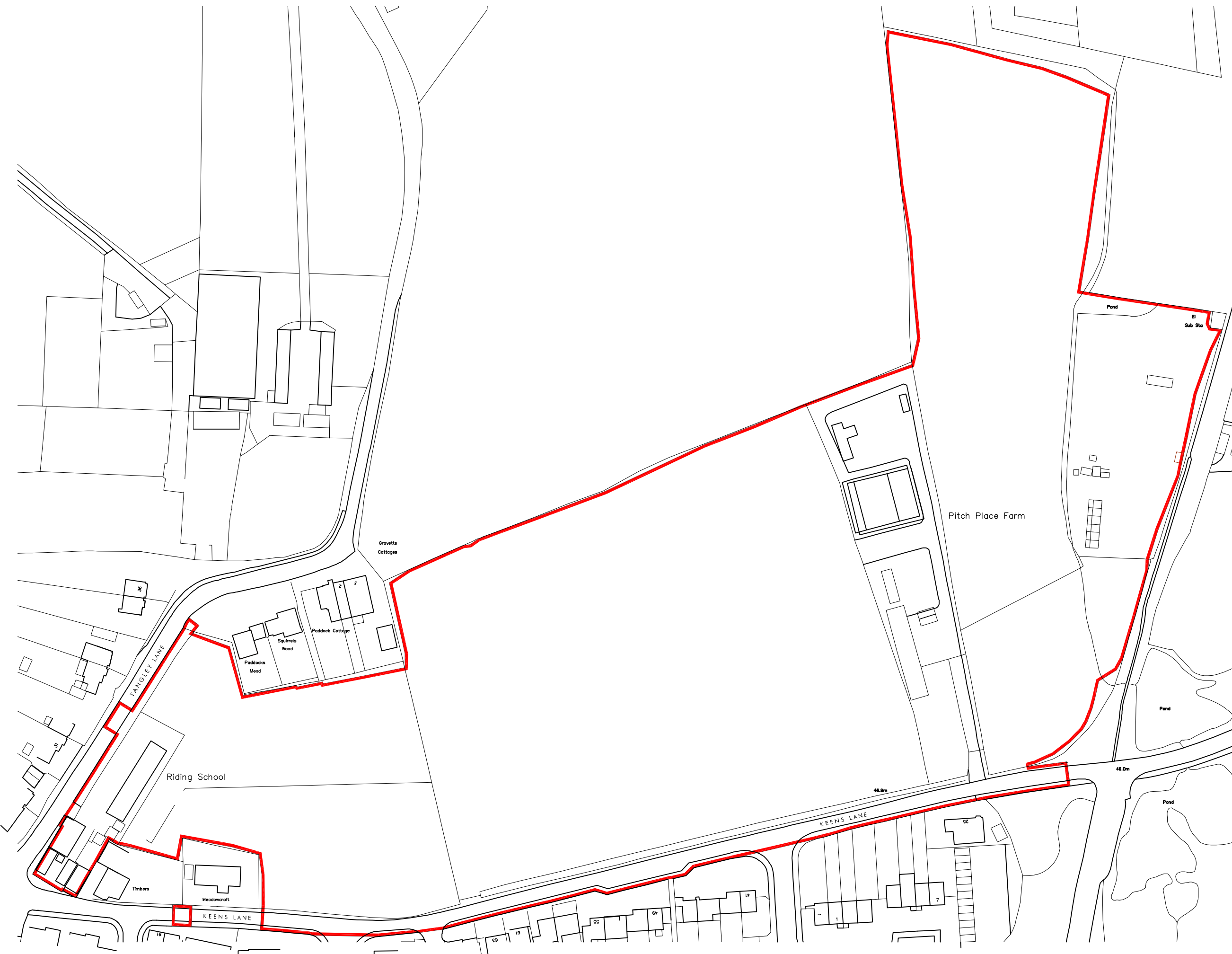
We trust that the above is helpful in the context of the EiP. It would be appreciated if you could confirm receipt of this Hearing Statement in respect of Ashill's site at land north of Keens Lane, Worplesdon. If you have any queries on the comments enclosed please contact myself or Beth Hawkins.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Roe', written in a cursive style.

MATTHEW ROE
Director

APPENDIX A



KEY:
 SITE BOUNDARY



REV DATE	CHANGES	BY	CHK	ISSUE FOR
A	18.04.18 FIRST ISSUE	GK	JH	COMMENT
B	26.04.18 BOUNDARY LINE AMENDED	GK	JH	COMMENT
C	02.05.18 BOUNDARY LINE AMENDED	GK	JH	COMMENT

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client
ASHILL LAND LTD
 project
LAND AT KEENS LANE & TANGLEY LANE, WORPLESDON, GUILDFORD
 description
SITE LOCATION PLAN

project number	drawing number	revision
2263	A-1000	C
scale	date	
1:1250 @ A3	APRIL 2018	

status
PRELIMINARY

2263-A-1000-C

