

PLANNING STATEMENT

Extension to existing spa facility and associated alterations, the erection of a replacement stable building, and the use of land as a horse riding arena

Smallshaw Farm Spa

Hollin Lane

Millhouse Green

Sheffield

S36 9NH

May 2026

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for an extension to an existing spa facility and associated alterations, the erection of a replacement stable building, and the use of land as a horse riding arena at Smallshaw Farm, Hollin Lane, Millhouse Green.

This application is also supported by a number of other technical reports in respect of matters relating to Design and Access, heritage, ecology etc. These reports are referenced within this Statement as appropriate but this Statement should be read in conjunction with all the information submitted to support the application.

Background

Smallshaw Farm lies to the north-west of Millhouse Green. It comprises two adjoining former farmhouses, Lower Small Shaw Farmhouse and Small Shaw Farmhouse, both of which are Grade II Listed Buildings. (References in this statement to “Smallshaw Farm” or “the farmhouse” should be taken to mean both elements). Close to the farmhouse, to its western side, are two former barn buildings attached to one another in a broadly ‘L’ shaped configuration. These are also Grade II Listed Buildings.

Although a registered agricultural holding, Smallshaw is no longer in any agricultural use. Instead, the applicant operates a holiday cottage enterprise and the former barns have been converted into living space comprising one dwelling, occupied by the applicant, and three holiday cottages.

Approximately 20 metres to the east of the farmhouse is a group of buildings attached to one another. One is a modern barn building which incorporates a Biomass boiler providing heat and hot water to all of the buildings at Smallshaw Farm. An extension to the barn to form a spa facility was built in 2015 and the facility is now known as Smallshaw Spa. The spa is open to the public and is very popular. Spa treatments, including massage and other therapies, are also offered as packages in conjunction with breaks at the holiday cottages.

A further building here is a three-box stable block. This is used for housing the applicant's horses and is not part of the business enterprise. To the east of this group is a tennis court that was converted from an existing horse arena in 2015. Fields in the applicant's ownership surround the site to the east and north, and these are used for grazing the applicant's horses and the production of hay.

The site lies within the green belt in the development plan for the area.

Proposed development

The existing spa provision has been stripped out and that end of the existing building will be converted to a garage use.

The spa proposal is now entirely located at the east end of the building.

A single-storey extension to the east side and double-storey extension to the south side of the existing barn have been designed to accommodate the new spa with the east end of the existing barn. The southerly extension has basement provision also.

There are a small amount of extensions at roof level on the north side to accommodate first floor requirements.

The ground floor-storey is faced in natural coursed stone and a string course datum and the first floor-storey and above is faced in vertical timber cladding.

The ground and first floor facing materials have also been applied to the existing barn for continuity.

In addition, the current stable block will be replaced by a new stable block to the east of a proposed manege.

As the applicant is a Chartered Physiotherapist and acupuncturist, and as such has worked in the NHS as well as treating cancer patients, the purpose of the proposed development is to provide facilities to also enable the provision of specialist massage and other therapies for people suffering with cancer. Treatments which the applicant is proposing to offer are as follows –

a) Manual lymphatic drainage. This is a specialised, gentle type of medical massage which can be used as part of lymphoedema treatment.

b) Acupuncture. This works by stimulating nerves to release endorphins in the spinal cord and brain, which relieves pain. It also releases serotonin, which is also a pain reliever and can promote a feeling of wellbeing. The release of both substances can reduce cancer symptoms and can relieve sickness associated with chemotherapy or other cancer drugs.

c) Cranial osteopathy. This is a subtle and refined approach to osteopathy which includes the anatomy and physiology of the head. A highly trained sense of touch is used to feel subtle changes of tension and tissue quality in the living anatomy of the whole body – not just the head – and to diagnose areas of strain or dysfunction.

d) Reiki. Some people with cancer may use reiki as a complementary therapy. While it is not able to treat cancer, as such, it is found to be relaxing after the rush and stress of hospitals and intensive medical treatments, and helps people to cope with cancer symptoms or side effects. It is sometimes used in palliative care, especially in hospices.

e) Reflexology. This is a technique that applies gentle pressure to the feet or hands to bring about a state of relaxation and help the body's own healing process. There is evidence that reflexology can help people with cancer relax and cope with stress and anxiety better, relieve pain and lift their mood, and give a feeling of wellbeing.

These therapies and wellness treatments are shown to be of significant benefit to the physical and/or psychological wellbeing of cancer patients. However, this is an area of care presently largely overlooked by the NHS. As a consequence of this, the delivery of these therapies has, in effect, largely been outsourced by the NHS to the private sector, a situation that looks set to continue. But due to the level of investment required in terms of facilities and professional training in what is a highly specialised area of therapeutic medicine, it is also not an area that has yet been taken up with sufficient geographic coverage across the country to deliver adequate provision and there are none in either South or West Yorkshire. As such, what is proposed here would be a truly national and regional facility for providing care for cancer patients. It would serve the residents of not only all of Barnsley Borough, but also those of surrounding districts and counties.

As a result of this inadequate geographical provision, many people needing or wishing to undertake such treatments face journeys of considerable length. That would undoubtedly be the case here and these people are unwell, many undergoing serious medical treatments

such as chemotherapy and suffering from often debilitating side effects and cannot realistically manage or cope with lengthy periods of travel. Because of this, people who are able and willing to travel for cancer care treatments of the sort the applicant plans to offer here require both overnight accommodation – to avoid the need for further travel the same day – and a range of appropriate therapies and other relaxation options to enable a full day and overnight stay. The provision of lunch or some sort of food offering is critical. The applicant already has accommodation to offer on site but the significant problem is that the spa is currently not of adequate size to provide the full range of cancer care treatments and other facilities required to meet people's needs. It is clear that if Smallshaw Spa is to be able to meet the needs of clients who are cancer patients, it must grow in order to offer appropriate facilities on a sufficient scale.

It should be noted that the spa currently has only three treatment rooms and clearly more would be required. This application proposes five treatment rooms, which the applicant considers to be the minimum to meet likely demand. Room to offer relaxation space and to provide food is essential, for the reasons already explained. The application therefore includes a dedicated relaxation area – a place of tranquility for quiet repose – along with a restaurant area. Again, neither of these spaces are of excessive size and are, in the applicant's experience, about the minimum size needed for the number of clients expected.

Furthermore, cancer sufferers in particular often seek to improve their overall sense of general wellbeing through undertaking a range of good health and fitness pursuits. This provides something of an antidote to, and a distraction from, the difficulties and challenges of living with cancer. For this reason, most if not all of the spas currently offering

cancer care treatments include a swimming pool. It is therefore considered essential that the proposed extension includes these facilities. However, the size of these facilities has been restricted to the realistic minimum necessary.

In summary, the proposed scheme would enable the provision of complementary healthcare services to people with cancer that are generally not available on the NHS and which it is not possible to accommodate within the existing building.

The proposed development has been designed to provide the minimum that is necessary to provide the range of services intended to meet the anticipated demand for them. In this regard, a Business Plan has also been submitted that sets out the business rationale for the proposed development. This Business Plan should remain confidential and is not for publication in the public domain, as it contains sensitive financial information regarding the business operations of the applicant.

It is important to note that the proposed scheme will ensure the on-going sustainability of the existing business and will contribute significantly to rural diversification and the rural economy, as set out in NPPF Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy, sub-heading Supporting a prosperous rural economy, paragraph 88 a) and policy E6 of the Local Plan. The proposed spa extension will allow for the sustainable growth and expansion of the business as set out in the Business Plan.

Pre-application enquiry

A pre-application enquiry was submitted to the LPA (ref: 2024ENQ00005) and a response to this enquiry was provided by the LPA in March 2024.

It should be noted that the draft scheme provided for the pre-application enquiry has been substantially amended, altered, and reduced in size to reflect the comments provided by the LPA (both through the pre-application response and through a further meeting with officers on site), particularly in relation to the bulk, scale, and mass of the proposed scheme. A Heritage Statement has been produced separately to consider the matter of heritage assets.

Relevant planning policies

National planning policy is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance. In respect of this application, the relevant section of the NPPF considered in this Planning Statement is Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land.

Local planning policy is contained within the Barnsley Local Plan (2019). The following policies are held to be of relevance to this Planning Statement –

E6 Rural Economy

GD1 General Development

GB1 Protection of Green Belt

GB2 Replacement, extension and alteration of existing buildings in the Green Belt

D1 High Quality Design and Place Making

Other relevant national and local planning policies are considered in the other technical reports submitted with this application.

Assessment

It is considered that the main issues with regards to the proposed development in the green belt are -

- a) whether the elements of the proposed development would be inappropriate development;
- b) the effect of the proposed development on openness; and
- c) whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations and, if so, whether this would amount to the “very special circumstances” required to justify the development.

With regards to inappropriate development in the green belt, paragraphs 152 to 156 of the National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’) set out the relevant national policy concerning inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (VSC). VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In considering the existence or otherwise of VSC, great weight must be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

The definition of Grey Belt in the NPPF guidance.

For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, Grey Belt is defined as land in the green belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.

The definition of previously developed land in the NPPF guidance.

Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land. It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding.

The land subject to this application is considered to be previously developed land, given that the existing spa building (and its associated hardstanding and curtilage) is commercial in operation. As such, the spa (and car park, following changes to the NPPF last year) is held to be Grey Belt for the following reasons:

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF

a) Weston Park in Sheffield is a leading specialist cancer care hospital yet there are no spas providing specialist cancer therapies in this area; people have to travel further to North Yorkshire or Cheshire to access this in spas such as Rudding Park, Grantley Hall, Devonshire Arms, all in North Yorkshire; Rena Spa in Manchester; Carden Park in Cheshire.

There are local housing plans to build 1400 new homes in and around Penistone with no increase in local leisure facilities of the type proposed forcing people to drive/travel greater distances to access spas.

b) Taking into account Paragraph 110 NPPF which states sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in decision making.

Penistone train station has regular links to Sheffield, Huddersfield, Manchester and further afield. There are regular bus links from Penistone and the surrounding villages that pass a bus stop at the bottom of Hollin Lane where Smallshaw is located.

Although there are good transport links for a rural location, the majority of visitors book a cottage for a week stay or short break and therefore arrive by car so as to be able to explore the surrounding area.

The visitors coming for cancer care therapies are often too ill or wish not to travel by any other means but by car.

I therefore believe we have satisfied points (a), (b) and (c) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

An extension can fall within the exception in the NPPF if it is proportionate and it does not materially harm openness (judged on a spatial and visual basis).

Both the proposed spa extension and the proposed replacement stable building involve the construction of new structures and in the green belt. For national and local planning policy purposes, it is held that the former is an extension of an existing building and that the latter is the replacement of an existing building by a new building in the same use with an associated use. In the NPPF and in the Barnsley Local Plan, a

distinctive approach is taken to these two different forms of new development.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states –

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

....

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

.....

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

.....

Policy GB2 of the Barnsley Local Plan is consistent with paragraph 154 of the NPPF, although it introduces a local “threshold” in relation to the extension or alteration of buildings. It states –

Provided it will not have a harmful impact on the appearance, or character and will preserve the openness of the Green Belt, we will allow the following development in the Green Belt:

- *Replacement buildings where the new building is in the same use and is not materially larger than that which it replaces.*

- *Extension or alteration of a building where the total size of the proposed and previous extensions does not exceed the size of the original building.*

Assessment of size is based on floorspace only, rather than any other measure, such as footprint or volume.

The proposed manege does not involve the construction of any new building. Rather, it amounts to the change of the use of the land from the grazing of horses to a use that is for outdoor recreation. In this regard, paragraph 155 of the NPPF applies. It states –

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:

e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation...)

The Local Plan does not include any policies concerning the change of use of land in the green belt for the purpose of outdoor recreation.

From the above, it is clear that different parts of national and local planning policy apply to the three elements of the proposed scheme – the proposed spa extension, the proposed stable building, and the proposed horse riding arena.

In respect of the proposed extension to the spa, in reference to the NPPF and Local Plan Policy GB2, the question here relates to the relative size of the proposed spa and other additions when considered against the size of the original building. It is necessary to establish precisely what represents the “original building”. As previously indicated, the spa has been formed by an extension to the barn and the stables are

also adjoined to the original barn building. Therefore, for the purpose of this exercise, the barn and stables as it existed prior to the addition of the spa should be taken to represent the “original building”.

The comparison to be made, then, is the size of the barn in relation to both the existing spa extension combined with the extension now proposed. Paragraph 18.7 of the Local Plan says that the sizes of buildings as existing and proposed will be compared by reference to their gross floorspace calculated by external measurements of the building and not taking into account floorspace within roof spaces.

Floorspace

Existing

Original Building - 407m²

Existing Building - Original - 407m² + barn extension - 78m² + wood store - 33m² + Spa 106m²

Total Existing - 658m²

Proposed

Garage (inside existing) - 271m² + agricultural (inside existing) - 152m² + new Spa (within existing) - 172m² + new Spa (above ground) 330m² + new Spa (Below Ground) -137m²

Total Proposed - 1413m²

The calculations indicate that there would be an increase of greater than 100% over and above the original building in terms of floorspace. This is beyond that which would normally be allowed in respect of policy GB2 – i.e., the proposed extensions exceed the size of the original building.

As such, it is necessary to consider the “very special circumstances” (VSC) of the proposed spa extension. As stated in the NPPF, VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In considering the existence or otherwise of VSC, great weight must be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

The VSC in this case are predicated on two material considerations –

Firstly, the Business Plan clearly shows an existing, successful local business which has diversified away from the original agricultural use of the site. This local business has been established for some time but now needs to invest in its future to grow the business in order to provide a business model which will provide for on-going and future sustainability, not only for this business but also for those local businesses in its supply chain and in local employment and other wealth generation.

Such a proposal is clearly in line with policy E6 of the Local Plan, which states that the Council will encourage a viable rural economy by allowing development in rural areas if it supports the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy and results in the growth of existing businesses. The proposed spa extension clearly relates primarily to business and employment development and the Council contends that small businesses are particularly important in rural areas

and will be supported, subject to any potential conflicts with the character of the landscape, biodiversity, and the green belt. The potential for conflict is considered later.

The second VSC is based on the provision of specialist cancer treatments. As set out above and in the Business Plan, the opportunity exists for the business to provide important specialist cancer care treatments, which not only offers the opportunity to provide much-needed ancillary cancer care for patients but also offers the opportunity to feed into the sustainability of this local business and to further support local businesses and employment.

These two VSC should then be assessed against any potential harm caused to the character of the area, biodiversity and the green belt, as set out in policy E6 of the Local Plan.

In terms of the green belt and the five purposes of including land within it, paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the green belt serves five purposes: a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

It is self-evident that the application site is not close to any town or large built-up area. Purposes a), b) and d) are therefore not relevant. Purpose e) is also of no meaningful relevance. Purpose c) is the only one of any germane application to the proposal in hand.

What is proposed is not encroachment but is in effect, adding an extension to one building within an existing cluster of buildings, and

would not extend the envelope any further into the countryside than is presently the case.

Any impact of proposed development within the green belt should recognise that openness has both a visual dimension and spatial dimension. The effect on openness of the development proposed cannot be considered merely by the presence or absence of buildings. The fact alone that the proposed buildings would be introduced where there are currently none cannot be the sole indicator of the impact on openness – the visual impact, that is the effect on openness “in the eyes of the viewer”, is an equally important consideration.

In light of this, it is patently clear that the assessment of the impact of the development on openness must encompass both spatial and visual aspects. It is accepted that the new spa facility sought through this application would be of some size. The justification and rationale for the high-quality design of the proposed scheme has been fully considered in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies this application. However, a significant proportion of the proposal would be on land where buildings currently exist, including areas of hardstanding. There is already a two-storey building to the west of the barn. To the south of the barn, some of the land is already occupied by the existing stable block.

The proposed scheme, in the round, offers significant biodiversity enhancement opportunities, for example in terms of the wild flower bank and the planting of new hedgerows. The sensitive design of the extension in the local architectural vernacular also makes a significant contribution to the quality of the character of the local area and reflects the characteristics of existing buildings in this rural locale. These issues of design and character are further explored in the Heritage Statement submitted with the application which looks at the relationship of the

extended spa building with the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and concludes that the proposed spa extension does not have an unacceptable impact on the significance of the setting of these buildings.

It is therefore held that the proposed spa extension, in a visual sense, has very little impact on the openness of the green belt or on the purposes of including land within it and that, spatially, the proposed spa extension has little impact on the green belt or on the purposes of including land within it. Given the weight apportioned to the economic benefits of the proposed extension and the benefits to be accrued through the provision of specialist cancer care, it is held that these VSC, on balance, outweigh any limited harm caused to the openness of the green belt by reason of inappropriateness in either a visual or spatial sense.

With regards to the proposed replacement stable building, it is held that the existing stables have a volume of 297 cubic m. The proposed new stable building has a volume of 308 cubic m, an increase of less than 4%.

The national and local planning policy considerations here hinge on two points – whether the replacement building would be in the same use as that it replaces, and whether it would be materially larger. On the former, it is clear that the proposed use is identical to the existing. This limb of policy is therefore unquestionably satisfied. While the proposed building would be slightly larger than the one it would replace, it would represent only a 4% increase in volume, which is considered to be a building not materially larger than the one it replaces.

Turning to the proposed manege, as previously indicated, for the purposes of paragraph 155 of the NPPF, the proposed horse riding

arena is a material change in the use of land for outdoor sport or recreation. It is clear from paragraph 155 that such a change of use is not inappropriate development in the green belt so long as it preserves the openness of the green belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

In terms of the spatial aspects of the proposed arena, located to the east of, and adjacent to, the proposed stable building, the manege would be enclosed with wooden fencing with an access gate to the north. This will be surrounded by a wild flower bank and hedgerow. The area will not be any larger than necessary for a facility of this type, and of no greater area than manege commonly found in countryside and other green belt locations. Enclosed by the wooden fencing, the manege would contain jumps, other obstacles for horse and rider to tackle and other related paraphernalia from time to time. However, it is likely that much of this equipment would generally be stored indoors, within the tack room inside the proposed stable building. For the large part, except for the presence of the proposed enclosure fencing, the land would remain entirely open.

With regards to the visual aspect of openness, it is clear that the manege would cause no material harm. In the wider landscape, only the proposed fencing would lead to the arena being discernible and the fencing would be hidden by the wild flower bank and hedgerow. In the context of the buildings here, it would appear as a secondary element and would not stand out. Moreover, given the materials and design of the proposed spa building, along with the traditional appearance of Smallshaw Farm and the converted barns, it would appear as an equestrian recreation facility at the periphery of, and associated with, a rural farmstead. This is a common relationship within the area.

As the replacement stable building proposed here is not inappropriate, there is no place for a subsequent assessment of its effect on green belt openness. In addition, for reasons given above, the proposed manege is also not inappropriate development in the green belt. As with the replacement stable building, national policy does not require a separate assessment of the effect on the openness of the green belt.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the VSC put forward here in terms of sustainable business and employment development opportunities in relation to rural diversification and the provision of specialist cancer care treatments outweigh, on balance, any harm to the openness of the green belt or the purposes of including land within it in this instance. In addition, the proposed scheme offers enhanced site biodiversity and a re-modelled building which contributes positively to the character of the landscape in this area.

Furthermore, it is considered that the new stables and the riding arena do not represent inappropriate development in the green belt.

As such, it is held that the proposed development is capable of approval subject to any reasonable and necessary conditions.