Dear Ms Westphal,

Attached you will find a letter from the Woldingham Association.

OBJECTing to the revised drawings for 2018/1792, Moorhouse Tileworks, Westerham Road.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Thank you for the opportunity comment.

Yours Sincerely,

Gina Miscovich

On behalf of the Woldingham Association
19 February 2019

Please reply to:
The Hermitage
Park View Road
Woldingham, Surrey
CR3 7DH

Lesley Westphal
Planning Department
Tandridge District Council
8 Station Road East
Oxted
RH8 0BT

Dear Ms Westphal,

We are writing to OBJECT to the revised drawings for 2018/1792, the proposed redevelopment of the Moorhouse Tileworks, Westerham Road, TN16 2ET. The proposal is located in the Green Belt and the Surrey Hills AONB.

The revisions do not address most of our other objections regarding the proposal, and so this letter comments on the changes. This letter should be read in conjunction with our previous letter which we have appended for your convenience.

The proposal seeks to redevelop previously developed land containing now redundant buildings and so we believe that the relevant policies are in DP13/NPPF 2 paragraph 145 (g). The test is whether the proposal would "not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development”.

The existing tileworks buildings are a dispersed cluster of single- and two-storey buildings separated by large and small open areas. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing buildings and amalgamate this volume into a single very large (nearly the size of a football pitch) monolithic warehouse building 8.9m tall.

This replacement building will be larger by volume than the existing and so will have a greater impact on openness than the existing. For our assessment and to be consistent in the calculations, we have used the existing building volume plan and schedule contained in Appendix 4 of the Planning Statement that accompanied the initial set of drawings. It is important to remember that the 6.9% (38,920m³/36,393m³) volume increase is calculated on an already large baseline number and the scale of this increase is considerable in any context.

The replacement will also have a large curved roof with a single "ridge" that runs the full length of the building. The replacement has a far more vertical, upright and bulky
massing than the existing buildings which are spaced apart and of varying heights, many single storey.

This means that the replacement built form would be monolithic and at least 1m taller than what currently exists.

Consequently, much of the existing and new volume would be shifted upwards to the first floor/roof levels and so the replacement will be both mathematically larger and have greater mass and bulk than the existing and so the proposal will have a greater impact on openness.

Further, this taller, larger monolithic replacement building would be built over areas of the site that are currently open as shown in the map contained in Appendix 4. The existence of external tile storage in some of these areas is not relevant as these are “impermanent and transient features” as has been established in previous Officer Reports (e.g. paragraph 67 of 2015/1217). The recognised definition of openness is the absence of built form and the presence of transient features does not alter the fact that these areas are open.

This conclusion is also consistent with the approach taken in 2014/667 when temporary buildings were also considered inappropriate development on this site. The Officer Report explains (emphasis added):

“....The proposal introduces new buildings within the Green Belt and therefore can be considered to constitute partial re-development but given the fact that it is for new buildings on an area of the site used for the stacking of roof tiles, it is considered that it would have a greater impact upon openness than at present.....”

Consequently, the proposal introduces built form into parts of the site where none currently exists and this also has a greater impact on openness than today. The harm to openness is compounded by the monolithic design and height of the proposed replacement building.

In the proposal, the size of the currently open areas(s) that are to be built on is broadly similar to the size of the area(s) that would not be built on, and so we can see no net benefit to openness arising from what appears at first glance to be a reduction in the area that would be occupied by built form. However, the replacement is taller and far more bulky than the buildings that would be permanently removed and would be built on what are currently open areas, and so it has a greater impact on openness than today.

**Additional harm**

We have identified further harms in our previous letter and the reduction in ridge height in the revised drawings and more landscaping does not alter these objections.

We reiterate that this urban, industrial form of development is completely out of keeping with the Surrey Hills AONB and introducing it would do permanent and irreparable harm
to the AONB and the local and wider countryside. Previous Officers Report have also concluded that “the development would appear incongruous in the landscape.....” and we believe that these comments apply equally to the revised proposal. This adverse impact must be given substantial weight in the planning balance.

NPPF 2 paragraph 172 explains that “great weight should be attached to conserving landscape and scenic beauty” and that planning permission should be refused for major developments in designated areas like the Surrey Hills AONB except in exceptional circumstances. We understand that exceptional is an even stricter test than “very special” and this indicates the degree of protection that should be accorded to the Surrey Hills AONB.

The change of use to DPD warehouse also significantly intensifies the use of the site compared to today, including significant increases in traffic/noise/lighting, etc. This adds further to the harm as explained in our previous letter.

Lastly, it is a well established principle of Green Belt policy and case law that landscaping, at best, may mitigate harm, but cannot remove it.

**Very Special Circumstances**

NPPF 2 paragraph 144 carries forward the requirement that “local planning should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt”. The test for Very Special Circumstances is not whether a proposal is “neutral” or “equivalent”, but whether the proposal delivers demonstrably positive benefits of sufficient scale so as to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.

The current application puts forward similar Very Special Circumstances to those included in previously refused/withdrawn applications, and we can see no reason why the revised drawings would justify a change in the Council’s previous conclusion that the Very Special Circumstances were insufficient.

Further, we conclude that the revised proposal does not have Very Special Circumstances that “clearly outweigh” the harm because:

- There is no demonstrable reduction in the area occupied by built form on the site because, as explained above, the larger and taller monolithic replacement building will occupy what are now large open areas which are broadly the same size as the areas where no replacement buildings would be built. This is more harmful to openness, and so does not meet the test for VSC.
- The monolithic replacement building is mathematically larger by volume and taller and more vertical than the existing collection of buildings of varying height and design. There is more mass and bulk relocated to the upper levels. In our experience, Inspectors have considered reduction in footprint combined with shifting the same amount of volume upwards to first floor and above to not be capable of constituting a VSC. In this case, however, the replacement
is larger and there is no reduction in the area occupied by built form and so there are no VSC.

The evidence for the new Tandridge Local Plan 2013:2033 and the proposed policies remain unexamined and so we understand they should not be given weight.

For all of these reasons, we conclude that no Very Special Circumstances exist that clearly outweigh the harm.

**Conclusion**

In summary, we believe that the revised proposal continues to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There is additional harm to the character of the AONB, the local and wider countryside due to the size and massing and incongruent design of the proposed replacement building. There is further harm arising from the change of use and intensification of the site due to it becoming a 24-hour warehouse distribution facility which is accompanied by increased noise, traffic, lighting, etc. There are insufficient Very Special Circumstances that clearly outweigh the harm. On that basis, we believe that the proposal should be refused.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours Sincerely,

Gina Misticovich,
On behalf of The Woldingham Association
Registered Address: 14 Hallsland Way, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 9AL
7 October 2018

Please reply to:
The Hermitage
Park View Road
Woldingham, Surrey
CR3 7DH

Lesley Westphal
Planning Department
Tandridge District Council
8 Station Road East
Oxted
RH8 0BT

Dear Ms Westphal,

We are writing to OBJECT to 2018/1792, the proposed redevelopment of the Moorhouse Tileworks, Westerham Road, TN16 2ET. The proposal is located in the Green Belt and the AONB. The site is in the Green Belt and the AONB.

It is important to recognise that the proposed building is similar in size to that in the previous refused/withdrawn applications and so all the current proposal does is redraw the application boundary in red around just one of the buildings while also adding a bit of landscaping. On that basis, many of the previous reasons for refusal put forward by the Council remain valid, in our view.

We believe that the revised proposal continues to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt because the volume increase in the replacement buildings is equal to 30% and so the replacement buildings are materially larger than the buildings that are to be replaced. The volume figures are shown in the table accompanying paragraph 5.71 on page 36 of the Planning Statement (replacement 47,159 m³ and existing 36,393 m³). The TLP Part 2: Detailed Policies explains that the volume is the relevant measure and not footprint.

The volume of external storage is not relevant as they are “impermanent and transient features” as has been established in previous Officer Reports (e.g. paragraph 67 of 2015/1217) and so amount of stored materials has no bearing on the mathematical calculation.

Second, the proposed replacement building has much greater mass and bulk due to being a consolidated single massive building nearly the size of a football pitch with both higher ridge and eaves than the existing dispersed set of buildings all of which are of varied size, ridge and eaves heights. The higher eaves of the proposed building means that the vertical face of the replacement building would appear to be closer to three-storey.
Therefore, the replacement has far more imposing mass and bulk than the existing.

Other harm

Visual Impact

The updated LVIA confirms that the proposal would be visible from nearby public rights of way, including from the North Downs Way. These are all well-used recreational routes and vantage points and so the proposal would be detrimental to the AONB and the local and wider character of the countryside.

The design includes new external lighting of the much larger building, entrances and car parks consistent with an 24-hour urban industrial site rather than a site located in an AONB. This will cause further harm to the character of the AONB and the local and wider character of the countryside. This increase in lighting will also be detrimental to wildlife and their habitats and so add to the harm.

Incongruent design

We believe that comments from the Surrey Hills AONB advisor that “buildings of this scale and massing” would not be “characteristic of the area” or of any AONB anywhere apply to the current proposal. This is an urban form of development that is completely out of keeping with the Surrey Hills AONB.

Previous Officers Report have also concluded that “the development would appear incongruous in the landscape......” and we believe that these comments apply to the current proposal. The detrimental impact to the AONB, and the local and wider countryside from this incongruent development would be permanent and irreparable and this adverse impact to the local and wider landscape and to the AONB must be given substantial weight in the planning balance.

It is a well established principle of Green Belt policy and case law that landscaping, at best, may mitigate harm, but cannot remove it. In this case, the landscaping does not remove the visual impact of this incongruous building, and so the harm to the local and wider character of the countryside and the AONB remains.

Traffic

There are no viable options to access the site except for by car/van/lorry. The very nature of a warehouse distribution site means a very significant increase in all types of traffic 24 hours a day, every day, all year round compared to today. This is harmful to the AONB and also to businesses and the amenity of residents in both the near and wider area.
The level of traffic will increase and so will congestion, with local areas and local rural roads becoming no more than “rat runs” for delivery vans and cars travelling to/from the site. This will deter customers from visiting local businesses and so adversely affect local businesses which will be detrimental to the local economy and local employment. This adds to the harm arising from the proposal.

**Very Special Circumstances (VSC)**

This application repeats much of the VSC case used in previous applications. These have already been explained in previous Officer Reports to be insufficient to outweigh the harm and the minor changes to the proposal do not invalidate the past conclusions regarding Very Special Circumstances, in our view.

The test under NPPF 2 remains the same, in particular NPPF 2 paragraph 144 requires local planning authorities to attach **substantial weight** to any harm to the Green Belt. Very Special Circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is **clearly outweighed** by other considerations.

In addition, the site is located in the AONB, where NPPF 2 paragraph 172 explains that “great weight should be attached to conserving landscape and scenic beauty” and that planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in **exceptional** circumstances.

The evidence for the new Tandridge Local Plan 2013:2033 and the proposed policies remain unexamined and so we understand they should not be given weight. We add that the Green Belt Assessments for Moorhouse (and many other areas) are not consistent with recognised planning case law or national policy and so we understand that they should not be relied on.

For the avoidance of doubt, we address the economic VSC strand as follows:

**Employment**

Paragraph 5.54 of the Planning Statement appears to explain that the labour catchment area for the site will be East Grinstead, Crawley, Redhill and Croydon. This paragraph also refers to claimant count data from Edenbridge and Sevenoaks. None of these six towns are in Tandridge. The reference to Caterham and Godstone in this paragraph appears to be an after thought. Commuting from any of these areas is only practical by car/van, and so the site is contrary to the achievement of sustainable development.

Provide vehicle-based employment in the Green Belt/AONB for those living outside of Tandridge that have no choice but to commute to this site by private vehicle from locations outside of Tandridge is contrary to national policy regarding sustainable development, the Green Belt and the AONB, and so the economic VSC strand is neither a Very Special Circumstance nor an exceptional one.
The Council’s Economic proposition is not a relevant planning consideration because its contents may or may not be sound or consistent with NPPF and relevant planning case law.

**Conclusion**

In summary, we believe the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There is additional harm to the character of the AONB, the local and wider countryside due to the size and massing and incongruent design of the replacement building. There is further harm to local businesses and residents due to increase noise, traffic and intensification of use arising from the proposed 24-hour warehouse distribution facility. There are insufficient Very Special Circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm. On that basis, we believe that the proposal should be refused.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours Sincerely,

Gina Miscovich,
On behalf of The Woldingham Association
Registered Address: 14 Hallisland Way, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 9AL