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Representations to the Chichester Local Plan Review



Site Name: Crouchlands Farm, Rickmans Lane, Plaistow RH14 0LE

On behalf of: Artemis Land and Agriculture Ltd

Date: 7 February 2019

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A. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. Crouchlands Farm lies 1km south-east of Plaistow, 1.5km south-west of Ifold and 3km north of Crouchlands Farm lies 1km south-east of Plaistow, 1.5km south-west of Ifold and 3km north of Kirdford in the district of Chichester.
2. The site is approximately 192.4 ha in size and comprises mainly agricultural buildings with associated hard standing and open fields in agricultural use as pasture or for storage. The site includes a residential dwelling towards the north of the site, Hardnip's Barn, that is currently vacant, as well as two cottages to the east of the site
3. The site, until recently, also provided an Anaerobic Digester plant (AD plant) and the associated infrastructure, including four lagoons for the storage of waste liquids associated with the AD plant.
4. The site has been the source of a major local controversy in recent years, given that much of the AD plant and its associated infrastructure was constructed and operated unlawfully.
5. Local people have been subject to the impact of significant movements of large lorries making deliveries of waste matter to the site to feed the AD plant.
6. Two major pollution events were also caused by leakages of digestate into local waterways.
7. A local action group, Protect Our Rural Environment (P.O.R.E.) has been established to campaign for the closure of the AD plant and the cleaning up of the site.
8. The Crouchlands Farm site was put into Receivership in 2017 by the then owner, following the failure of two businesses operating on the site called Crouchland Farm Limited and Crouchland Biogas Limited, both of which were in Administration until 10 January 2019. West Sussex Agri Limited ("WSA"), was the senior creditor in the Receivership and the Administrations.
9. Artemis Land & Agriculture Limited ("Artemis"), owned by WSA, has purchased the Crouchlands Farm site excluding the area known as Lagoon 3 ("Crouchlands") from the Receiver. These representations are submitted on behalf of Artemis.
10. Artemis will continue the clean-up of the biogas site and the environmental restoration and improvement programme across the farm started by WSA.
11. Whilst much of the unlawful plant has already been removed, Lagoon 3, which contains large amounts of digestate and which the Environment Agency has assessed as being at risk of structural failure, will take longer to remediate. Artemis has consistently affirmed that it is willing to contribute to the steps necessary to assist the decommissioning of Lagoon 3. For example, Artemis retains certain infrastructure that may assist in the first step, which is the necessary removal of liquids from the lagoon.

12. Artemis' purpose in purchasing Crouchlands is to bring forward plans for the long term development and operation of rurally-orientated and environmentally sustainable business enterprises which will improve the use of the site, blend in well with the local community and provide sound employment opportunities.

Crouchlands Farm – the Future

13. The site sits comfortably in the landscape of West Sussex, in close proximity to the three settlements of Kirdford, Ifold and Plaistow. It has a varied and rich ecology supporting a wide range of habitats especially within the areas of Ancient Woodland.
14. It is located in a part of rural West Sussex which has, in recent times, been unable to provide the affordable housing and jobs to allow local people to remain in the area if they want to. This has resulted in an ageing population, schools at capacity, a lack of local employment opportunities, a failure to provide affordable housing and the inability to support a sustainable local economy.
15. The recent history of Crouchlands Farm is a distressing and tragic episode in the life of this site, which will take some time to recover from.
16. The new owners, Artemis, wish to work with local people, Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council and the Environment Agency to rescue the farm and bring it back into productive use as part of the process of supporting the local communities as they develop.
17. This aim is consistent with the plans for the northern part of Chichester District being developed through the local planning process.
18. The Kirdford Neighbourhood Plan, the Chichester Local Plan and the consultation document "Local Plan Preferred Approach" (December 2018) to which we are responding all recognise the need for development to support the local economy.
19. In this context, Artemis has started to consider the options for the future of Crouchlands Farm.
20. The ideas that are set out in this representation are put forward as the first stage of an open and inclusive consultation process, in the spirit of local engagement that is at the heart of the UK planning process.
21. The proposals seek to create a sustainable future for the farm and its land over the next twenty years, repairing the damage that has been done and creating a valuable and important centre of rural employment.
22. The initial ideas include the following.
 - The gradual development of a Rural Enterprise Centre, providing space for a range of employment uses, from farm shop and butchery to office and light industrial use. The

buildings will contain small units for local entrepreneurs, and new and existing small businesses that require purpose designed accommodation.

- An AgriTech Centre that will provide space for companies that specialise in the development and innovative use of technology to enhance agriculture. Bringing together farmers and growers, scientists, academia, technology experts and entrepreneurs to create a regional innovation hub in agri-tech.
- Farming: a series of small scale high welfare, low impact, low intensity pasture fed livestock operations and high quality food production; and the planting of crops such as miscanthus for the provision of sustainable fuel.
- The development of a range of leisure uses, including a competition level Equestrian Centre, high-end glamping, a restaurant and other activities for visitors.
- Environmental improvements such as restoration of footpaths, improved woodland management in the ancient woodlands to allow managed access by the public, and the creation of wildflower meadows.
- Environmental education, providing courses in woodland management, rural crafts such as hurdle making, and husbandry, such as bee-keeping.
- The gradual development of a range of housing, with a focus on affordable housing linked to the employment uses as well as a small number of larger houses, including potentially a large country house.

23. These developments would create the following benefits:

- provide small scale, sustainable employment opportunities for start-up rural and agricultural enterprises;
- provide affordable homes for local people, including those who wish to work at Crouchlands Farm and in the surrounding area;
- generate income from tourists and local people who want to enjoy the leisure facilities; and
- generate the investment funds required to finance the environmental restoration and improvements across the site.

24. Artemis therefore puts the site forward for allocation as a mixed-use development in the new Local Plan, to assist in the provision of the new homes identified as being required in the northern part of Chichester district, in a sustainable and deliverable development during the life of the new Local Plan.

25. The early proposed developments can be done through permitted development and through use of the existing buildings and land for farming activities that are already lawful at the site.

26. The larger scale proposals, most notably for residential development, will require local people and the Council to understand and accept the proposals, through a process of consultation and engagement that begins with the submission of this representation to the Regulation 18 consultation process.
27. The remainder of this document sets out the planning policy justification for these proposals.

B. THE SITE AND WIDER CONTEXT

Crouchlands Farm

28. The site at Crouchlands Farm is approximately 1km south-east of Plaistow, 1.5km south-west of Ifold and 3km north of Kirdford in the district of Chichester.
29. The site is approximately 192.4 ha in size and comprises mainly agricultural buildings with associated hard standing and open fields in agricultural use as pasture or for storage. The site benefits from a residential dwelling towards the north of the site, Hardnips Barn, that is currently vacant, as well as two cottages to the east of the site.
30. The site also contains an anaerobic digester plant and the associated equipment in the centre of the site that is no longer in use. There are also 4 lagoons located on the site, associated with the previous use of the site for anaerobic digestion. A site location plan can be seen attached at Appendix I.
31. The site is designated as countryside in the Chichester Local Plan and some or all of the site also benefits from the following designations:
 - Rural Area under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985;
 - Ancient Woodland; and
 - Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
32. See the site location plan with policy designations on at Appendix I that shows where these designations are located within the site.

Wider Context

33. The site is located approximately 8 miles to the north east of Billingshurst, West Sussex and spans across two electoral wards; Plaistow and Wisborough Green.
34. The site is bounded by Rickman's Lane and Plaistow Road to the east and the Sparrwood Hanger and Roundwyck Copse Complex Woodland and Meadows spans to the west. Whithurst Park is to the south.
35. To the north of the site is the village of Plaistow. Plaistow is a small village that currently benefits from a village green, a village shop, a church and a pub. The village shop has been owned and run by the Payne family for over 20 years and is a sustainable business which has expanded to offer hot food and coffees, a delicatessen and gift shop. The Sun Inn is a traditional pub and online it states opening hours are from 12pm - 4pm and 7pm - 11pm Monday to Sunday.
36. To the north east of the site is the village of Ifold. The village of Ifold does not have any local services and so residents either travel to Plaistow or Loxwood for everyday essentials.

37. The nearest primary schools are Plaistow and Kirdford Primary School (located in Plaistow), Loxwood Primary School and Wisborough Green Primary School. According to the West Sussex Planning School Places (2018) the primary schools in Billingshurst (including these two schools) were deemed at full capacity in 2015 and 2016 and were 3% off being deemed full capacity in 2017. There are extensions proposed at Loxwood Primary and Wisborough Green Primary School over the next 7 years, with 5 new places being provided each year.
38. In the wider context, there is a good road network around the site. The A283 is located to the west of the site, with links to Brighton, and the A272 is located to the south of the site, with links to Winchester. There are relatively low volumes of traffic on the smaller roads surrounding the site, as expected in a predominantly rural area.
39. The nearest bus service to the site is located at Crouchlands Farm bus stop on Rickman's Lane with limited services 64 and 69 running towards Billingshurst. The nearest train station to the site is in Billingshurst, which is approximately 8 miles from the site.
40. The site is relatively unconstrained, with the Ancient Woodland and ecological benefits of the site being the most significant constraint that will have to be addressed in a future allocation. The proposals and aspirations for the site seek to enhance the ecological benefits of the site, and so this would not present a barrier for development. The mixed-use development proposed will also improve the transport links and local road networks and will facilitate the expansion of local facilities in the nearby villages.

C. THE PROPOSAL AND MASTERPLAN

Rationale behind the proposals

41. The site was previously used for unlawful biogas production and some of the operational infrastructure is still on the site, although this has been decommissioned and emptied. There are also 4 lagoons that were previously used for holding wastewater and digestate from the biogas production, two of which are still being used for such storage. These lagoons need to be decommissioned safely to ensure the site can be fully redeveloped.
42. The removal of the existing anaerobic digester plant and associated infrastructure and full rehabilitation of the site will cost a large sum of money, but once complete will be a significant enhancement to the natural environment and make efficient use of the land.
43. The developments proposed will present an opportunity to generate the investment funds required to finance the continued environmental restoration and improvements across the site. The proposals detailed below will enable the rehabilitation of this site, and the creation of a sustainable, attractive mixed-use development with significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

Masterplan

44. The overall masterplan proposes commercial and high welfare, low impact and low intensity farming activity, the gradual development of a Rural Enterprise Centre, an AgriTech Centre, the development of a range of leisure uses and the gradual development of a range of housing, including potentially a large country house. At the centre of this strategy is the link between agricultural uses and a variety of employment space, and affordable accommodation, breaking down the barriers to entry into rural employment and accommodation for younger people.
45. Artemis have appointed a team of technical consultants, including the master-planner and architect Taylor Architecture and Urbanism, whose principal has had involvement with the Prince's Foundation (<http://taylorurbanism.com>). Taylor Architecture and Urbanism have started to create a comprehensive masterplan for the site. Each stage of the gradual development will be part of a wider strategic proposal and the site will not be planned or developed on a piece meal basis. There are different, complementary uses proposed across the site, and the main uses that are being proposed are set out in detail below.

Agriculture and Farming

46. The lawful use of the site is as a farm, and it is therefore logical to revert back to rural, agricultural uses on the majority of this large site. The strategy seeks to provide new entrants into agricultural businesses with affordable access to land and homes. At the heart of the proposal is commercial agriculture, including a series of small scale high welfare, low

impact, low intensity pasture fed livestock operations, outdoor and woodland reared poultry, high quality food production and crop cultivation. Farming activity will also include planting of crops such as miscanthus for the provision of sustainable fuel.

47. Land and facilities will be available to younger people at an affordable price to encourage entrepreneurial agricultural businesses to start and thrive.

Rural Enterprise Centre

48. As well as farming land, the proposals will include a Rural Enterprise Centre (REC). This will include small offices, light industrial and rural artisanal workshops for small rural businesses to rent at an affordable rate. These will either be new buildings or re-used agricultural buildings to create suitable employment space for new entrants to rural businesses, providing young people with employment space to begin or grow their own rural businesses.
49. These small employment units and workshops will have flexible uses for whatever the market demand is, but could include activities such as cheese making, rural craft workshops, butchery and food production and a farm shop selling produce from the farm and other retail offerings such as a saddlery and country clothing. An artist impression of how the Rural Enterprise Centre might look is attached at Appendix 2.

Environmental Improvements and Education

50. There is Ancient Woodland located across the site and the site is rich in ecological interest. The proposals seek to utilise this and environmental educational courses are proposed, such as woodland management in the Ancient Woodlands, rural crafts such as hurdle making, and husbandry such as bee-keeping. Further education is also proposed, such as farming apprenticeships and equestrian apprenticeships, in conjunction with local colleges.
51. Environmental improvements are also included, such as restoration of footpaths, improved woodland management to allow managed access by the public, and the creation of wildflower meadows.

AgriTech Centre

52. The proposal includes an AgriTech Centre that will provide space for companies that specialise in the development and innovative use of technology to enhance agriculture and horticulture. Bringing together farmers and growers, scientists, academia, technology experts and entrepreneurs to create a regional innovation hub in agri-tech. With the advances in agriculture technology, young people are becoming increasingly interested in agriculture and may wish to pursue a career in AgriTech. Crouchlands Farm will provide different sized units for companies to rent and start-up their AgriTech businesses in West Sussex.

Leisure and Tourism

53. The proposal includes the development of a range of leisure uses, including a competition level Equestrian Centre, high end glamping, a restaurant and other activities for visitors. A visitor centre, farm shop and cafe will create a focal point for people to visit as a destination or before they leave the site after visiting for the day or weekend.
54. The commercial Equestrian Centre would be open to members of the public to come and train. The Centre could have approximately 20 livery boxes and 10 overnight boxes, indoor and outdoor arenas, a hay barn, circular horse walker and enclosed paddocks. The facilities may also include gallops and a cross country course.
55. The proposal will include camping and high-quality accommodation pods, such as wooden cabins, yurts and tree houses. If people are visiting Crouchlands Farm and staying in the accommodation pods or camping, it is important to provide suitable leisure activities for visitors to enjoy. This could include a restaurant, bar and reception area which could be proposed at the existing Hardnip's Barn. This restaurant would serve food grown and produced on the farm and would likely be visited by people staying in the accommodation pods or visitors to the area as well as local people.

Residential

56. The proposal includes the gradual development of a range of housing, with a focus on affordable housing linked to the employment uses as well as a small number of larger market houses, including potentially a large country house.
57. The proposal relies on the new entrants working at the farm being offered affordable land and accommodation. This breaks down the usual barriers to entry that exist in the area, including affordable homes, suitable jobs and affordable employment space. To this end, the proposal includes key worker accommodation for employees of the farm and Rural Enterprise Centre, market housing and affordable housing. The proposal also includes a large country house to the west of the site. An artist impression of how the residential development and country house might look is attached at Appendix 2.

D. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND THE RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

58. This section is in response to the “Chichester Local Plan Review 2035 Preferred Approach” consultation document (December 2018). It sets out how the proposed development at Crouchlands Farm contributes to the proposed aspirations and requirements of the emerging Local Plan. Although the consultation document has two parts - the strategic policies and Development Management policies - this section will focus largely on the overall development strategy and strategic policies to demonstrate how the site can help meet the future demands of the area.
59. Whilst we do agree with the issues that have been identified in the emerging Plan and the principle of the proposed policies and framework for guiding development to address these issues, Crouchlands Farm and the land within the red line boundary (see Appendix 1) should be included as an allocation in the Plan for mixed-use development, for the reasons set out in detail below.

North of the Plan Area

60. The site is located in the North of the Plan Area which is considered under Policy S19 in the emerging Local Plan. The policy states that the Council will encourage and support development proposals and other initiatives in this area that conserve and enhance the rural character of the area, safeguard existing local facilities, expand the range of local facilities and improve accessibility to facilities in nearby centres outside of the area.
61. The supporting text in paragraph 4.129 states the identified need to accommodate some development in the North of the Plan Area to address local housing and employment needs and support local village facilities. We wholly agree with this statement and consider that a significant amount of development is required in the North of the Plan Area in order to assist Chichester to deliver the housing and employment provisions its needs over the next 20 years. Crouchlands Farm can contribute sustainably and significantly to this provision in this area and should seriously be considered for allocation as a mixed-use site.

Support for local village facilities

62. The consultation document at paragraph 4.129 states that accessibility to services and facilities is a particular issue for this area, which we agree with. Local residents have to travel significant distances by car to reach facilities and services that should be locally available. The Local Plan Review provides for limited growth in the North of the Plan Area to address this issue.
63. Crouchlands Farm is located approximately 1km south-east of Plaistow, 1.5km south-west of Ifold and 3km north of Kirdford. Plaistow currently benefits from a village green, a

recreation ground and a children's playground, a village shop, a church and a pub. Ifold does not have any local services.

64. The part of the site suitable for residential development at Crouchlands Farm is only 1 mile from the facilities in Plaistow. The addition of residential and commercial development in close proximity to the village would have a significant positive impact on the rural economy and services in the village. The increased footfall and activity would strengthen the vibrancy and health of the community by supporting the social facilities integral to the vitality of the village.
65. The same principles apply to the village of Ifold, which is approximately 1.3 miles from the site. Ifold does not have a shop, a pub or a school and so residents either travel to Plaistow or Loxwood for everyday essentials. This lack of shops and services demonstrates how residential development at the site could potentially generate the need for shops and services in Ifold, to be met by contributions from the development of the site and create a more sustainable place where existing residents can walk to the shop or pub without having to travel.
66. Crouchlands Farm is therefore in a prime location for development to facilitate the expansion and improvement of existing local facilities in these nearby villages as recommended by emerging Policy S19. We consider that the area could take more than "limited development" as set out in the supporting text at paragraph 4.130, and more sustainable development would generate activity in and around these service villages, giving shops and facilities the opportunity to expand and grow organically.
67. The benefits to the rural economy and provision of facilities and services would be significant if the site at Crouchlands Farm was allocated for mixed-use development. This includes not only the expansion and improvement to services in the nearby villages, but also the facilities and services that would be provided at Crouchlands Farm, namely; a sustainable farm shop, a restaurant, a cafe and leisure activities.

Housing

68. In the existing Local Plan (2015), the Inspector allowed Chichester to adopt a requirement of 435 new homes per year, even though this was well below the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of 505 per year. This was in recognition of the constraints on delivery at that time, notably the capacity of the A27 around Chichester and the need for improved waste-water treatment facilities.
69. The current evidence base is now out of date and requires renewal. This includes the identification of land for housing and economic development for inclusion in the Council's new Local Plan for the period to 2035.
70. In this context, the Local Plan Review seeks to make provision for at least an additional 12,350 dwellings to be delivered in the period 2016-2035. This figure reflects the identified objectively assessed housing needs of the plan area, plus an allowance for accommodating

unmet need arising from the Chichester District part of the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Strategic allocations are made in the emerging Plan, but Crouchlands Farm has not been allocated.

71. We agree with the increased housing requirement of at least 12,350 dwellings and that some of this requirement must be met in the North of the Plan Area, but this should be significantly more than the 489 currently proposed in emerging Policy S4. There are three sub-areas in Chichester District; East-West Corridor, Manhood Peninsula and the North of the Plan Area. We consider that there should be a minimum of 1,000 homes to be supplied in the North of the Plan Area to take some pressure off the East-West corridor, which has been the focus of significant amounts of development in previous years and as indicated in the Local Plan Review, is likely to be the focus for new development for years to come.
72. As set out in the Proposals section, we are proposing that the site at Crouchlands Farm is allocated in the new Local Plan as a mixed-use site, for residential and commercial development. The site is suitable, sustainable and available and could accommodate a significant number of new homes to help Chichester deliver the housing requirement that is to be met in the North of the Plan Area.

Affordable Housing

73. Within the overall housing requirement, there is a significant need for affordable housing, because the housing stock in Chichester is biased towards more expensive, detached residences (reference) . Therefore, young adults or families who have previously lived locally or have family nearby are being forced out by an unaffordable market. The Local Plan Review acknowledges this at paragraph 4.34 where it states *“house prices and rents in the Plan area continue to grow and remain high compared to average household incomes. This means housing is unaffordable to many people in the Plan area.”*
74. In compliance with emerging Policy S6, any residential development at Crouchlands Farm would be policy compliant, with an emphasis on affordable homes for young adults or key workers accommodation for employees at the Farm. This will help Chichester to retain working age people and families to ensure the sustainable growth of the economy that Chichester hopes to achieve over the plan period. Employment needs and provision is discussed in full below.

Land for Employment

75. The Local Plan Review seeks to develop a strong and thriving economy, improving employment opportunities for all skills and diversifying the economy. This reflects the main priorities identified in the Economic Development Strategy for Chichester District 2013 - 2019. The Local Plan Review will assist the creation of new jobs in variety of ways - most obviously through the allocation of land for employment uses.

76. The proposed Rural Enterprise Centre will be providing employment that will provide opportunities for both existing and new local businesses to develop and grow. We consider the site at Crouchlands Farm should be allocated for mixed-use development, including employment uses, to facilitate the creation of new jobs, and opportunities for existing businesses to grow or diversify.
77. The employment opportunities created through the Rural Enterprise Centre, other commercial activities, farming, education and leisure and tourism will encourage the inward investment that the Local Plan Review is seeking to achieve in Policy S8. The Policy requires the provision of 235,182 sq m of employment floorspace between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2035. The land at Crouchlands Farm can contribute to this provision, and proposals currently include space for a range of employment uses, from small scale farming to office and light industrial use. The buildings will contain small units for local entrepreneurs, and new and existing small businesses that require purpose designed accommodation.
78. We therefore agree with the significant provision that is required up to 2035 but consider that Crouchlands Farm should be allocated as a site for mixed-use development to contribute to this provision in a sustainable way which will also boost the rural economy.

Conclusion

79. The strategic policies in the Local Plan Review convey a clear message that there must be significant growth across the district for Chichester to thrive. The allocation of Crouchlands Farm as a mixed-use development in the North of the Plan Area will contribute to the required housing provision, boost the rural economy and contribute to much needed employment space for smaller businesses and entrepreneurs.
80. These developments would create the following benefits:
- provide small scale, sustainable employment opportunities for start-up rural enterprises;
 - provide affordable homes for local people, including those who wish to work at Crouchlands Farm and in the surrounding area;
 - generate income from tourists and local people who want to enjoy the leisure facilities; and
 - generate the investment funds required to finance the environmental restoration and improvements across the site.
81. Artemis therefore puts the site forward for allocation as a mixed-use development in the new Local Plan, to assist in the provision of the new homes identified as being required in the northern part of Chichester district, in a sustainable and deliverable development during the life of the new Local Plan.

E. APPENDICES

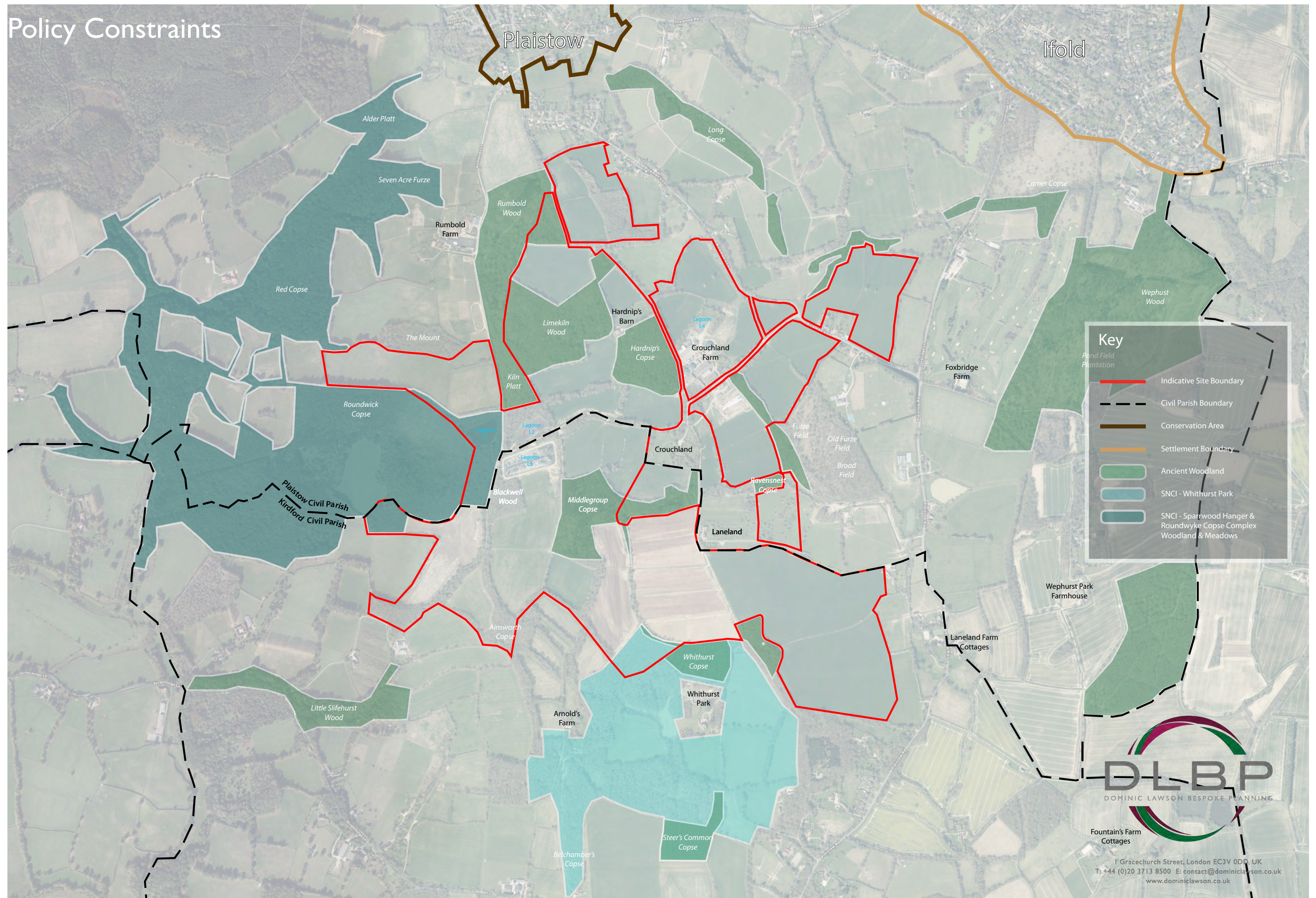
- Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan with Policy Designations; and
- Appendix 2 – Artist’s impressions.



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APPENDIX I

Policy Constraints



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APPENDIX 2



The
Restaurant
→
Farm
Shop
←



