

12 Goslings Turning, Bursledon,
HANTS, SO31 8LP



Application Supporting Statement

Contents

Para No

1.0 Introduction and Background	1.1 - 1.4
2.0 About The Applicant and The Evolution of The Concept	2.1 - 2.16
3.0 The Need for This Facility	3.1 – 3.8
4.0 The Application Property	4.1 – 4.7
5.0 The Proposal	5.1 – 5.15
6.0 Planning Policy and Guidance	6.1 – 6.13
7.0 Planning Issues	7.1 – 7.11
8.0 Other Development Control Matters	8.1 – 8.16
9.0 Summary and Conclusions	9.1 – 9.2

Appendices

Appendix 1 Schedule of Existing Longcroft Cat Hotels
(as at May 2023)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. This Statement has been produced by Abi Purser, the founder of Longcroft Luxury Cat hotels, with the help of planning consultants, in support of an application for planning permission to install a building to provide short-term boarding accommodation for cats. The boarding accommodation will be a commercial activity (probably 'sui generis') and will only be ancillary to the existing residential use.

1.2. Attached as **Appendix 1** to this Statement is a schedule of the existing Longcroft cat hotels currently operating in the UK.

1.3. The following Statement identifies and appraises the relevant planning issues and in particular:

- Explains the nature of the proposal;
- Sets out the national and local planning policy context for the proposal; and
- Identifies and appraises relevant planning issues.

1.4. Finally, the conclusions present a brief review of the content of this Statement in support of the case.

2. ABOUT THE APPLICANT AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT 2.1.

The Longcroft Luxury Cat Hotel has provided a low-key, high quality, niche service for cat owners requiring short-term accommodation for their cats since 2010. Longcroft hotels are well known for being sited within residential environments (although some are also located in rural locations). Longcroft serves those not wishing to use large scale commercial catteries, which generally cater for large numbers of cats in small environments. The accommodation in a Longcroft hotel is designed to cater for small numbers of cats, but offering more space. Longcroft hotels are expertly and efficiently maintained and all consumables used are the very best available. The cat hotel building itself is made by a specialist manufacturer (to a similar type to those

used by animal welfare charities) and is made from impervious and durable materials that do not deteriorate over time, or harbour odours. This again differs from the conventional cattery model which tends to generate much greater activity and use timber partitioning, which deteriorates through its occupation and retains odours.

2.2. Longcroft Luxury Cat Hotel is a successful and proven business model that has been offered as a partnership scheme since April 2012 (Hotel owners are known as ‘Longcroft Partners’). The benefit for Longcroft Partners is that it allows them to work part time from their own home to supplement their income, whilst providing an important and much needed service for local cat owners. The business is meticulously run to the highest standards of animal welfare. Longcroft HQ assures that all of their partners follow the same strict process and hygiene protocol to ensure the same high level of care and cleanliness is upheld in every location. This is further strengthened by a binding contract between Longcroft HQ and the Longcroft partner.

2.3. The first Cat Hotel (which is still in operation) opened in June 2010 in the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area at 23 Longcroft Lane and the concept won a ‘Smarta 100 Business’ award in 2012 (it has since won other awards, including the Guardian’s 2016 Small Business Showcase Award for ‘Home Business’). In determining the planning application for our first hotel (reference W6/2009/88/EM), the officer stated:

“...the proposed development does not have an unacceptable harmful impact on the amenities of the area”.

2.4. Similarly, the planning officer in the case of the second of Longcroft’s applications, this time in St Albans (reference 5/2011/2931), granted planning permission because it was found that the proposed development would be *“compatible with the character of the*

locality... [and therefore there was].....no adverse impact on neighbouring properties”.

2.5. Since then, the Longcroft concept has been widely accepted by local authorities elsewhere in the country and after the initial Welwyn Garden City outlet opened, a large number of further permissions have been granted for Longcroft hotels up and down the UK. For ease of reference, we have scheduled these at **Appendix 1** to this statement. Every location is operating well, without any difficulties in terms of the effect upon their neighbours. The list now includes a second cat hotel within Welwyn Garden City, which opened off the back of the impeccable service given from the original cat hotel opened in 2010.

2.6. Apart from the Welwyn Garden City outlet mentioned above, a number of the other hotels mentioned in **Appendix 1** are in locations which would be considered sensitive in relation to the natural or built environment. For example, Letchworth is in a Conservation Area (this outlet also required ‘heritage approval’ from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, in addition to the usual planning permission from the Local Planning Authority), or Winchmore Hill. The latter outlet is also sited within the Green Belt, the Chilterns’ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the cat hotel structure itself is only 14 metres away from a listed building (Longcroft’s hotel at School Lane, Sheffield also adjoins a listed building). In granting temporary permission at Winchmore Hill (Chiltern District Council Application Reference CH/2013/1737/FA) the planning officer said:

“...the applicant has proposed to remove an existing outbuilding of a comparable size to that proposed. The applicant also makes reference to the NPPF in relation to promoting sustainable economic growth. This is also reflected in the adopted Development Plan policies with Core Strategy Policy CS19 stating that the Council will seek to develop a sustainable rural economy by encouraging working from home. Taking all of

this into account it is considered that in this instance there are very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness” (this temporary permission was subsequently made permanent under the terms of Application Reference CH/2016/0054/FA).

2.7. The Planning Officers made similar comment in the analysis of the Company’s proposal at Flamstead in Dacorum Borough Council area (application reference 4/03474/15/FUL) and in recommending that planning permission be granted, stated:

“Such a stance has been reinforced by the Strategic Planning Policy Officer consulted on the proposed; the follow comments were provided: “The proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle on the basis that it falls within one of the exceptions for small-scale development identified in Core Strategy Policy CS6”. Thus, it is considered that the use of the outbuilding for business use as a cat hotel would fall within the acceptable criteria F, and would constitute an appropriate use and development within this Green Belt village”.

2.8. Comparable comment about the cat hotel’s acceptability, even when in the Green Belt, was made by the Planning Officer at St Albans City & District Council recently when considering the Longcroft proposal at St Albans Road, Sandridge (Application Reference No: 5/21/0323). The officer said (at pages 5 & 6 of her report):

“.....the size of the cattery building would be considered of a domestic scale and would essentially be of a size that would, if used ancillary to the main dwelling, come under permitted development, with a maximum height of 2.45m.

Additionally, the site is within a row of semi-detached dwellings, many of which have outbuildings, similar in size and scale to that proposed in this application, which are located towards the rear of the amenity space. The outbuilding proposed would appear in size, scale and character as surrounding outbuildings. Furthermore, views from the green belt from the rear would improve given that the cattery building will be located slightly further into the site with the loss of the garage that is located closer to the access to the rear”.

2.9. In the Sandridge case, existing outbuildings were being removed as

part of the proposal, but in combination with *“the size and scale of the building.....this would amount to very special circumstances to allow the development and would not result in harm to the openness and character of the green belt”*.

2.10. As mentioned, some of the franchises are also in the open countryside, such as that at Liphook (which is within the scope of the South Downs National Park Authority; ‘SDNPA’); Braintree; or the operator’s former outlet at Royston. Again, there has never been any issue with operating the Longcroft concept as a ‘rural business’. In the assessment of the Longcroft proposal at Liphook (application ref: SDNP 17/003314/FUL), the officer at the SDNPA commented:

“As such, the proposal is considered to be sustainable development, where development should be supported and no adverse harm would result from the proposal with regards to the impact on the area, neighbouring amenity and highway and parking considerations. Also, the proposal is considered to accord with the purposes of the South Downs National Park. Therefore, the application [is] recommended for approval subject to conditions”.

2.11. Similarly, planning permission was granted, on the 10th January 2020, for a Longcroft outlet upon land designated as open countryside, and outside any designated settlement boundaries, at Lockerley near Romsey under Test Valley District Council (TVDA), ref 19/02823/FULLS, where the officer found (at paragraph 8.9 of the delegated report):

“...it is considered that the proposal satisfies all of the relevant criterion [sic] of Policy LE16 and therefore, the principle of development is acceptable and in accordance with Policy COM2”.

2.12. In the event that the cat hotel is close to other residential property, there is again no issue with amenity. For instance, on 29th March 2017, the London Borough of Croydon granted permission for a cat hotel at 157 Green Lane, Norbury (Application Number:

17/00466/FUL). The case officer found the use itself to be “acceptable in principle”. Likewise, the “*design and in particular the materials chosen*” were acceptable and the proposal was also found to have no “*detrimental effect on the amenity of adjacent properties*”. Furthermore, “*given the small scale of the business and the limited opening hours for dropping off and collection*”, there was no issue in relation to highways.

2.13. Notwithstanding that residential amenity has never been an issue, the Applicant commissioned an assessment of its first Welwyn Garden City outlet by a specialist acoustic engineer. The acoustic assessment is also contained within the application bundle.

2.14. On occasions, the matter of drainage and flood risk has been raised in connection with assessing the acceptability of Longcroft’s applications. As the officer said in the Longcroft case at Green Lane (Application Number: 17/00466/FUL), referred to above:

“Given the scale of development it is not considered to negatively impact on flood issues within the area. However, it is considered that a sustainable drainage method system should be incorporated within the development for harvesting of rain water run-off from the roof”. A condition to this effect was attached to the permission.

2.15. Finally, it should be mentioned that no dogs are ever boarded at a Longcroft Luxury Cat Hotel. Many conventional catteries also have kennelling for dogs, which may have different effects upon the amenity of a residential area.

2.16. **Working With Charities** - Longcroft strongly supports local charities and if a volunteer place became available this is something that would be considered and only on consent by the local authority.

3. THE NEED FOR THIS FACILITY

3.1. The National Position - According to the Pet Food Manufacturers

Association, PFMA, (<https://www.ukpetfood.org/information-centre/statistics/uk-pet-population.html>), as of 2023, there is currently estimated to be a population of about 11 million cats in this country (in 2019/20, pre-lock-down, the ownership figure was estimated at 7.5 million by the PFMA), yet there are only some 2,000 catteries. Of these existing facilities, many tend to be old, poorly maintained, and built from unsuitable materials such as timber, which are not easy to keep clean because they harbour bacteria. When they go away, responsible owners of cats want to be able to leave their cat where they are confident that it will be looked after properly, in the type of conditions that it is used to at its usual home.

3.2. To help deal with the issue of existing quality, more stringent licensing laws were introduced by the Government in October 2018 and whilst this is a positive measure in relation to animal welfare, it has had a further impact upon the availability of provision. As noted above, much of the existing cattery provision does not, and for various reasons cannot, comply with these regulations and so have been forced to close, further reducing the supply of accommodation.

3.3. Abi Purser, the originator of the cat hotel concept who still owns and runs the first hotel opened in Longcroft Lane Welwyn Garden City noted the mismatch between the unserved demand and existing provision and began to fill this gap in 2010. The Longcroft concept is helping to fulfil this need, as the majority of the business for each of the existing cat hotels comes from repeat bookings and typically a cat owner will use the cat hotel about 4 times a year. As a result, the customer base is relatively small, and becomes known to the Longcroft Partners very quickly. As mentioned above, such has been

the local demand for this service already using Longcroft's existing Welwyn Garden City hotel, that a further Longcroft Luxury Cat Hotel close by was required and so planning permission was granted and the hotel built.

3.4. As noted, the cattery industry has seen an enormous and recent surge in demand, largely because cat ownership rose by some 4 million just during the Pandemic. Additionally, because travel was prohibited during this time a huge number of catteries closed as their revenue was non-existent (the industry did not fall into the wider and more financially supported categories of hospitality or retail. Now that travel is permitted once more, the demand for the remaining cattery spaces is likely to be higher than ever.

3.5. Attached to these submissions is a letter from the Pet Industry Federation (PIF), the regulatory body for our industry, concerning the increased need for our services to meet the quantitative and qualitative shortfalls in supply.

3.6. **The Local Position** - According to research, carried out by the PFMA, the average percentage of the UK's households owning a cat in 2023 was estimated to be about 26%. The Office for National Statistics (ONS), found that Eastleigh Borough's population size has increased by 8.9%, from around 125,200 at time of the previous Census in 2011 to around 136,400 by the most recent one in 2021 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000086/3>). In respect of households with at least one usual resident, there were estimated to be 56,900 in Eastleigh Borough in 2021, which was an increase of 4,723 households since 2011 (approximately 9%). This level of increase was higher than the household formation in the rest of the South East and in England (which stood at 7.1% & 6.2% respectively over this same period (<https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/media/11660/census-v2.pdf>)). Further

population growth is predicted over the course of the adopted development plan to 2036.

- 3.7. Using the PFMA's survey figures, in the context of the 2021 Census figure for households, suggests that there would be in the order of 14,800 households within the Borough that own at least one cat (many households have more than one). Thus, as the Borough's overall population increases, the demand for short term cattery accommodation is also likely to increase.
- 3.8. It can be seen that there is considerable potential demand for facilities to accommodate cats in the locality and there is currently no facility in the immediate locality at all (the nearest being over 2 miles away). Furthermore, even when there may already be catteries in an area, these facilities may not always have availability (they may be fully booked during holiday periods), or in some cases may not be directly comparable in terms of quality or convenience. In addition, very often many of these facilities also operate as kennels for dogs, which is not an ideal environment for most cats.

4. THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

- 4.1. **The Application Property** is part of an estate of recently developed, two-storey, detached houses. The estate is a private road, situated to the east of Windmill Lane (from where it takes its access to the road network) and north of the A27 (Goslings Turning is parallel to the A27 for part of its length). Views of the estate are screened from the A27 by a dense belt of trees and landscaping. There is a large garden to the rear of the application property. Burlesdon Windmill is approximately 100 meters away from the application boundary with the addition of a thick belt of trees in between the Windmill itself and the application house's garden.

- 4.2. The application house has garage parking for two vehicles, as well as a surfaced forecourt which would allow another two vehicles to be parked. There is also plenty of on street parking . The road is an unadopted Private Road.
- 4.3. **Planning History** – from reviewing the Council’s on-line database it seems that the relevant permission for this dwelling was granted in outline under the terms of Ref C/14/74932. This permission was for the *“Residential development of up to 29 houses with associated parking, public open space and enhancement of existing vehicular access off Windmill Lane (access, appearance, layout & scale to be considered). (Amended description)”*. No conditions seem to have been attached to this permission removing permitted development rights. There is also an Article 4 relating to this site, but again this is not related to removing domestic permitted rights.
- 4.4. **The Surrounding Area** – the site is within 1km of shopping facilities at the ‘Tesco Extra’, or the local facilities on Portsmouth Road (which includes another convenience store, as well as other services). There is a bus stop very close to the site (Providence Hill) upon the A27 served by the X4 & 501 routes and there are good footways enabling pedestrian access to these services and facilities from the application site. The location can therefore be said to be a sustainable one for the purposes of Government policy.
- 4.5. **Heritage Assets** – the Windmill and its granary, immediately to the north of the application site are both listed buildings (Grade II* and Grade II respectively). Some of the other buildings in the vicinity of the Windmill are also locally listed. The area around the Windmill is also a Conservation Area (‘Bursledon Windmill Conservation Area’), originally designated in 1990 and extended in 2011. The boundary of the Conservation Area borders the application property on its

northern and eastern sides.

4.6. **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** – there are no TPOs upon the site.

4.7. **Flood Risk** - The site itself is not within a zone which is subject to enhanced risk of river, or surface water, flooding (the land is designated as being ‘very low risk’ in both cases “*meaning that this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1% each year*” - <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/risk>).

5. THE PROPOSAL

5.1. The following section outlines the operational elements of the proposed facility in relation to matters such as staffing, and other development management matters including highways and residential amenity. Following the current AAL guidelines the proposed building is capable of housing up to 14 cats within the 7 room hotel. The overall level of the investment into the local economy is around £50,000. Longcroft always favours local gardeners, builders and electricians to complete each build, further contributing to the local economy.

5.2. It should be noted that since Longcroft Luxury Cat Hotels was founded in 2010. There are now over 25 Longcroft hotels in operation (see **Appendix 1**), with most being located within residential areas or, at the very least, close to other housing.

5.3. **Description of the building** - The cat hotel building will be sited alongside the left hand boundary line at the end of the rear garden. It is manufactured to Longcroft’s strict specification which is one of the highest quality available (it is similar in type to those used by Cat’s Protection and Blue Cross). It also offers excellent insulation

properties from noise, even when entering and exiting the sleeping areas. It is manufactured from uPVC, comprising glass panels and has a fully insulated and heat reflective polycarbonate roof (specific details of the building's internal specification can be made available to EHO's if needed). The door frames are again uPVC, with galvanised safety mesh in the centre. The new structure is to be sited in the house's rear garden and will not be visible from the road.

5.4. Each cat hotel building's dimensions are similar to the type of domestic outbuilding, which could normally be permitted development under Class E of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order, or GPDO. The proposed height of the building is 2616mm at the front and 2203mm to the rear, which allows space for the cats to climb and exercise. The base of the proposed structure is to be of concrete and measures 4310mm in depth, with a length of 11640mm (or about 50.16m² in area) and sits approximately 3 inches above ground level. The building itself is made of UPVC and is fully demountable.

5.5. Low energy lamps with diffusers offering low night light in the sleeping areas and low energy lamps in the safety corridor with prism diffusers are used. Lighting is switched off in the evening in order to respect neighbouring residents. There is no external lighting. In the interests of Animal Welfare each room comprises a thermostatically controlled sleeping area. The flooring will be an impervious floor and grout system for state of the art, hygienic, cleaning.

5.6. All cat furniture is bespoke, antimicrobial and hygienic. Longcroft further supports local tradespeople to achieve this. Longcroft insist on an attractive wooden pergola to be added to the exterior of each building, further softened by natural plants and seasonal hanging baskets regularly supplied by local gardeners.

- 5.7. **Duration of stay** - Typically the average stay is ten days. However, it has been known for customers to leave their cats for longer periods during a working trip abroad or a house renovation. On average, a customer uses the Longcroft hotel about 4 times a year.
- 5.8. **Hours of operation** - Customers at the property are only allowed to arrive on an appointment-only basis between the working hours of 9 am - 5.00pm. No one arrives without a prior appointment. Longcroft does not permit visits on a Sunday, or on any Bank Holidays.
- 5.9. **Vehicular Turnover** - Longcroft's vehicular activity is very low due to the appointment-only system put in place and Longcroft's niche clientele attracted. The Applicant has established that even over the busiest periods, there was an average of one car per day stopping for ten minutes at a time whilst customers settled their pets in and out.
- 5.10. Due to the small scale of the operation, there is no need for specialist deliveries, in fact supplies are sourced as part of the normal domestic shopping trip.
- 5.11. **Staffing** - Due to the small scale of the operation, no staff are needed.
- 5.12. **Noise** - Longcroft has proven that cats are very quiet creatures staying away from home, when given the respect and care they deserve in a Longcroft hotel. We must also mention the materials used for our buildings are very effective in noise reduction, utilising 400mm UPVC Polystyrene core board with Argon K Glass double glazing. The buildings exceed all Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) guidelines and are made of impervious construction throughout.
- 5.13. **Hygiene** - Cats are very clean animals and due to the fact that this is

a premium service, cleaning procedures are detailed and consistent. The hygiene protocols are devised by Longcroft's head vet. Most

importantly there is never any sluicing, run off or surface water created. Hosing of floors in Longcroft Hotels is not necessary, ensuring no waste water is created and no additional drainage is required. Temporary isolation facilities can be provided if required. In addition, all guests at Longcroft are fully vaccinated and proof of vaccination is a conditional term of booking. Worming and flea treatments are also strongly recommended for each guest.

5.14. **Odour** - The impervious construction and cleanliness regime does not allow odour to form. Furthermore, Longcroft uses a cat litter, which neutralises smells and limits waste.

5.15. **Waste Disposal** - Due to the small size of Longcroft hotels and state of the art cat litter used, the waste produced is negligible. Longcroft does not store cat hotel waste with general household waste. Any waste is disposed of regularly, is triple bagged and stored in a closed bin until it is collected by the dedicated waste carrier.

6. PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

NATIONAL POLICY

6.1. This section reviews and identifies relevant guidance and policy from both the national level and the Development Plan. National Government guidance is now presented in the National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF, of July 2021. Furthermore, the many ministerial statements (including the various statements which have accompanied the Budgets) and the HM Treasury's 'Plan for Growth' are also material considerations. The following are of relevance to this application.

NPPF

6.2. The NPPF reiterates that applications should be determined in Page 16

of 37

accordance with the 'Development Plan', which forms the "*starting point for decision making.....unless material considerations indicate otherwise*". The NPPF states that it (and other statements of Government policy), is "*a material consideration in planning*

decisions” (NPPF, paragraphs such as 2, 3, 12 & 47).

- 6.3. According to paragraphs 7 & 8 of the NPPF, *“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”* and there are three interdependent *“overarching objectives....[that]...need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways”*. These objectives are ‘economic’, ‘social’ and ‘environmental’. A *“strong, responsive and competitive economy”* is encouraged and the planning system should *“support growth, innovation and improved productivity”*. At the same time *“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities”*, with the *“current and future needs”* for *“health, social and cultural well-being”* being met. This must be done in a way that ensures that the *“natural, built and historic environment”* is protected and that land is used effectively. Making the most effective use of land and buildings that have already been developed is also a feature of Chapter 11 of the NPPF. Paragraphs such as 119 and 120 support *“opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land”* or reuse/redevelop under-utilised land and buildings.
- 6.4. *“A positive and creative”* approach to decision-taking is urged (see NPPF, paragraph 10 & Chapter 4, paragraph 38). Local planning authorities *“should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”*.
- 6.5. The Treasury’s ‘Plan for Growth’ of 2012 and the various statements which have accompanied the Budgets of the subsequent years, underpin policy such as the NPPF and state that the default answer

to applications should be ‘yes’. There should be a positive attitude towards all development which generates wealth and creates employment. NPPF paragraph 81, within Chapter 6 (entitled *“Building a strong, competitive economy”*), also exhorts a positive approach to supporting economic growth and planning *“decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local*

business needs and wider opportunities for development". Paragraph 82 continues that the planning system must *"be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances"*.

6.6. In respect of transport matters, the NPPF says that *"development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe"* (NPPF, paragraph 111).

6.7. According to paragraphs such as 93 (within the NPPF Chapter headed *"Promoting healthy and safe communities"*), in order *"to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should [amongst other things]:*

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.....

e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of

Page 18 of 37

housing, economic uses and community facilities and services".

6.8. Chapter 16 of the NPPF deals with *"Conserving and enhancing the historic environment"*. Where development is to take place within the setting of heritage assets, or upon land with archaeological potential, paragraphs such as 194 & 195 require applicants *"to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected"*. However, paragraphs 206 & 207 of the NPPF explain that *"not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance"*, but *"proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably"*.

6.9. More generally, according to the NPPF, good design and *“the creation of high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”*. Planning decisions should ensure that development *“will function well”*, whilst being sympathetic to its surroundings (NPPF, paragraphs such as 126 & 130 and throughout Chapter 12 *“Achieving Well-Designed Places”*).

6.10. Government policy generally seeks to protect the built environment from increased flood risk from all sources and to direct new development away from sites and areas which might be at enhanced risk. LPAs should also ensure that allowing new development does not increase the risk of flood elsewhere (see NPPF paragraphs such as 159 & 167).

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The Development Plan

6.11. For the purposes of this application, the current adopted ‘Development Plan’ for this Borough comprises the ‘Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036)’ (EBLP), which was adopted in April

Page 19 of 37

2022. The ‘Policies Map’ shows the subject land is within the defined settlement boundary, but is itself unallocated (it is close to two housing allocations (Policies BU1, ‘Land north of Providence Hill’ & BU3, ‘Land lying south east of Windmill Lane’). The subject land adjoins the ‘Bursledon Windmill Conservation Area’ and the open countryside (see Policy S5).

6.12. The relevant EBLP Policies are listed below:

Strategic policy S1 *“Delivering sustainable development”* - For the purposes of the ‘Existing Settlement Hierarchy level’, Bursledon is Level 3 – *“Larger villages, principally serving the day to day needs of their local catchment, and employment centres”*.

Strategic policy S2 *“Approach to new development”*

Strategic policy S4 *“Employment provision”* -

Strategic policy S8 *“Historic Environment”*

Strategic policy S9 *“Green infrastructure”*

Strategic policy S10 *“Community facilities”*

Strategic policy S11 *“Transport infrastructure”*

Policy DM1 *“General criteria for new development”*

Policy DM2 *“Environmentally sustainable development”*

Policy DM3 *“Adaptation to climate change”*

Policy DM5 *“Managing flood risk”*

Policy DM8 *“Pollution”*

Policy DM11 *“Nature conservation”*

Policy DM12 *“Heritage Assets”*

Policy DM13 *“General development criteria – transport”*

Policy DM14 *“Parking”*

Policy DM36 *“Community, leisure and cultural facilities”*

Page 20 of 37

6.13. **Car parking** - the *“Residential Parking Standards”* Supplementary Planning Document (RPSSPG) adopted January 2009 addresses the issue of car parking provision for residential development within the Borough and requires 2 spaces for 2/3 bedroom dwellings; rising to 3 spaces for dwellings of 4 beds or more. Non-residential development (such as offices, schools and retailing) still seems to be governed by the ‘Hampshire Parking Strategy And Standards’ (‘HPS&S’) of Spring 2002. However, this document contains no standards relevant to the subject development.

7. PLANNING ISSUES

General Policy Background

7.1. The NPPF reiterates that applications should be determined in accordance with the ‘Development Plan’, which forms the *“starting point for decision making.....unless material considerations indicate otherwise”*. Government statements of planning policy are one such consideration relevant to the determination of applications (see NPPF, paragraphs such as 2, 3, 12 & 47). The Planning System should take a *“positive and creative”* approach to decision-making and *“should seek*

to approve applications for sustainable development where possible” (see NPPF, paragraphs 10 & 38). Likewise, Development Plan policies such as EBLP **Strategic policy S1** says that in its role as decision-maker, the LPA *“will take a positive approach.....[and]...will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area”*. Generally, development proposals which *“meet community needs without compromising the identity of the Borough or its individual settlements, or the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* will be supported by the EBLP.

Page 21 of 37

- 7.2. The application proposal will provide a key service to cat owners. According to paragraphs 7 & 8 of the NPPF, it is part of the ‘social role’ of planning to support *“strong, vibrant and healthy communities.....with accessible services....that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being”*. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF requires that in order *“to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should....plan positively”* for the provision of community facilities and take an *“integrated approach”*. Making the most effective use of land and buildings that have already been developed is a key feature of Chapter 11 of the NPPF (see in particular paragraphs such as 119 and 120).
- 7.3. According to the Development Plan, generally new development is to be directed towards the larger centres as well as the existing built-up areas, as these are considered to be the most sustainable locations. Wherever possible, development should make use of existing developed land within the *“urban edge”*; protect residential amenity; whilst reducing the need to travel (see EBLP Policies such as **Strategic policy S2**, which has *“a presumption in favour of new development”, within “the main built-up areas”*).
- 7.4. As noted earlier in this submission, in the case of the Applicant’s

application at Green Lane, Norbury in the London Borough of Croydon (see paragraph 2.10 of this Statement), the case officer found the proposed land use to be “*acceptable in principle*”. Equally, the long list of successful cases at **Appendix 1**, all demonstrate that many other planning officers have reached the same conclusion.

Need

7.5. According to the PFMA Cat ownership has risen considerably in the

Page 22 of 37

last few years, but this increase has not been matched by commensurate increases in the provision of short-term accommodation. There has long been a severe shortfall of provision for cats in the country as a whole; a supply situation that has worsened due to the introduction of more stringent licensing controls since October 2018. The problems have since been further compounded by the impact of the Pandemic, which shut off the revenue stream for two years. As a result, many catteries went out of business and have been unable to reopen despite the release of lockdown restrictions.

7.6. Because of this limited choice, the accommodation that there is, may often be over-subscribed, even if its quality is indifferent, or poor (some also provide accommodation for dogs, which is not the most suitable environment for cats). It is clear from the Applicant’s direct experience that the local catchment needs this additional provision.

7.7. There is support in the NPPF for proposals that help meet identified local deficiencies in the facilities that the community needs (see for instance paragraphs such as 93). There is no provision of short stay cat accommodation in the immediate vicinity and the nearest comparable facilities are some miles away.

Sustainable Economic Investment

7.8. Overall, it can be seen from national planning policy in the NPPF, as well as the Treasury’s ‘Plan for Growth’ (and the various Statements that

have accompanied the Budgets in subsequent times, which underpin the policies in the NPPF and which state that the default answer to applications should be ‘yes’), that there should be a positive attitude towards all development which generates wealth, encourages businesses to invest, creates employment and makes effective use of land. *“Building a strong, competitive economy”* is

Page 23 of 37

specifically supported by the NPPF, and planning *“decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development”*. Policies should promote *“new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances”* (see for instance NPPF, paragraphs 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 47, 81 & 82).

7.9. Likewise, in terms of the EBLP **Strategic policy S4** (*“Employment Provision”*), allows for *“other employment-generating uses [i.e. “other than industry and commerce”] through....new employment development within the urban edge.....”*. The EBLP also seeks to provide services that the community needs, in accessible locations (the nature of the proposed activity is not one which could be operated from a town centre) and will work with a variety of stakeholders to achieve this (see EBLP **Strategic policy S10 & Policy DM36**).

7.10. The subject proposal involves investment into the application premises (amounting to more than £50,000) by an award-winning small business and will enable the integration of flexible working practices as the NPPF encourages. In this case there are no employees coming to the site and the activity will enable the resident to derive an income from home-working. Longcroft has a policy that, wherever possible, local suppliers are used to complete each build, so there is further investment into the local economy. Under the terms of Government policy for encouraging economic investment, as well as the Council

initiatives to promote 'small business' employment opportunities and enterprise, the application should therefore have support.

- 7.11. The subject use itself has already been accepted as appropriate to both urban and rural locations by many LPAs in the past, even those with development plan policies of restraint (see **Appendix 1**).

8. OTHER DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MATTERS

- 8.1. **Transportation & Parking** – There is a general planning policy of directing new services towards existing settlements, where a variety of sustainable travel modes are available. The NPPF is also clear, at paragraph 111, that *“development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe”* (our underlining).
- 8.2. Likewise, according to the 'Development Plan', development should generally be directed towards the main centres and the built-up areas within the settlements; access to development should be safe for all users; there should be no impact on any adjoining rights of way; and the levels of traffic generated from the use should be appropriate to surrounding roads. Thought should be given to access and layout matters such as parking provision at planning stage (although it should be noted that Goslings Turning is a private road). Car parking should be suitable for the proposed development with the standards in the 'HPS&S' being used for provision. However, there are no parking standards for catteries set out in the 'HPS&S', leaving planning applications to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.3. As explained above (and has been accepted by numerous Councils around the country), the traffic generation arising from, and parking requirements of, the proposed activity are minimal and customers only make occasional visits, to pick-up or drop-off, of about 10 minutes' duration. This level of visitation is no different from normal

domestic use and so will have no impact upon the road network. The subject dwelling already has a double garage for parking (which would serve for the staff occupant), with the opportunity for short-term customer parking to park a further two vehicles at the front, upon the hard surfaced driveway.

- 8.4. Although the promotion of alternative means of travel is generally promoted at all levels of planning policy and the 'HPS&S' would normally require cycle parking in association with new employment uses, this would not be of any practical assistance to Longcroft customers, when transporting animals.
- 8.5. Finally, there are no other deliveries associated with the activity, as items needed for the business are bought by the operator as part of the normal domestic shopping trip.
- 8.6. Therefore, the proposal should be acceptable under the terms of the 'Development Plan', as there is no traffic issue and therefore no reason to oppose the proposal upon its transportation effects (see such EBLP **Strategic policy S11** and **Policies DM13 & DM14**, as well as the 'HPS&S'/'RPSSPD').
- 8.7. **Heritage & Design** – there are a number of heritage assets in the immediate vicinity (which includes the 'Bursledon Windmill Conservation Area' and both statutorily and locally listed buildings) and Longcroft is aware of the sensitivity of this site in heritage terms.

The NPPF, especially Chapter 16 and EBLP **Strategic policy S8 & Policy DM12** are all relevant to the consideration of the proposal and there is also a statutory duty to consider the impact of any proposed development upon the setting of any designated heritage assets. The planning policies generally require respect to be given to the historic environment by new proposals and design should be mindful of the effect upon the setting of heritage assets (although, it is made clear in

the NPPF that *"not all elements of a Conservation Area.....will necessarily contribute to its significance"*, NPPF, paragraph 206).

According to the EBLP, new development “*will be permitted provided it does not harm or detract from the significance or special interest of the asset, and sustains and enhances its special character and qualities*”. As stated above, Longcroft cat hotels have been found to be acceptable in numerous previous cases where heritage and landscape sensitivity were considerations (see schedule at **Appendix 1**). This even includes the most sensitive locations, such as: conservation areas; adjoining listed buildings (in the case of the Applicant’s hotel at Winchmore Hill the structure was only 14 metres away from the listed building, as well as within the Chilterns’ AONB); the South Downs National Park; the Green Belt; as well as the open countryside.

- 8.8. Good design and “*the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve*” (NPPF, paragraph 126). However, paragraph 130 of the NPPF says that good design goes beyond just aesthetic considerations of a building’s appearance, but includes their ‘function’. The ‘Development Plan’ (see **EBLP Strategic policy S1**

and **Policy DM1**) also require the design of all new buildings to respect their context and surroundings, in relation to elements such as sustainability, height, scale, form, materials and waste management and to make efficient use of land.

- 8.9. The method of operation for a Longcroft cat hotel, including waste management arrangements have been explained in Section 5 above. The proposed building has been designed by a specialist manufacturer to provide maintenance free, high quality accommodation that is mindful of animal welfare (and is of a type

also used by animal protection charities). This means that the building has to have sufficient height to enable the cats to climb and exercise. In addition to considerations of animal welfare, Longcroft’s usual design parameters, such as dimensions and the materials used, are comparable with conventional domestic outbuildings (there were no

restrictions imposed upon outbuildings in the original outline planning permission for this house). For instance, the case officer in the previously mentioned Green Lane, Norbury application also *“considered that the design and in particular the materials chosen would be acceptable”* and noted that the requirements of the Council’s various design policies were met.

8.10. The NPPF and Development Plan policy (such as EBLP **Policies DM2 & DM3**) also require thought to be given to the energy performance, as well as the longevity and sustainability of the materials used in the construction. The uPVC (which is regularly used in domestic situations) is not only heat efficient, it also provides a much better environment for cats than timber, which is more traditionally used by established catteries. Unlike uPVC, timber does not endure well: it deteriorates quickly when exposed to the elements; is degraded through the cats scratching; is less hygienic, because it is prone to retaining odours; and more difficult to clean than uPVC. Furthermore, the fact that the structure used at the St Albans cat hotel since 2011 could be relocated to Sandridge and reassembled, nearly 10 years later, is a testament to the quality and durability of the materials Longcroft uses. As for lighting, low energy lamps with diffusers are to be used throughout the structure.

8.11. **Trees, Landscape & Biodiversity** - There are no TPOs on the subject site and there will be no loss of trees or hedges, arising as a consequence of this proposal. In this specific case the development is to be sited within the garden at the rear of the house and the new

Page 28 of 37

structure will not be visible from outside the site because of the strong belts of mature landscaping at the front, rear and sides of the plot. Thus, the terms of the Development Plan are satisfied in relation to landscaping and retention of hedges and trees.

8.12. In relation to the matter of *“Nature conservation”* (EBLP **Policy DM11**), the subject proposal does not increase population levels. Furthermore, the cats are kept within their rooms for their entire stay and so will not have an impact upon local biodiversity.

- 8.13. **Residential amenity** - There are now a number of Longcroft's franchises in operation across the country (see **Appendix 1** to this Statement), most of them within close proximity to other residential occupiers, and there has never been any complaint about their impact upon amenity. The few visits generated are only ever by appointment, during normal working hours and, as stated previously, there are no HGV deliveries.
- 8.14. In relation to other elements which could possibly have an effect upon local amenity (such as external lighting, smells, waste disposal or noise), there is also no issue. For instance, the attached acoustic report shows that there is no problem in relation to noise impact from siting a cat hotel even within a closely built-up residential area. There is no external lighting and the low-level internal lighting (which is set at the minimum level operationally necessary anyway) is switched off late at night; odours are controlled by the use of uPVC which is easy to clean; the small amount of waste is to be disposed of by means of an appointed contractor; and the uPVC acts to screen out any noise from within the accommodation.
- 8.15. As stated above at Section 2, there have never been any amenity issues surrounding a Longcroft cat hotel once it has opened and so the terms of the NPPF and the 'Development Plan' objectives and

Page 29 of 37

policies (such as EBLP **Policy DM8**) which seek to protect residential amenity and minimise any adverse external environmental impacts arising from non-residential uses are again fully met by the proposal. The case officers in the many other Longcroft cases (scheduled at **Appendix 1** to this Statement) have, likewise, agreed.

- 8.16. **Flood Risk** – the application land is not assessed as having an enhanced risk of flood from rivers (it is in 'Zone 1'), or from surface water (it is 'very low risk'). Thus, the proposal would also be compliant with the relevant Government policy in the NPPF (such as paragraphs 159 & 167, and EBLP **Policy DM5**).

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1. In the light of the above we **summarise** the position as follows:

- This application relates to the installation of a new outbuilding to provide short-term boarding accommodation of 7 rooms for cats, from a location which is accessible to shops and services, as well as to the population being served.
- The subject land is within the defined settlement of Bursledon and therefore within an area of the Borough where new development is generally to be directed.
- The site selected for the new cat hotel is not assessed as being at risk of flood from rivers or surface water and is at the rear of the dwelling. The proposed cat hotel will be well screened from public view by mature landscaping at the plot boundaries. No trees or hedges are lost as a consequence of this application and there is no impact upon biodiversity.
- The boarding accommodation will be a commercial activity, but will remain ancillary to the main use of the property as a dwelling. It will be operated by the house's current occupier. The Applicant

Page 30 of 37

is a successful company which has been rolling out its franchise across the country for over a decade.

- There are now an estimated 11 million cats in this country, yet only some 2,000 licensed catteries. As a result of regulations introduced in 2018 the number of existing facilities has declined further, as many of these existing outlets tended to be old, poorly maintained, and built from unsuitable materials (such as timber), which are difficult to maintain and keep clean. The recent Pandemic has exacerbated the problem with some catteries having gone out of business and failed to reopen after the 'lock-down'.
- The wider mismatch between demand and supply (there are deficiencies in both quality and quantity) has long been noted by the Applicant Company and the operation was started. There are now a number of the Longcroft cat hotel facilities in operation

across the country (see **Appendix 1** to this Statement), the planning authorities in each case concluding that the activity was compatible with the character of the area, even in the most sensitive locations (including within Conservation Areas, the Green Belt, National Parks/AONBs and the open countryside, as well as immediately adjoining listed buildings). Since these operations have commenced, there has been no history of any residential amenity problems, relating to such matters as noise, waste control, or odours.

- The proposed cat hotel has the design attributes of a normal domestic outbuilding. Notwithstanding its ‘domestic’ appearance, the proposed building is of a type used by the RSPCA and Blue Cross and so meets high standards of animal welfare.

Page 31 of 37

- As the new structure will be entirely screened from wider view, there is no harm to the setting of any heritage assets, or the wider landscape.
- Customer visitation will be only by appointment and during the hours of 9am - 5.30pm, Monday to Saturday. In terms of vehicle movements this equates to an average of one car per day stopping for ten minutes at a time. No outside staff members are employed, so there are no additional vehicle movements, or parking requirements and there are no deliveries.
- In terms of Central and Local Government policy, all development should consider the wider effect upon the core objective of achieving sustainability and according to the NPPF, the Planning System *“should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”* to facilitate this. Government policy seeks to promote the provision of new services in both urban and rural areas. Decision-making should be approached positively and enterprise (particularly that which enables flexibility and working from home, thereby reducing the need to travel); which introduces

new investment; and which improves community services; should generally be supported (see throughout the NPPF and the 'Development Plan').

9.2. As a consequence of the above we **conclude**:

- The application will provide a much-needed local service and assist in meeting a qualitative and quantitative shortfall.
- The activity is one that has been proved to cause no issue with residential amenity and has been found acceptable in urban and rural locations (including those would are considered to be highly 'sensitive').

Page 32 of 37

- In terms of the *"powerful new presumption in favour of sustainable development so that the default answer to development is 'yes'..."* (HM Treasury *"Plan for Growth"*), the proposal is clearly in accordance with Government policy promoting investment which generates wealth and employment.
- The proposal is also in accord with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, HM Treasury's *"Plan for Growth"* and the local 'Development Plan', Therefore, it is requested that this application be **granted**.

Appendix 1

Schedule of Existing Longcroft Cat Hotels

Town	Address	Opened
Welwyn Garden City	23 Longcroft Lane, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6EB	June 2010
St Albans •	38 Longacres, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 0DR (*)	April 2012
Winchmore Hill	Redcot, Whielden Lane, Winchmore Hill, Buckinghamshire HP7 0NQ	March 2014
Fontwell	Fairacres, Level Mare Lane, Eastergate, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 3SA	September 2014
Pamber Heath	2 Church Road, Pamber Heath, Hampshire RG26 3DP	October 2014
Braintree	217 Church Street, Bocking, Braintree, Essex, CM7 5LH	March 2015
Southport	23 Shaws Road, Birkdale, Southport, PR8 4LP	April 2015
Luton	12 Corncrake Close Luton Bedfordshire LU2 8EL	December 2015
Cole Green	73 Great Ganett, Welwyn, HERTS, AL7 3DB	March 2016

Romford	35 Hamlet Road, Romford, RM5 2DS	June 2016
Margate	18 Gresham Avenue, Westbrook, Margate CT9 5EH	May 2017
Norbury	157 Green Lane, Norbury, Greater London, NW16 3NA	July 2017
Barnet	64 Haslemere Avenue, East Barnet, London, EN4 8EU	July 2017
Liphook	78 Portsmouth Road, Liphook, GU30 7EF	December 2017
Croydon	36 Valley Road, Kenley, Greater London CR8 5BQ	June 2018
Letchworth	13 Field Lane, Letchworth, HERTS, SG6 3LF	March 2018
Chelmsford	32 Hill Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6HW	April 2018
Barry Island	54 Redbrink Crescent, Barry Island, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales, CF62 5TU	July 2018
Cuffley	33 Brookside Crescent, Cuffley, Hertfordshire, EN6 4QW	July 2018
Orpington	9 Forest Way, Orpington, BR5 2AG	July 2019
Sheffield	28a School Green Lane, Sheffield, S10 4GQ	August 2019

Orpington	9 Forest Way, Orpington, BR5 2AG	July 2019
Flitwick	46 Osprey Road, Flitwick, Bedford MK45 1RU	January 2020
Tring	46 Nathaniel Walk, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5DG	March 2020
Romsey	Pains Hill, New Barn Farm House, Romsey SO51 0JE	May 2020
Banbury	The Burrow, Merestone, Marston St Lawrence, Banbury OX17 2DB	December 2020
Bury St Edmunds	Parkfield, Drinkstone, Bury St Edmunds, Bury Saint Edmunds IP30 9SS	May 2021
Sandridge	35 St. Albans Rd, Sandridge, St Albans AL4 9LE	August 2021
Four Marks	12 Fairfield Green, Four Marks, East Hampshire GU34 5BL	October 2021
Walkern	1 Winters Lane, Walkern, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. SG2 7NZ	April 2023
Crowthorne	2 Lower Broadmoor Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire RG45 7HD	April 2023

- * The St Albans outlet closed in January 2021, upon the retirement of the franchisee, after having operated successfully for 9 years. The cat hotel building was re-sited at the new Sandridge outlet.

Notes:

- i. Until March 2019, Longcroft also had an outlet at Royston, but this ceased

Page 36 of 37

operating due to the franchisee deciding to leave the network for personal reasons.

- ii. It should also be noted that planning permissions were granted for cat hotels at Haywards Heath, because the activity was seen to be acceptable in planning terms. However, for business reasons, Longcroft decided not to establish permanent cat hotels in these locations at the present time.

