

**2024/0782**

Mr and Mrs Senior

Change of use of buildings from a mixed use of cattery and agriculture to a mixed use of cattery, equestrian stables, winter caravan storage, domestic storage and honey extraction including processing and jarring

Coniston Farm, Coniston Avenue, Staincross, Barnsley, S75 5BB

### **Background**

B/99/0606/DT - Change of use of agricultural buildings for use as cattery - Approved  
2023/0796 Demolition of existing buildings and construction of 5no. dwellings – Withdrawn  
2022/0886 Demolition of existing buildings and construction of 6no. dwellings – Withdrawn

### **Description**

Coniston farm consists of series of large agricultural outbuildings that have been used for agricultural purposes and a cattery business, which was given planning permission in 2000. The site is no longer used as a working farm and as well as the cattery, the applicant also manages as apiary on the farmland which produces honey which is sold through local retailers. The honey jarring currently takes place within the farmhouse adjacent to the farm buildings.

The site is set within the Green Belt, on the outskirts of the village of Staincross. The site is accessed directly from Coniston Avenue which consists of mainly semi-detached dwellings. The buildings on site appear to be in a good structural condition.





### Proposed Development

Full planning permission is sought for a change of use of the existing agricultural buildings at Coniston Farm from a mix of agricultural and cattery uses to a mix use comprising, cattery, stables, honey extraction, processing and jarring, domestic storage and winter caravan storage. No external alterations are proposed and no changes are proposed to the access and parking areas.



The agent has provided the following further information:-

'The application proposes a mix of beneficial but low-key uses that are compatible with the character and function of the site and the surrounding area for a mix of private and commercial uses. The already established cattery use is to be retained. In addition, the applicant manages an existing apiary within the farm. At the moment, all honey extraction, processing and jarring has to be carried out within the farm house due to a lack of alternative space. It is proposed to use two of the existing agricultural buildings to carry out these functions. This will not represent any material increase in the scale of the bee keeping or honey production activities but will simply provide a suitable and dedicated space for these operations.

The proposal also includes the return of a former stables building to stables to be used for the keeping of horses by the applicant. This would be for private use, and not a commercial operation. One building is also proposed to become domestic storage space for the occupiers of the farm house.

Finally, two adjoining buildings are to be used for winter caravan storage. This would provide a secure and sheltered storage facility for caravan owners to use during winter months when caravan use is typically reduced. The caravan storage would operate on a 'for the season' basis whereby caravans are parked up at the start of winter, and removed in early spring. Once parked, caravans would not leave in between times and, as such, the actual activity of moving caravans to and from the site will be minimal.

The existing cattery use is to remain unaltered.'

## **Policy Context**

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is also now accompanied by seven masterplan frameworks which apply to the largest site allocations (housing, employment, and mixed-use sites). In addition, the Council has adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans which provide supporting guidance and specific local policies and are a material consideration in the decision-making process.

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances, require it.

## **Local Plan Policies**

The site is allocated as in the Green Belt in the Local Plan where GB1 applies, protecting the Green Belt in accordance with National Planning Policy.

### **Policy GB3: Changes of use in the Green Belt**

We will allow the change of use or conversion of buildings in the Green Belt provided that:

- The existing building is of a form, scale and design that is in keeping with its surroundings;
- The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction for the proposed new use;

-The proposed new use is in keeping with the local character and the appearance of the building; and  
-The loss of any building from agricultural use will not give rise to the need for a replacement agricultural building, except in cases where the existing building is no longer capable of agricultural use.

All such development will be expected to:

- Be of a high standard of design and respect the character of the existing building and its surroundings, in its footprint, scale and massing, elevation design and materials;
- Have no adverse effect on the amenity of local residents, the visual amenity of the area, or
- highway safety; and
- Preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

The following policies are also of relevance:-

Policy E6 Economic development in rural areas  
Policy D1 High quality design and place making  
Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
Policy T4 New Development and Transport Safety

Supplementary Planning Document – Barn Conversions  
Supplementary Planning Document – Parking

### NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Para 155 is of relevance to this proposal and states that:-

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- a) mineral extraction;
- b) engineering operations;
- c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order

## **Consultations**

Highways – No objections

Pollution Control – No objections

Ward Cllrs – Cllr Hunt - I am supportive of the application as any harm to the green belt will be minimal due to use of existing agricultural buildings for activities which are in keeping with the location.

## **Representations**

The applications have been advertised by way of neighbour notification letters and site notice, no representations have been received.

## **Assessment**

### Principle of development

Coniston Farm is set within the Green Belt as allocated on the adopted Barnsley Local Plan where inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful and should not be allowed except in very special circumstances.

In terms of the change of use development within the Green Belt, para 155 of the NPPF states that 'certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include;

d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

Local Plan Policy GB3 also allows for changes of use to existing buildings in the Green Belt, subject to the various criteria. The policy states that:

We will allow the change of use or conversion of buildings in the Green Belt provided that:

- The existing building is of a form, scale and design that is in keeping with its surroundings;
- The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey
- demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction for the proposed new use;
- The proposed new use is in keeping with the local character and the appearance of the building; and
- The loss of any building from agricultural use will not give rise to the need for a replacement agricultural building, except in cases where the existing building is no longer capable of agricultural use.

All such development will be expected to:

- Be of a high standard of design and respect the character of the existing building and its surroundings, in its footprint, scale and massing, elevation design and materials;
- Have no adverse effect on the amenity of local residents, the visual amenity of the area, or
- highway safety; and
- Preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Policy GB3 of the Local Plan requires that the existing building to be converted is of a 'permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction for the proposed new use'.

The existing agricultural buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction and do not require any alterations to facilitate the proposed change of uses. The buildings on site will therefore still appear as agricultural buildings. The supporting information indicates that the agricultural use has reduced to such an extent that the site could no longer be considered to be a working farm and the applicant has continued to operate an established cattery as well as an apiary with associated honey extraction. As such, the replacement of the buildings for further agricultural uses will not be required.

In addition to the above, policy E6 is supportive of economic development in rural areas if it:

- Supports the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy;
- Results in the growth of existing businesses;
- Is related to tourism or recreation; or
- Improves the range and quality of local services in existing settlements.

In terms of policy E6, the proposed caravan storage element of the scheme would allow a maximum of 10 touring caravans to be parked in a secure and sheltered environment through the winter months. The agent has indicated that this is a low-key use that would generate a reliable diversification income from two of the existing buildings.

The applicant has also established a successful apiary on the farmland. The bee keeping operation produces honey that is sold through local retailers. The extraction of honey from hives, processing and jarring all takes place in the farmhouse at the moment, with there being no dedicated space for this function. The proposal therefore also includes the change of use from an agricultural use to allow for dedicated space for the extraction, processing and jarring of honey and would greatly improve the efficiency of the business and will result in the growth of the business.

The proposed equestrian stables use and domestic storage uses are solely for private use by the residents of the farm house. The stables will be used to keep two horses that will graze the associated farm land and the domestic storage would be to allow for the storage of domestic paraphernalia including bikes, tools, gardening equipment, decorating supplies etc. Given that the site no longer has an agricultural use, the change of use to domestic storage is acceptable, given the range of uses on the site and as the existing dwelling is in close proximity to the site. In addition, the equestrian use is acceptable as an outdoor sports/recreational use within the Green Belt.

Other matters such as ecology, visual amenity, residential amenity and highway safety are assessed below.

#### Visual amenity and Openness

In considering the impact on openness and visual amenity, Policy GB3 states that:- proposals should be of a high standard of design and respect the character of the existing building and

its surroundings, in its footprint, scale and massing, elevation design and materials, and must preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The existing buildings are all of permanent and substantial construction. The agent has confirmed that there would be no requirement for any physical works to any of the existing buildings.

The stored caravans will be enclosed within the existing buildings and the honey extraction and processing will be carried out within the existing buildings so will have no visual impact from outside of the site. The stabling of horses is in keeping with the rural landscape and there would be no visual impact of keeping domestic paraphernalia as it would be stored within the existing buildings. A condition should be included to state that all caravans must be stored within the buildings shown on the approved site plan and there should be no outdoor storage of caravans at any time, in order to protect the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

Based on the above, there would not be a significant impact on openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and the visual amenity of this site in compliance with Local Plan Policies GB1, GB3 and the NPPF.

#### Residential amenity

The site is well separated from other separate residential properties. Whilst the scheme proposes a series of different uses, cumulatively the uses will be less intensive than the established agricultural activity and its potential for 24hr operation. The cattery and apiary/honey business are already in operation at the site and the equestrian stables are to be for personal use only. A condition should be included stating that the equestrian use shall only be used for domestic purposes in connection with Coniston Farm and not in relation to any business or commercial activity which will require the separate express consent of the Planning Authority.

The main concern would be the proposed caravan storage and potential increased activity from this use; however it is anticipated that the caravan storage would only generate 20 towing trips per year. The timings of these trips would be managed through a booking system so there would never be more than one caravan accessing or leaving the site at any given time. As such, the caravan storage use would not generate traffic/disturbance to a level that would result in any issues of disturbance to local residents. The proposal is therefore acceptable when measured against policy GB3.

#### Impact upon Protected Species

The proposal is for the change of use of the existing buildings with no physical works required. As such, there will be no significant impact on ecology interests or protected species. As the proposal is for the reuse of existing buildings, it falls under the de minimis exemption from BNG requirements. The proposal is in compliance with policy BIO1 of the Local Plan.

#### Highways

The Highways Officer has been consulted and has no objections to the proposals. The supporting information indicates that the agricultural use has reduced to such an extent that the site could no longer be considered to be a working farm, the site does however continue to operate an established cattery as well as an apiary with associated honey extraction.

The cattery is to remain as existing, and the honey extraction operation is to move from its current base within the farmhouse, instead utilising two of the agricultural buildings. The two smallest buildings on the site are intended to be used for non-commercial purposes as a domestic storage unit and private stables for the applicants use only.

It is proposed for the two largest agricultural buildings to be used for caravan storage during the winter months. The supporting Planning Statement suggests that the scheme would allow a maximum of ten touring caravans to be stored; no internal floor layout plans have been provided, however, the size of these two buildings would suggest that a greater number of caravans could be stored than the ten stated. The Planning Statement also refers to the caravans being parked up at the start of winter and removed in early spring.

It is considered that both the number of caravans stored, along with the timing and frequency of their storage or removal would be difficult to control, monitor or enforce. Notwithstanding the above, the movement of caravans in excess of the suggested proposals would in all likelihood still result in fewer movements of similar type vehicles (i.e. car and caravan as opposed to tractor and trailer) in comparison with the site being fully utilised for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, the farm is accessed through a residential area, as such, the movement of cars towing caravans would be much more commonplace for residential streets than the movement of farm vehicles. This is borne out by on-site observations of a number of properties within the vicinity of the site having caravans parked within their curtilage.

The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of Highway Safety and no specific highways related conditions are deemed necessary, in accordance with the SPD Parking and Local Plan Policy T4.

### Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions