

Burntwood Court
Brierley, Barnsley

Planning Statement





DEVELOPMENT OF SITE IN THE GREEN BELT TO FORM PADEL CLUB WITH ASSOCIATED SUPPORTING BUILDING AND FOOTBALL PITCH

Land at Burntwood Court, Brierley Common, Brierley, Barnsley, S72 9ET

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Saul Homes, in support of a full planning application for the above proposals.

1.2 The finalised proposals put forward in this application have not been subject to a pre-application enquiry with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (hereafter referred to as BMBC or LPA).

1.3 This statement sets out a justification for the proposals in line with sustainable development principles, with particular focus given to the very special circumstances that allow Green Belt development in this location.

2.0 Site and Location Overview

2.1 Below is an aerial image of the site that is the subject of the proposed development, of which further detail is provided in section 4. The red line denotes the boundaries of the proposal site, with the image facing north.



2.2 The site in question covers an area of approximately 0.88 hectares (1.12 hectares including the existing access and carpark) forms part of the total landholding of approximately 35 acres associated with the Burntwood Court hotel and leisure facility. The business includes an array of services, including accommodation, conferencing facilities, health and fitness centre, bar and restaurant, ceremony hall and holiday pods (currently being built on site).

2.3 The land is currently undeveloped, save for a path that crosses through the site to the north-east to access an existing substation. Adjacent to the proposal site to the south-east is the existing Burntwood The Club and Spa,

and existing overspill carpark while to the east, west and north of the site are open green fields.

2.4 At the neighbourhood level, the site is located on the outskirts of Brierley on the north-east fringe of the Barnsley Metropolitan area. In line with its countryside location, the site forms part of the Green Belt around the existing settlements in Barnsley, with the site's rural setting being a significant attraction to visitors. Although there are presently no public transport routes that service the facility, bus stops are located directly outside of the site. Nonetheless, the nature of the facility is such that most patrons or visitors will access the site via car (including car-pooling).

3.0 Relevant Planning History

3.1 Consultation with BMBC Planning Explorer shows that, from the records available, the site in question forms part of a larger site that was approved for numerous developments, for which the details are given below. It should be noted that a number of the planning records, particularly those prior to 2000, are historical, with no access to the associated files or how the applications were determined.

3.2 B/77/2300/HR – Development of former hospital site as sports complex with associated bungalow.

3.3 B/83/1408/HR – Extension to lounge bar of existing complex.

3.4 B/87/0666/HR – Outline for motel, exhibition room, extension to function rooms, golf driving range and tennis courts.

3.5 B/90/0691/HR – Erection of motel.

3.6 B/92/1604/HR – Erection of stabling/stone building and construction of all-weather training track.

3.7 B/94/0506/HR – Erection of extension to existing motel.

3.8 B/94/1228/HR – Alterations to premises and erection of new gym extension.

3.9 B/98/0176/HR – Erection of extension to existing function room.

3.10 B/99/0336/HR – Planning permissions granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 17th May 2000 for the erection of a 20-bedroom 2-storey motel extension and new banqueting and conferencing facilities.

3.11 B/00/1246/HR – Erection of banquet/conference centre with motel annexe and restaurant (Reserved Matters).

3.12 2013/0553 – Erection of ceremony building with provision of associated access, parking and site landscaping and new outdoor children's play area.

3.13 The approval of application 2013/0553, and the general development of the complex over time, indicates the amenability of the LPA to Green Belt development, particularly where it serves to enhance the local economy (which has a bearing on the proposals in this new application). In line with this, section 7.1 of this statement provides an in-depth discussion pertaining to the justifications to allow the development of the site as proposed.

3.14 2020/1417 – Erection of 9 detached pods and creation of associated landscape features and paths.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 The site in question is subject to the proposals outlined below:

- Erection of four padel courts with associated open structure and lights
- Football pitch with 3G synthetic grass, surrounding fencing and lights
- Supporting new padel club building
- Associated landscaping works

4.2 Further information pertaining to the proposals are included in a Design & Access Statement, which accompanies the plans submitted with this application.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 In determining the application, the most relevant planning policy documents include the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (revised February 2019);
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan (adopted January 2019).

5.2 Other supporting documents that have been reviewed to ascertain their relevance to the scope of the proposed development include:

- Biodiversity and Geodiversity (adopted May 2019);
- Trees and Hedgerows (adopted May 2019).

6.0.0 Accordance with Planning Policy

6.0.1 In this section, the details of the proposed development are discussed within several key contexts, in accordance with relevant national and local planning policy.

6.1.0 Development in the Green Belt

6.1.1 It is important to note that the acceptability of the scheme is subject to providing sufficient justification for the proposals to demonstrate that they would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As per paragraph 133 of the NPPF, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Consequently, applications to develop Green Belt land are carefully scrutinised to ensure they are in accordance with these overarching objectives.

6.1.2 As described in paragraph 134 of the NPPF, Green Belt designation is intended to:

- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

- assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

6.1.3 As such, development that is contrary to these objectives is considered to be inappropriate and therefore harmful to the Green Belt, as per paragraph 143 of the NPPF. Despite this emphasis on preservation of the Green Belt, paragraph 144 goes on to say that ‘very special circumstances’ would allow development in the Green Belt that would otherwise be considered inappropriate, where it can be shown that the benefits of a scheme outweigh perceived harm.

6.1.4 Indeed, it should be noted, here, that the Green Belt is not an outright barrier to development, nor should any interpretation of matters such as impact on Green Belt openness be too literal or applied too stringently. That is, it is often the case that development in the Green Belt has an inevitable quantitative impact on openness. However, employing an appropriate design at a suitable scale can achieve a scheme that preserves and even enhances a site in terms of its visual character, while also preserving the purposes of the Green Belt.

6.1.5 As is the case with the proposal site, Green Belt development can entail the extension of established business premises that would benefit from an increase in or enhancement of its facilities. Due to the site location and the current layout, it is not felt that it can reasonably be argued that the proposed development would constitute infill development in the Green Belt, which would be acceptable in line with clause G of paragraph 145 of the NPPF. That is, the site is not flanked by existing built development but is situated between the existing facilities at Burntwood Court and open fields. Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances that outweigh any perceived harm to the Green Belt. In line with this requirement, there are numerous considerable benefits to be attributed with the proposals that would outweigh what is asserted to be relatively limited and insubstantial impact on the Green Belt. Namely these benefits are:

- Securing the viability of an important local business.
- The valuable contribution the development can make to the success and vitality of the local economy.
- The considerable improvements to the site’s biodiversity that will be

achieved from the proposed development.

6.1.6 First, there would be a clear benefit from the proposals insofar as helping to secure the viability of the Burntwood Court facility. The catastrophic economic impact of Covid-19 has been well documented, with businesses still recovering to this day. It is important for the business to keep developing, to listen to its members and continue to extend and progress with the trends and always stay relevant. Particularly, the proposed development would perfectly complement the fitness club which is typically in high demand. It is expected that the padel courts and football pitch would provide a great offer for the region which is lacking. Similarly, the proposed club building and the natural features would be suitable for the setting.

6.1.7 Second, beyond securing the viability of the business itself, associated with this is supporting the contribution that Burntwood Court makes to the local economy. Even notwithstanding the impact Covid-19 is still felt to the present day, there is an explicit directive in national policy, echoed by Barnsley's Local Plan, for the planning system to help facilitate sustainable economic growth where possible (NPPF paragraph 80). Furthermore, clauses A and C of NPPF paragraph 83, concerning supporting the rural economy, are also applicable:

Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; ...
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

6.1.8 The Local Plan reaffirms the national guidance with several goals to support the local economy, including protecting existing employment sites and ensuring a sufficient provision of land for future economic growth, as well as promoting tourism and maintaining sustainable rural economies. These goals are based on an acknowledgement that Barnsley currently underperforms economically in comparison with other parts of South Yorkshire, with its existing economic structure vulnerable to economic shocks (such as Covid-19). These goals are reflected in policy E5, which

seeks to encourage the growth of the tourism business sector, and encouraging tourist-related development in rural areas to support the local economy. It should be noted that the supporting text to policy E5, at paragraph 8.26, makes clear that 'tourism' refers to all activity of visitors, including same-day visitors, as well as covering a diverse range of activities. Furthermore, paragraph 8.28 goes on to say that BMBC would look to support and explore all opportunities to improve existing destinations.

6.1.9 It is clear the proposed development would be in line with these policies. The nature of the new sports facilities, club pavilion and associated landscaping would respect the character of the countryside, which has been a fundamental principle in each stage of development at Burntwood Court. Furthermore, the expanded service provision would represent sustainable growth which would benefit the local economy. As part of this overall economic benefit, the extra revenue that would be generated would help to support local employment, with the majority of the 134 individuals (FTE 80 jobs) on the payroll at Burntwood Court drawn from the local area. Additionally, in terms of job creation, the development of the site as proposed would also provide work for an extra FTE 10 jobs and the local construction sector, all of which should weigh in favour of the development.

6.1.10 Insofar as complementing the fitness offer at Burntwood Court, previous consultations undertaken by the operators showed that the padel offer will bring people from all over South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and beyond. As part of this consultation, participants were asked to identify what potential additional features would increase their preference for Burntwood Court. From the responses received, it is evident that the venue would benefit from this sport covered facility and a football pitch. Partly as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, more people understand the need to stay active and healthy, with a desire to play sports outside in the fresh air. The sense of community and team sports became more relevant not just physically but also from a mental-health perspective. Therefore, the proposed development would be addressing the points raised in the consultation, and meeting the demand from the rise of padel, and in doing so would maintain Burntwood Court's competitive advantage over other destinations, to the benefit of Barnsley's economy.

6.1.11 The aim of policy E6 ties into that of E5, looking to encourage a viable rural economy that results in the growth of existing businesses and is related to tourism or recreation. In line with the objectives of national and local policy, the LPA should be looking to support the sustainable growth of an established local business. While policy E6 also makes clear that, as part of supporting the rural character of an area, development is expected to avoid any harmful impact on the countryside, including the Green Belt and any biodiversity value therein, it is asserted that any impact on the Green Belt would be minimal. With regards to the purposes of the Green Belt cited in paragraph 6.1.2, none of these fundamental purposes would be in any way adversely affected by the proposals.

6.1.12 The essence of the proposals is its natural character that complements the site's countryside setting. In accordance with this, there would be minimal impact on Green Belt openness. (Further details regarding this net increase are provided in section of this statement and the Preliminary Ecological Assessment submitted in support of the application).

Not only does the biodiversity value benefit the site, but it also ties into the wider objective of environmental conservation and enhancement within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area which was designated by the Government in 2012. Therefore, when balanced against the minimal impact on the Green Belt, it is asserted that the biodiversity gains that would be achieved demonstrably outweigh this impact, thus representing a further very special circumstance to allow development.

6.1.13 In summary of the implications of development on the Green Belt, the site's designation has been fully considered by the applicant. The resulting proposals stem from the clear understanding that Burntwood Court's location and rural landscape setting are an integral part of what draws people to the venue, hence a layout and landscape scheme that harnesses and enhances these natural features. In doing so, the proposals would help to achieve the sustainable growth of the businesses, thus securing its long-term viability and ultimately benefitting the local economy. Together, these positives amount to very special circumstances that allow Green Belt development and are not outweighed by the impact on the Green Belt, that has been shown to be small. As such, the LPA should look favourably on the proposals in this regard.

6.2.0 Environmental Impact

6.2.1 As highlighted in section 6.1, the proposed development represents an improvement in the site's biodiversity value. This positively addresses both national and local objectives with regards to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 175 of the NPPF makes clear that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. In line with this, one of BMBC's challenges with regards to green infrastructure, as stated in their Local Plan, is to maintain and, where possible, strengthen its networks of natural habitats. In doing so, these networks would enhance the appearance, character, and overall quality of the countryside across Barnsley. Equally, improvements in the Borough's green infrastructure would contribute towards the conservation of biodiversity.

6.2.2 With a view to meeting the above challenge, Local Plan policy GI1 sets out the LPA's objective to enhance biodiversity and landscape character, which, importantly for this application, includes improving opportunities for recreation and tourism. To reiterate the point raised in section 6.1 of this statement, paragraph 8.26 of the Local Plan makes clear that tourism refers to a diverse range of activities and includes same-day visitors. In this respect, it is clear the proposals will have a positive impact insofar as they would increase the potential of the site's social and economic benefits.

6.2.3 Specifically addressing biodiversity, policy BIO1 details a number of ways in which developments should look to respect the biodiversity credentials that a site possesses, as well as protect species and habitats of principal importance. As with other policies, policy BIO1 seeks measures that prioritise preservation and enhancement of these credentials where possible for a development to be considered acceptable. As stated in section 6 of this statement, the site's inclusion in the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area also has implications for any development proposals, in that there are greater expectations of the degree of biodiversity enhancements to be achieved. Pursuant to this aim, a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was undertaken by specialist ecological consultants Whitcher Wildlife Limited. The PEA provides details of the site's current

features, its biodiversity credentials, and whether the proposals for the site would achieve an increase in biodiversity.

6.2.4 In summary, the PEA concludes that the features of the site, a combination of various grassland and hedgerow, were considered to provide a low-quality habitat or would be unaffected by the proposed works. Also, no nests, roosts or setts were identified as part of the site investigation. Resultantly, it is the view of Whitcher Wildlife Limited that the proposals would not have any negative impacts on biodiversity matters. The site's existing features were calculated to have an area biodiversity value of 5.24 Biodiversity Units and a linear biodiversity area of 0.01 Biodiversity Units. By comparison, the estimated biodiversity value to be achieved by the proposed development on site was calculated at 5.36 area Biodiversity Units, which represents an increase of 0.12 area Biodiversity Units and 0.1 linear Biodiversity Units, an increase of 0.09 linear Biodiversity Units. In addition, an off-site biodiversity area has a baseline figure of 0.40 area Biodiversity Units and that will increase to 0.87 area Biodiversity Units post development. Overall, an increase of 0.59 area Biodiversity Units gives an area BNG of 11.31% and an increase of 0.09 linear Biodiversity Units gives a linear BNG of 669% and all trading rules are satisfied. This increase does not include the biodiversity value of the existing boundary trees.

6.2.5 As such, it is asserted that considerable positive weight should be attributed to the substantial contribution that would be made by the development, particularly with regards to helping to achieve the LPA's biodiversity objectives in the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area.

6.3.0 Sustainable Development and Principle of Development

6.3.1 Sustainable development underpins the updated NPPF, indicating the greater awareness within society of the shared responsibility to create more sustainable places to live. As such, it states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, by striving to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The achievement of sustainable development has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. These objectives are interdependent and should be pursued

in mutually supportive ways. The essence of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and for “decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay” (paragraph 11, clause C).

6.3.2 In accordance with this focus on sustainable development, local authorities have followed the guidance set out within the NPPF in their formulation of local policy. In the case of Barnsley, sustainability represents a key consideration, demonstrated by specific Local Plan policy, SD1, which makes clear that a positive approach will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This policy is to be read in conjunction with policy GD1, which sets out the general expectations of development.

6.3.3 It is clear from the proposals that the development of the site in question would be consistent with the objectives of the above policies, achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, as an established local business at an existing site, the principle of the development is acceptable, especially when considered against the minimal impact to the Green Belt and the overriding benefits to be gained from the sustainable economic growth of the business and the local economy. Locating the new sports facilities adjacent to the existing club would be an efficient use of the wider landholding, with a design approach (discussed further in section 6.4) that is grounded in the natural character of the wider area. The development would include high-quality landscaping and avoids any unacceptable impact on the environment or natural resources, with an appropriate natural boundary in keeping with the countryside setting.

6.3.4 Energy efficiency is another important element of sustainability in new developments. As such, Local Plan policies CC1 and CC2 detail the ways in which all new buildings are expected to be efficient and use resources sustainably, as well as maximising sustainable design and construction features. It is expected that the proposed development will incorporate, where possible, energy efficiency measures including high performance window glazing and frames, low-energy LED lighting, water-efficient white goods, taps, toilets, baths and other equipment. Should there be scope to incorporate any technologies for off-grid energy production, they will be based on an assessment of the greatest environmental benefit, benefit to future occupants, ongoing running costs and physical feasibility. Should

permission be granted for the proposed scheme, detailed design proposals and energy assessments will be undertaken to ensure energy efficiency is optimised.

6.3.5 It is acknowledged that, at present, the public transport network does not provide ready access to the site. However, this is clearly outweighed by the nature of the facility and fact that a fair proportion of its trade is from already existing members of the club. Further support in this regard is set out in paragraph 84 of the NPPF, which concedes that it will be necessary to allow the development of businesses (in this case the growth of an existing business) in rural areas beyond settlement limits where they are not well served by public transport.

6.3.6 Together, the above discussion with regards to sustainable development has established that the nature of the proposed scheme is in keeping with the objectives of national and local policy. The principle of the development is also acceptable, being in line with the established use of the existing business. Despite being outside of the settlement limits of nearby Brierley, the proposed development would contribute towards the progression of the business, as well as continue to support other local businesses in Barnsley's rural economy and the local economy in general.

6.4.0 Design and Amenity

6.4.1 In terms of the design of the proposed development, it is consciously influenced by its natural countryside setting, with the new building to be set "into-the-ground" and amongst high-quality landscaping. Its siting is intended to utilise the existing connections between the health and fitness and existing substation, optimising function as well as amenity.

6.4.2 As discussed in section 6.1, the design of the proposed development has sought to minimise any potential impact on the Green Belt, as well as achieve biodiversity enhancements through its significant provision of natural screening and other habitat-friendly features. In much the same way, the green infrastructure proposed would also create an attractive environment for members and guests, providing a high level of amenity.

6.4.3 The padel club building would have its own green roof, including an open deck top facing into the padel and football pitch complex, as well as a sheltered area along the front façade.

6.4.4 The building would be a contemporary design that incorporates natural materials to complement the countryside setting of the site. The pavilion would have a flat roof and generous proportions of glazing, maximising the natural light. Wood cladding and panelling would also be a prominent material internally, tying it into the surroundings.

6.4.5 The proposed development tries to entail an attractive and thoughtful design, both in terms of its appearance and its layout which, together, would provide a high-quality environment for visitors. The natural design aesthetic envisaged for the site also provides unique accommodation that stands apart from the current offer at Burntwood Court yet remains firmly in keeping with the rural setting.

6.5.0 Highways and Parking Provision

6.5.1 This section addresses any impact that the proposed development may have on the surrounding road and transport network, and how the site incorporates a sufficient provision of car parking. While it is usually desirable that new development is located as close as possible to the public transport network, it should be acknowledged that more rural locations, lack the necessary provision of services to achieve a modal shift in transport. As discussed previously, there is a general acceptance in national policy that rural businesses are less likely to be located near public transport routes. As such, this should not automatically count against new development, especially where a successful local business is established in a rural location and whose selling point is, amongst other factors, its natural surroundings.

6.5.2 It is notable that the LPA's Parking supplementary planning document does not specify a minimum provision of parking for hotels, which constitutes the main use of the site. However, at approximately 200 parking spaces, there is ample existing provision to meet the parking requirements for visitors to the facility. In this regard, it is considered that the existing provision will also comfortably accommodate any requirement associated with the proposed padel and sports pitch facilities. Furthermore, most users

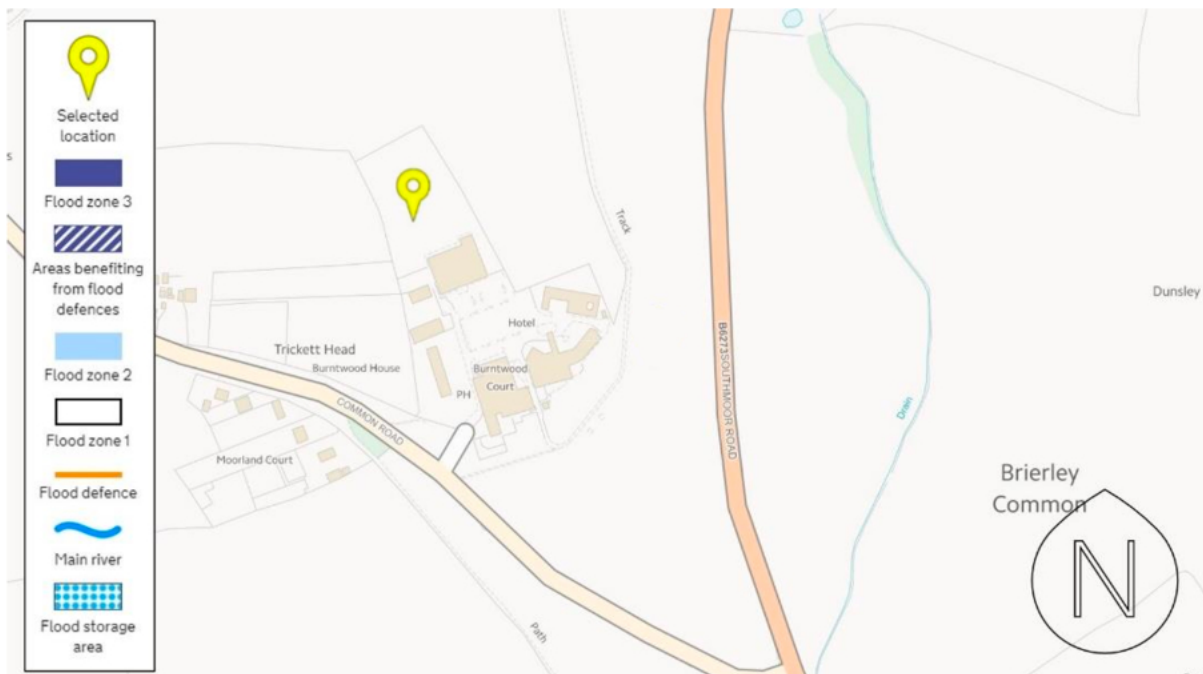
will be the existing members of the club who already travel to site regularly. Additionally, a smaller car park with an extra 16 spaces will be included as close as possible to the new building.

6.6.0 Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Contributions

6.6.1 A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a tool to help Local Planning Authorities secure financial contributions towards local infrastructure projects.

6.6.2 As part of the work undertaken towards producing the new Local Plan, BMBC made preliminary consultations regarding the introduction of a CIL in 2016. However, an agreed CIL charging schedule is yet to be put in place. As such, any contributions from developers will continue to be sought by means of a Section 106 agreement.

6.7.0 Flood Risk



6.7.1 Local Plan policies CC1 and CC3 makes clear that development should be located where it would reduce the risk of flooding. Consultation of the Environment Agency website (see image above) shows the flood risk of the proposal site and the surrounding area (site indicated by yellow

marker). As part of Flood Zone 1, the land has less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding.

6.7.2 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out the guidelines to which developments should adhere with regards to flood risk. With Flood Zone 1 designation, it is not believed that the site requires a flood risk assessment as, per footnote 50 of the NPPF, it is under one hectare in size and has not been identified as having critical drainage problems or being a flood risk in the future. In addition, it is not believed that the development proposed can be considered a more vulnerable use of the site. Nonetheless, it is ensured that, should the site be approved for development, necessary measures will be taken to ensure that there is sufficient on-site drainage infrastructure.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 This statement has been produced in support of a full planning application for the development of land at Burntwood Court to provide new padel courts and covering structure, football pitch and new support club building. In line with the above justifications, it is asserted that the proposals are in accordance with the objectives and stipulations of relevant national and local planning policy, as well as with the general principles of development with regards to the location of the proposal site.

7.2 Despite the site's Green Belt designation, it is asserted that the impact of development would be minimal and would not adversely affect the purposes of Green Belt development. Furthermore, very special circumstances pertaining to the viability of a local business and its contribution to the local economy of Barnsley, as well as the substantial biodiversity gains that would be achieved, outweigh any presumption that the proposed development would be inappropriate.

7.3 Considerable thought has been given to the design of the scheme, especially in terms of its appearance, layout, and how it would function as part of the wider facility. Importantly, the design approach is grounded in preserving and enhancing the natural environment, with its rural setting being a key positive that gives Burntwood Court a competitive advantage over other similar facilities in the region and beyond.

7.4 Within the context of the site, its location and its function, the proposed scheme represents sustainable development economically, socially, and environmentally and should be viewed favourably by the Local Planning Authority. Accordingly, the applicant looks forward to continuing their positive and proactive dialogue with officers to ensure this project is delivered.

