



Planning Statement

DEMOLITION OF CATTERY BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF A REPLACEMENT BUILDING TO PROVIDE SELF-STORAGE UNITS

OLDFIELD ROAD FARM, OLDFIELD, HONLEY, HD9 6RL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the demolition of an existing cattery building and the construction of a replacement building that will provide self-storage units.

The cattery is part of the rural business diversification activities at Oldfield Road, along with an existing self-storage building. Whilst the self-storage building is successful and provides a vital additional income stream for the farm business, the viability of the cattery has dwindled in recent years. This has prompted the current project to replace the cattery with a second self-storage building.

The proposed building occupies a similar footprint to the existing cattery building and is of appropriate scale and appearance for this farmstead within the agricultural landscape.

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.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the supporting plans supplied by Hinchliffe Architecture & Design 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 lies at the southern end of the wider Oldfield Road Farm complex. The farm comprises some 160 acres and is primarily a cattle rearing operation. The farm comprises a series of farm buildings. There are also two buildings that are under the control of the wider farm business, but that are in non-agricultural use as part of farm diversification projects. These are a large building within the centre of the site that is used for self-storage following the grant of planning permission in 2023, and a cattery building close to the site frontage with Oldfield Road. The current application relates specifically to the part of the site that is occupied by the cattery building.

The site is located within the Green Belt. Oldfield Road is characterised by dispersed development along either side of the road, with open fields forming an agricultural landscape beyond. The site is not within the Oldfield Conservation Area.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing cattery building and the construction of a replacement building to be used for additional self-storage units. 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 proposed building occupies a similar position within the site to the existing cattery building.
- Whilst the proposed building has a larger floor area, this is primarily achieved by replacing a L-shaped building with a rectangular building. The proposed building only extends marginally beyond the footprint of the existing building to the side and rear. The height is also only marginally increased.
- As is the case now, the proposed building would be part and parcel of the wider building group and would also continue to be well screened by the mature planting to the site frontage.
- Additional landscape planting is also proposed to deliver BNG enhancement and to provide further visual enhancement.
- The new building is of an appropriate agricultural design that fully reflects the rural landscape setting of the site. It would be an entirely comfortable addition to the existing group of similar buildings.
- The new building would operate as an extension to the well-established and successful self-storage operation that already operates from the wider site and that provides an essential revenue stream for the farm business.
- The existing self-storage units are typically visited very infrequently, whereas the cattery requires more frequent customer visits for drop offs and collections. As such, there is likely to be a reduction in traffic movements to and from the site.
- The existing self-storage operation is quiet by its nature, and operates without causing harm to any surrounding third-party properties.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The relevant planning history for the site comprises of:

- 2023/90990 Change of use of and external alterations to agricultural building and stables/livery yard to Class B8 Self-Storage units. Application approved 30 June 2023.
- 2013/91208 Erection of single storey timber building for use as a cattery and associated engineering works. Application approved 10 June 2013.

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 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- 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 – Achieving sustainable development
- LP2 – Place Shaping
- LP7 – Efficient Use of Land and Buildings
- LP10 – Supporting the Rural Economy
- LP21 – Highway safety
- LP22 – Parking
- LP24 – Design
- LP52 – Improvement and Protection of Environmental Quality

Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan

The following policies are considered of relevance:

Policy 1 – Protecting and Enhancing the Landscape Character of Holme Valley

Policy 2 – Protecting and Enhancing the Built Character of the Holme and Promoting High Quality Design

Policy 7 – Supporting Economic Activity

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

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 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 building is larger than the existing cattery building. However, it occupies the same position within the site, and this is very well contained by virtue of being located in between the road and the other existing farm buildings.

In addition, whilst the proposed building is larger, it would only project marginally further to the north east and north west than the existing building. The majority of the additional floor space is derived from the replacement of an L-shaped building with a rectangular building,

rather than any significant expansion beyond the extremities of the existing building. Whilst the height is also to be increased, the eaves height of the proposed building is similar to the flat roof of the existing building. As such, the additional height takes the form of a shallow pitched roof, that increases in height as it slopes away from the site frontage.

The existing building is very well screened by the mature planting that forms the site boundary with Oldfield Road. This is to be retained and added to, and it will continue to provide effective screening.

The site already has the appearance of an enclosed and developed area, distinct from the surrounding open fields. The proposed building would be largely visually contained and would not unacceptably impact the function and purpose of the Green Belt.

Taking into account the very well contained nature of the site, the close proximity to the existing and much larger buildings, the similarities in the building footprints and the effective screening, the additional size of the proposed building in comparison to the existing would only have a marginal impact on Green Belt openness. This impact would be well below the substantial harm threshold.

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.

Self-storage Use

As noted above, there is already a self-service operation that provides vital additional income for the main farm business through appropriate diversification. The proposed additional storage units would represent the sustainable and appropriate expansion of the existing self-storage operation in order to provide additional support to the main farm business. Policy LP10 supports farm diversification where the proposal would not adversely affect the management and viability of any farm holding. As the proposed building replaces

another farm diversification use in the form of the cattery, albeit one that is no longer viable, it would clearly not adversely affect the management and viability of the farm holding through the loss of space that is essential to the main farming activities. Self-storage has already been found to be an acceptable form of farm diversification at this site through the approval of the 2023 application, and this conclusion remains fully relevant and applicable now. The proposal is fully in accordance with policy LP10.

Design and Landscape

The existing cattery building is modern, having been built following the grant of planning permission in 2013. As such, it is not a building that is of any historic merit. There would be no visual harm through the demolition of the existing building.

The proposed building has been carefully designed to reflect and respect the rural landscape setting of the site. It is of typical agricultural form, materials and appearance, and would be entirely in keeping with the appearance of the existing building group and the character of the locality.

The proposal would respect and preserve the landscape character of the surrounding area and is fully compliant 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 storage units would utilise the existing access that serves the cattery. Whilst the cattery has become unviable due to increased operating costs, it has nevertheless remained busy.

The cattery turns over at a much faster rate than the existing self-storage units within the wider site. The cattery building contains 20 bays, with each one generating a collection and drop off every week or weekend. The proposed building would provide 14 storage units. The existing storage units are usually let by the same customer for several weeks or months at a

time. Other than initial drop offs and final collections to empty the units, they are typically visited infrequently in between times. As such, 20 cattery bays generate a much higher volume of trip rates than 14 self-storage units. On this basis, the proposal would cause no material increase in traffic generated by the site. In fact, there is likely to be a significant reduction.

Residential Amenity

The scale and the position of the proposed building would have no overbearing or overshadowing impacts on any neighbouring property. Furthermore, the self-storage use is quiet and low intensity. The existing self-storage units demonstrate that this is a use type that causes no adverse impacts. The existing units are subject to a condition restricting opening hours, and this can be carried over to the proposed units. Outside of these hours, the storage use generates no noise, activity or disturbance whatsoever. The proposal is fully policy compliant in this regard.

Ecology

The existing cattery is a modern flat roof building that is in daily use. It is a building type that offers no habitat potential for birds or bats, and there would be no harm to ecology interests through its removal.

A BNG metric and proposed landscaping scheme have been provided in order to demonstrate an improvement to the habitat value of the site of over 10%.

The proposal is fully policy compliant 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 an appropriate form of farm diversification, 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.