

Planning Statement

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING STABLES BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTON OF ONE DWELLING

LAND AT WHINNEY DENE, WEST FIELD LANE, WOOLDALE, HOLMFIRTH, HD9 1RD

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the demolition of a substantial stables building and the construction of a single dwelling. The proposal comprises the redevelopment of previously developed land in the Green Belt that would not cause substantial harm to openness. As such, the proposal is a type of development that is not inappropriate within the Green Belt and accords with both the NPPF and Local Plan policy.

Furthermore, the new dwelling has been sensitively designed in order to respect and reflect the rural landscape setting of the site.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the supporting plans supplied by Neil Bowen Architecture which demonstrate the credentials of the scheme in more detail. It is anticipated that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will adopt a progressive approach to this sustainable scheme.

This statement now proceeds to give details of the site. The details of the proposal are then set out. The planning merits of the scheme are then discussed in relation to relevant planning policies contained in the statutory development plan, together with Government guidance principally set out in the NPPF. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the proposal would result in a sustainable form of development, would not harm highway safety or efficiency, would not harm the character of the area and would sufficiently protect neighbouring living conditions. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on ecological assets. Significantly, the proposed development is of a type that is suitable in the Green Belt. Finally, the conclusion is reached that planning permission should be granted for the proposed development.

2.0 THE SITE

The application site comprises of a paddock that contains an equestrian stable block, yard and grassland. The site lies immediately to the north of the existing dwelling house at Winnie Dene. The house and stables plots are in common ownership, but there is no planning tie between the two.

The site lies to the northern side of West Field Lane, a short distance to the east of east of Holmfirth and south of Wooldale.

The existing stables buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and have been used for many years for the keeping of horses.

The site lies within the Green Belt.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing stables building and the construction of a single dwelling house. The key elements of the proposal are as follows:

- The scheme comprises the redevelopment of previously developed land that would not cause substantial harm to Green Belt openness.
- The position and arrangement of the proposed dwelling reflects the position and L-shaped arrangement of the existing stables block.
- The height of the new dwelling has been limited to single storey, and the form and materials are reflective of the rural landscape setting.
- The dwelling would provide a high standard of housing environment for future occupiers, having well-proportioned rooms with excellent levels of outlook and natural light.
- The size and position of the new dwelling would cause no harm to the amenity of occupiers of any existing dwellings.
- Garden and parking spaces would be confined to areas that are already in regular use as part of the established equestrian activities, and would have no adverse landscape or openness impacts.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history for the application site or the neighbouring dwelling at Whinney Dene. Aerial photos do, however, demonstrate that the existing stables block and the equestrian use has existed since at least 2001. As such, the existing buildings and use are clearly lawful and well-established.

Planning application 2023/92276 approved a new stables building in a field a short distance to the north of the application site. The supporting information with the approved application explained that the applicant had had use of the stables at the current application site for 20 years. However, due to a change in circumstances, this was no longer the case. The new stables were, therefore, to provide alternative stabling for the 6 horses that were previously kept at the current application site. The new stables have now been constructed. The new stables were approved on the basis of being additional to the existing stable block at the current application site, and there was no requirement to remove of cease the use of the current stables as part of the 2023 permission.

5.0 ALLOCATION AND POLICIES

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Development Plan consists of the Kirklees Local Plan

Material considerations exist in the form of national policy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as updated in July 2021 and the suite of documents comprising National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Allocations

The site lies within the Green Belt as identified under the development plan.

National

The NPPF is reflective of the guidance contained within the NPPG. The following sections of the revised NPPF are considered of direct relevance to the current proposal:

- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 - Decision-making
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The overarching message of the NPPF is that LPAs should adopt a positive and pro-active approach to planning proposals, particularly those that result in sustainable development. LPAs should not place unnecessary burdens on developers and should look to support appropriate schemes such as this.

Kirklees Local Plan

The following policies are considered of relevance:

LP1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
LP9 – Location of new development
LP20 – Sustainable travel
LP21 – Highways and access
LP24 – Design
LP30 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity
LP32 – Landscape
LP59 – Brownfield sites in the Green Belt

Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan

The following policies are considered of relevance:

Policy 1 – Protecting and Enhancing the Landscape Character of Holme
Policy 2 – Protecting and Enhancing the Built Character of the Holme and Promoting High Quality Design
Policy 11 – Improving Transport, Accessibility and Local Infrastructure
Policy 12 - Promoting Sustainability
Policy 13 – Protecting Wildlife and Securing Biodiversity Net Gain

6.0 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development / Green Belt

The revised NPPF is a crucial part of the Government's overarching agenda of delivering 1.5m new homes during this parliament. This is a central pillar of the 2024 election pledge and is a response to the well-publicised UK housing crisis. The NPPF places great importance on housing delivery across the UK and is accompanied by recent press releases ("back the builder's, not the blocker's") and written ministerial statements. All of these place heavy emphasis on the need to reform the planning system so that developments, most notably housing developments, can be delivered as quickly as possible.

The proposed level of housing that is expected to be delivered is extremely ambitious. To put it into context, the UK has not got close to delivering the amount of housing now proposed for over 45 years.

Applications for housing developments need to be viewed in this context and supported wherever possible.

One of the most significant changes in the revised NPPF in respect of Green Belt policy is the clear and deliberate loosening of restrictions on the redevelopment of previously developed land.

Under the last iteration of the NPPF, the redevelopment of previously developed land was not inappropriate providing that it would not have any greater impact on openness. This like-for-like requirement has now been abolished. Instead. Paragraph 154 part (g) now allows for the redevelopment of previously developed land which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Due to the change in the threshold of appropriateness for redevelopment of previously developed land in the revised NPPF, the requirement set out in local plan policy LP59 for the extent of the existing footprint to not be exceeded is now out of date.

Substantial harm is a deliberately high threshold. There can be no doubt that the change in this respect has been made in order to allow for more housing development on previously developed sites in the Green Belt. There is no longer any policy requirement for arbitrary volumetric calculations between the existing and proposed developments. A new development that is larger than the existing development is policy compliant up until the point where the substantial harm threshold is crossed.

In this instance, the proposed dwelling is larger than the existing stables, but follows a similar layout and form. There would be a marginal impact on openness through the footprint of the new building being larger, but the impact of this would be moderate rather than substantial.

The single storey height of the proposed building would limit the visual impact on openness. The new dwelling would be seen in conjunction with the existing dwelling at Whinney Dene, and would be set against the rising topography of the site and the land to the west. The site already has the appearance of an enclosed and developed area, distinct from the surrounding open fields. The proposed dwelling would be largely visually contained and would not unacceptably impact the function and purpose of the Green Belt.

The images below taken from the east of the site show that the existing bungalow, two stables buildings and garage already form a visually continuous block of built form, despite being four separate buildings:





Because of this, although the new dwelling is larger than the exiting stables block, the visual impact of it will not be significantly different.

As such, whilst there would also be some additional impact on visual openness, this would also be moderate, and not substantial.

Overall, taking into account both spatial and visual considerations, the impact of the development on Green Belt openness would be moderate. This is, therefore, an acceptable form of redevelopment as it would not cause substantial harm to openness.

A number of recent and relevant appeal decisions confirms that the assessment of the impact on openness as set out above is sound.

Appeal reference APP/J1535/W/24/3345568 considered the issue of whether substantial harm to Green Belt openness would be caused by the introduction of a dwelling house on a site that does not contain any existing buildings. The Inspector noted:

“The site is largely devoid of any buildings or structures, but includes an area of hardstanding comprising the foundations of the former building and is enclosed by timber fences. Consequently, any new buildings would have a significantly greater impact on the spatial openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. Nevertheless, the single-

storey dwelling would have a modest footprint and would have a low ridge height. Whilst the dwelling be more visible than the existing development at the site, the presence of the neighbouring properties and the established hedgerow to the rear of the site would limit the visual effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

The dwelling would be located within the context of the surrounding development, which is enclosed from the surrounding open fields by a hedgerow and mature trees. While the development would be visible from outside the site, the proposal would be largely visually contained and would not unacceptably impact the function and purpose of the Green Belt. Accordingly, although the proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt, the adverse effects would be moderate. The proposal would therefore accord with Paragraph 154 g) of the Framework."

Bearing in mind that this was for a site that did not contain any existing buildings, there is clearly scope for replacing the existing buildings at the current application site without resulting in substantial harm to openness.

On a larger scale, appeal reference APP/N0410/W/24/3348677 considered whether 95 assisted living units and a 75-bed care home on a sports pitches site would result in substantial harm to openness. The Inspector acknowledged that there was no doubt that the proposed development would have a greater impact on openness than the existing situation, but stressed that, following the December 2024 changes to the NPPF, the new criterion is that it should not cause substantial harm to openness, rather than having no greater impact on Green Belt openness. In considering whether the substantial harm threshold would be breached, the Inspector noted that:

"The scheme would appear well-contained within the wider Wilton Park site. The A355 with its roundabouts and adjacent bund provides a very clear dividing line between the appeal site and the countryside. The appeal scheme's perceived effect on openness would therefore not be that of a new development encroaching into open countryside.

The layout of the scheme, consisting of five residential blocks enclosing a landscaped courtyard, residents' lounge and access, would be compact rather than sprawling. The

traditionally designed buildings of two, three and four storeys, though taller and more extensive than the terraced houses, would still be of relatively modest height. Their varied architectural form and concealed flat roofs would help to limit their visual bulk and hence their impact on openness.

Views of the scheme would be most evident from the A355, from north and south of the site. However, the impact on openness would be contained; blocks of woodland limit longer views of the site. The effect of the scheme on openness from these positions would be moderate.

The scheme would have some effect on openness when seen from within Wilton Park to the east, but this would be limited by planting within the proposed parkland. In any case, the site would clearly be perceived as connected with the overall development of Wilton Park. Again, the impact here would only be moderate."

These decisions clearly reflect the significance of the changes to the NPPF in respect of proposals that are appropriate in the Green Belt provided they do not result in substantial harm to openness, and the high threshold that substantial harm entails.

The proposal is an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt as defined by paragraph 154 (g) of the NPPF, and fully complies with local plan policy LP59 in so far as that policy remains up to date. The principle of development is wholly acceptable and policy compliant.

Sustainability

The proposed dwelling would not be an isolated new home as it would be sited immediately adjacent to the existing dwelling at Whinney Dene. Furthermore, the site is only a short distance from the existing dwellings that line Winney Bank Lane and Wooldale Road, forming the edge of the built-up settlement of Wooldale village. Wooldale contains a good range of village amenities that are within easy walking / cycling distance of the application site. The wider range of services and facilities within Holmfirth are also easily accessible. As such, future residents will have good accessibility to community facilities and amenities, without reliance on private car use. The site is a suitable and sustainable location for one

additional dwelling, and the proposal fully accords with the LPA's adopted spatial strategy in this respect.

Design and Landscape

The proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to reflect and respect the rural landscape setting of the site. The single storey height, narrow gables, L-shaped form and materials all reference the existing stables / agricultural outbuilding that would typically be found in this landscape setting. The external materials are highly recessive and would integrate into the surrounding landscape whilst also not dominating the existing dwelling at Whinney Dene.

The application site is within Landscape Character Area 8 - Settled Slopes of the Holme Valley. Key landscape characteristics of the area are:

- Strong rural and agricultural character with pastoral farmland on the rising valley slopes.
- There is a strong connection to the surrounding rural landscape from long distance and panoramic views over the wooded valley floor to the opposing valley sides as well as glimpsed views of the rural backdrop through gaps between the built form, especially within Totties and Scholes.
- Stone walls and hedgerows form field boundaries and line single lane roads.
- Short sections of the Kirklees Way, the Barnsley Boundary Walk and the Holme Valley Circular Walk cross the area. A short section of National Cycle Route no. 627 also crosses the north-east of the area.

The identified key built characteristic of the area includes farmsteads on the valley slopes.

Whilst the site would no longer be in equestrian use, the development would retain the sense of house (Whinney Dene) and agricultural / equestrian outbuilding (proposed dwelling), thereby retaining and respecting the appearance of the identified characteristics a farmstead set on the valley slopes. The open land that already warps around the built areas

of the site would be entirely retained, and the agricultural character would be unchanged. The proposal works with and preserves the identified key characteristics of the landscape area.

The proposed building would form an appropriate piece of rural architecture that would relate well to its surroundings and would not appear in any way discordant. The proposal would respect and preserve the landscape character of the surrounding area, and is fully complaint with policies LP24 and LP32 of the Local Plan, Policies 1 and 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and section 12 of the NPPF.

Transport and Accessibility

The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing access point that serves the existing dwelling at Whinney Dene and the existing stables. Parking for the new dwelling is to be provided within an existing detached garage, with parking for Whinney Dene to the western side of the existing dwelling as per the existing arrangement.

As noted further above, whilst Whinney Dene and the application site have historically been in common ownership, there is nothing that ties the two sites legally or in planning terms. Whinney Dene is currently vacant, and the management of the stables is carried out by persons who do not reside at the application site. This generates numerous trips to and from the stables each day in order to tend to the horses that are kept on the site, as well as additional vehicle trips for deliveries, vets' visits, horse box transport etc.

Even if Whinney Dene was to be occupied again, there is nothing to stop the stables being let or sold to someone with no connection to the host dwelling. This situation would generate traffic movements to and from the existing dwelling, plus all the existing traffic for the stables as set out above.

Rather than traffic being generated by the existing dwelling plus the existing equestrian use, the proposal would see traffic being generated by two dwelling houses. It is highly likely that

the traffic generated by the proposed two-bedroom dwelling would be significantly less than the existing equestrian use. This would result in a reduction in the use of the shared access point, and the surrounding highways network, in comparison to the established situation.

Given this reduction in traffic generation, along with the suitable parking and turning provision for the new and existing dwellings, the proposal would not be detrimental to highways safety and efficiency. The proposal fully accords with national and local policy in this regard.

Residential Amenity

The single storey scale and the position of the proposed dwelling would ensure no overbearing impacts to or overshadowing of the existing dwelling at Whinney Dene. The window arrangement would ensure the outlook from the new dwelling is onto its garden space, and there would be no overlooking between the two properties.

The separation distance to the other existing dwellings in the locality is about 100m, and would ensure no adverse amenity impacts.

The proposed dwelling would deliver a very high standard of housing amenity for future occupiers, with no harmful impacts to residents of any existing dwellings. The proposal is fully policy compliant in this regard.

Ecology

The existing buildings are modern stables buildings that are in everyday use for the keeping of horses. They have open span roofs, and the construction and use of the buildings mean they provide no habitat opportunities for roosting bats or nesting birds. The external areas are a yard and. There would be no adverse impact

The development is a self-build project, and is therefore exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

The proposal is fully policy complaint in this respect.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed scheme represents a sustainable form of development that would not have any unacceptable impact for the reasons set out above.

The proposal would deliver a much needed and good quality new home, in a manner that is fully compliant with Green Belt policy. The proposal would have no adverse impact in respect of visual, amenity, highways and environmental considerations.

The proposal is fully policy compliant.

The Applicant is willing to discuss any issues that may arise during the consideration of the proposal with the LPA.