

Our Ref: SW/12458

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25th January 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

**CRAWLEY FOREST SCHOOL, BRIGHTON ROAD, PEASE POTTAGE,  
RH11 9AD**

I am writing to you to advise that the Home Office will shortly be submitting a planning application in relation to the Crawley Forest School site at Brighton Road, Pease Pottage (location plan enclosed).

The purpose of writing to you is to provide some information about the requirement for the proposed use and the use itself. I would also like to provide the opportunity for you to comment and raise any queries on the proposal.

The site currently operates as a residential school for children with behavioural and learning difficulties. The school has the ability to accommodate up to 35 residential pupils plus 35 day pupils, however it has never been fully utilised since its opening in September 2009 and currently only 8 residential pupils are accommodated at the site making it unviable. The children will be relocated to alternative school accommodation for the start of the Summer term.

The planning application will be for a change of use of the site to a Pre-Departure Accommodation facility for use by the UK Border Agency.

One of the Coalition Governments policies is to end the detention of children for immigration purposes by 11th May 2011. This policy has led to the recent closure of the family facilities at Immigration Removal Centres at Dungavel House and Yarl's Wood and the pending closure of the Tinsley House family unit for all but exceptional cases. However, the need remains to provide a suitable facility to accommodate families, whose removal from the UK is being enforced where they have failed to accept various opportunities to leave voluntarily or to comply with the returns process. The new Pre-Departure Accommodation provides that solution.

The facility would only house families with children who have been referred to it by a new Independent Family Returns Panel being established by the UK Border Agency. The Panel will ensure the Agency's plans to return individual families take full account of the welfare of

children. Families would be accommodated for a maximum of 72 hours, before being taken to a departure airport. In exceptional cases they might be held for up to one week but linked to a specific date when they will leave the UK.

This site has been chosen due to its location in the South East, being close to Gatwick/Heathrow, and its suitability to provide the amount of internal and external space required to support up to 8 families of up to 6 persons at any one time. Very importantly, the buildings and the grounds support the UK Border Agency's desire create a facility which provides a more family-friendly environment, where they are afforded privacy and independence.

Families would be accommodated in self contained units, consisting of living, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom spaces. Staff, healthcare, social and welfare facilities would also be provided to meet the needs of the families during their stay at the facility, helping them to prepare for leaving the UK. Part of the existing expansive gardens and the outdoor sports facilities would also be available for the residents' use.

An existing 2.5m palisade fence surrounds the site's boundary with electronic entrance gates and there is no requirement to alter this boundary treatment. Staffing levels, their expertise and the environment of the accommodation would provide the appropriate security for the facility. Children will be permitted to leave the facility for short periods such as to visit the shops or cinema, subject to a risk assessment and suitable adult supervision to ensure their safe-guarding and welfare are protected.

The facility would be operational 24 hours a day, as is the current use of the site. The traffic levels associated with the proposed use are not expected to exceed those of the current use if fully utilised. Movements would include the transportation of the families, staff and visitors to and from the site.

The facility will be run on a care model rather than a secure one, supported by a third sector organisation. In short, it will look and feel very different to the UK Border Agency's immigration removal centres.

As previously mentioned, the timescales for having the facility up and running are critical due to the closure of the previous facilities and the Government's policy timeframe. It is therefore important that the new facility at Crawley Forest School is operational by the 11th May 2011. Considering the internal works required to the building, and the necessity for a planning application for the change of use to be secured, preferably prior to the works starting, we need to submit an application as soon as possible i.e. by the end of January 2011.

We are keen to work with the public, local Members, Parish Council's, as well as Council officers, to ensure that any issues and concerns are dealt with satisfactorily and that the planning process operates smoothly. To this end we have already had discussions with Mid Sussex planners and County highways officers and at the same time as writing to you will also write to the local Councillors and the Parish Council.

I appreciate the short timescale for considering and dealing with this matter however I would welcome any comments you may have on the proposal and would be happy to answer any queries.

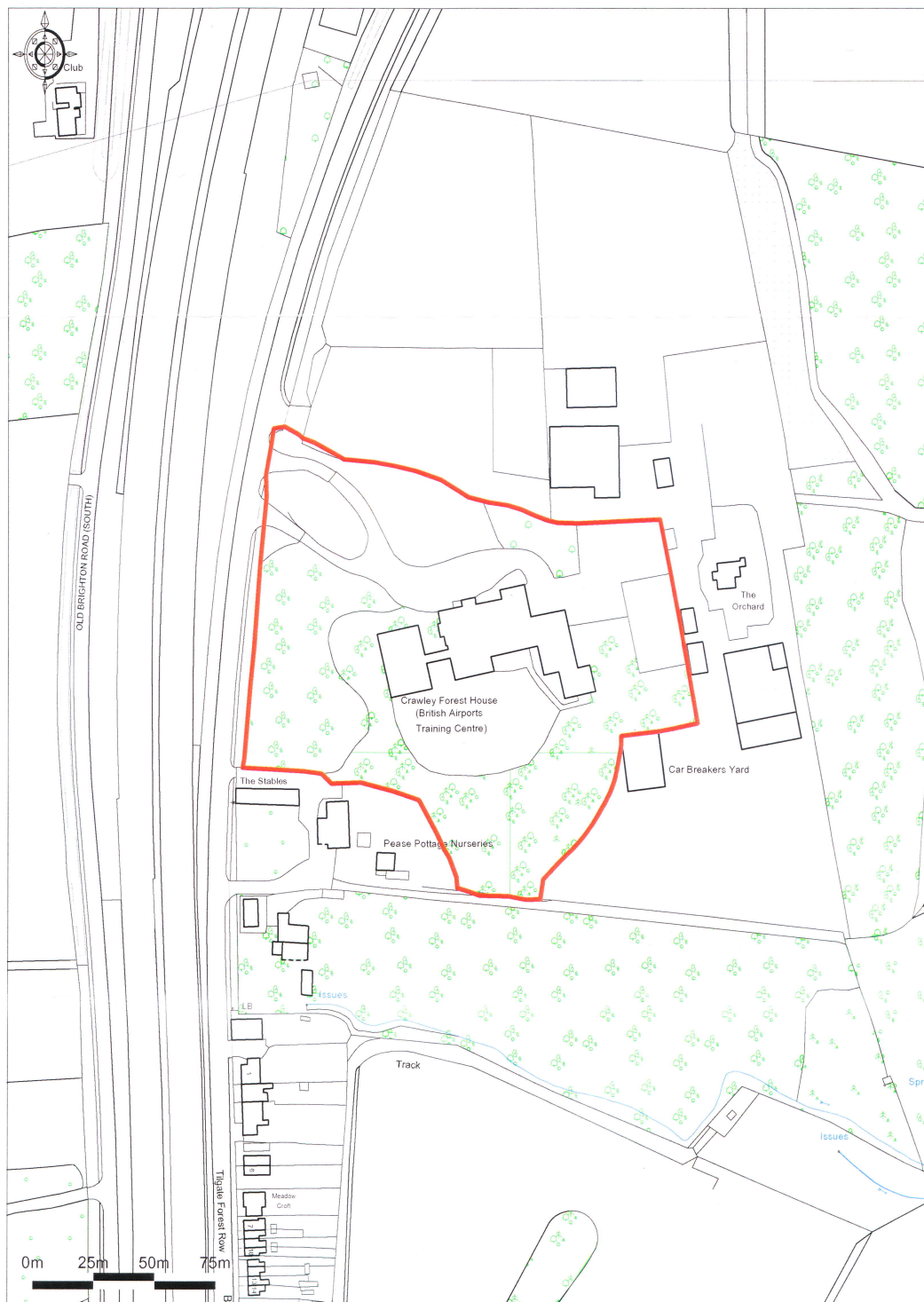
Yours sincerely



**Suzy Wilson**  
**Associate Director**



CRAWLEY FOREST SCHOOL, BRIGHTON ROAD, PEASE POTTAGE, RH11 9AD



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LOCATION PLAN - SW/12458