Application for Erection of Grain Store

Planning Application No 2009/0994

PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

LEE LANE MILL, LEE LANE,
MILLHOUSE GREEN, PENISTONE

Goldthorpes Corn Millers Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The proposal which forms the subject of this application for planning permission relates to a site known as Lee Lane Mill, Lee Lane, Millhouse Green. The scheme provides for the construction of a grain storage building in connection with the existing lawful use of the site which is for the production and storage of grain/feedstuff and storage of fertilizers.

The subject application was submitted to the Council (application reference No 2009/0994). Following the submission of this application, ongoing discussions have been held with the Council's Planning Officers, Laura Bibby and Matthew Smith. The following issues were raised by the Council in respect of the proposal with a requirement for the provision of further information which is now supplied:-

1. This Planning Support Statement which sets out the "very special circumstances" necessary to justify the grant of planning permission – Townsend Planning Consultants.

2. Redrafted scheme plans including cross sections showing adjacent development and identifying the buildings to be removed (as requested by the Council's Planning Officer) – Stamford Geomatics Ltd.

3. Detailed landscaping scheme – CF Landscape Design.

4. FRA/Drainage Report as requested - Haigh Huddleston.

It will be noted that as part of the proposal two unsightly and unattractive storage buildings will be demolished and removed which will be of benefit to the visual amenity of the site and area in general.

The subject scheme has evolved following the discussions with the Council's Officers. The original submission involved the construction of a free-standing building but the scheme has been amended and the proposed store now forms an extension to the existing buildings.

It is considered that this statement, together with the accompanying documents/information, clearly demonstrates to the Council that the proposal accords with national and local planning policy. Furthermore, when judged against this and all material considerations, it is clearly the case that notwithstanding the site's Green Belt status the necessary "very special circumstances" are present and are sufficient to warrant the grant of planning permission.

The proposal will involve significant benefits including:-

(i) full landscaping/screening of the site;
(ii) removal of unsightly buildings; and
(iii) enhancement of an existing local rural business with close ties to the local agricultural industry with job retention/opportunities.

It is considered that, these benefits amount to the "very special circumstances" necessary to justify the granting of planning permission and this issue will be dealt with in detail in the text of this statement.

This statement now proceeds to give details of the background to the site and its current uses, including planning history. The details of the proposal are then set out. Relevant planning policy and central government advice in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements are then discussed. The issues that the proposal raises are also examined (in particular the "very special circumstances" that arise), and finally the conclusion reached that planning permission should be granted for the proposal to proceed. Nevertheless, the applicants remain willing to discuss all aspects of this proposal with the Council.

2.0 THE SITE AND THE PROPOSAL

The subject site constitutes a roughly rectangular shaped area of land which incorporates extensive commercial buildings. It is understood that the use of the site for industrial purposes is longstanding. The current occupiers and applicants moved this family business to the site in 1981. At that stage the main building was constructed but is understood that a further extension was added in 1989. The site contains large modern commercial buildings with extensive hardstand manoeuvring areas around but to the south of the site are two unsightly storage buildings which are not considered suitable for the needs of the modern-day business. They would be replaced by the proposed extension.

The site is located in a rural area and in the main adjoins open fields. However, there is a dwelling located to the south of the site and a barn for which planning permission has been granted for use as ancillary living accommodation. The site has mature trees to its frontage.

The business which operates at the site is used for the processing and storage of grain, corn, wheat and barley into feedstuffs, together with the storage of fertiliser. The business is closely linked to local agriculture as both are importers of produce and exporters of the finished product. The business is very important to the local agricultural industry.

To ensure that the business is viable and competitive, it is the practice to purchase such things as barley and wheat when the price in the market is low. This ensures that the business can sell its products at a competitive rate. Whilst the site has always been utilised for two main purposes, i.e. the production of feedstuff and the storage of fertiliser, increased regulation on food safety means that there is an urgent requirement to separate the two activities and products and independent separate facilities are needed for the feedstuff in order for the business to continue in its current form. The subject building as proposed will allow the storage of wheat and other grain which will meet the requirements of the business. It will be noted that the two existing buildings to the south of the site which will be demolished as part of the proposal are not suitable for storing foodstuff.

In terms of the changing legislation, the Universal Feed Assurance Scheme Code of Practice has

been introduced by the Government to ensure food safety in the UK. Under the Code of Practice, feed cannot be sold to any farmer in the UK unless the manufacture of that feed is UFAS accredited. Under Section C2.2 of the Merchants Code of Practice, fertiliser and feeding stuffs must be stored separately. Under the terms of the Code, the business is inspected annually and the applicants have been advised by the Inspector that they must separate the two forms of produce to retain accreditation. It will be noted that separate storage is also required for fertiliser under The Fertiliser Industry Assurance Scheme, which ensures there is security and traceability in the industry's supply chain.

It must be stressed that the problem for the business is that those farmers who are supplied by Goldthorpes will not be in a position to sell their produce to supermarkets and retail outlets unless they can demonstrate that the foodstuffs they use have come from a supplier who meets those regulations and is accredited. In the circumstances, a new building is urgently required and is essential for the business to operate in its current form.

Clearly, in the context of the above regulations the Company has had to consider very carefully what alternatives there are for the business to continue in its current form, including the following:-

i. The business could be relocated. However, to undertake this task would require the sale of the existing site and efforts made to find a suitable alternative location. It would also involve major costs and upheaval and could potentially remove the business from its market. This course of action has been discounted as it does not form a viable alternative.

ii. The removal of the fertiliser part of the business. It will be noted that whilst this activity forms a small part of the overall business (25%), this is critical to the ongoing viability of the business and retention of jobs. The removal of this part of the business would call into question the overall viability of the business.

It is considered that the business is a small but important employer of local labour. There are twelve full-time employees in the business and the new storage facility would safeguard those jobs and could create further job opportunities in the future. However, unless an urgent solution is found to

the need to provide separate storage facilities for the two parts of the business, the production of fertiliser will, have to cease. This would seriously affect the overall viability of the business to compete in an increasingly evolving market and would result in immediate job losses.

It will be noted that the scheme, as submitted, has evolved during the processing of the application following discussions with the Council's Planning Officers. The initial scheme sought the construction of a separate building to the south of the site. However, following issues raised by the Council about the proximity of that development to the adjacent properties, the scheme has been amended and the subject building will now be attached to the end of the existing modern buildings, thereby forming an extension to the existing built form. It is considered that this will allow for the following:-

i. Better separation from the adjoining neighbours;
ii. It will be noted that the existing buildings on site which are to be demolished are much closer to the adjacent neighbours than the subject proposal. The proposal will, therefore, result in better separation.
iii. This additional space provides an opportunity to carry out a more comprehensive landscaping scheme between the two sites as shown on the submitted plans.

The proposed scheme will not result in the activities at the site being carried out closer to the adjoining properties. It must be recognised that this is a longstanding and lawful business. The site constitutes an existing and well established non-conforming use in the Green Belt. It is considered that the proposal provides an opportunity for the Council to ensure the removal of the unsightly buildings and provide for a carefully landscaped scheme. It will also allow the Council to support rural employment and the business requirements of a local commercial firm. It will be noted that whatever the outcome of this application, the site will not revert to a use appropriate to its Green Belt location. It will also be noted that if planning permission is refused, the current unsightly buildings will remain and serious questions will be raised over the future viability of the business with immediate job losses.

It is considered that the proposal will have the following benefits:

i. Replacement of unsightly buildings with an extension to the existing buildings which will match the modern appearance of those buildings but will appear in the context of the overall buildings as a very small-scale extension.
ii. The opportunity to fully screen the site by the implementation of a landscaping scheme.
iii. Ensure the long-term viability of the use of the site as an employment and business generating site.

Overall, it is considered that major benefits will accrue to the Green Belt in this location as a result of the proposal in addition to the broader beneficial impacts in terms of the viability of the existing business.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

By virtue of Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the planning authority must determine the planning application in accordance with the statutory development plan (insofar as it is material to the application), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. PPS1 also advises of a presumption in favour of development which accords with the development plan. The importance of the statutory development plan in the decision making process necessitates an examination of the relationship between the policies and proposals of the plan and government guidance.

3.1 Central Government Policy Advice

It is considered that the following central government policy advice in the form of planning policy guidance notes is relevant to the consideration of this proposal:-

3.1.1 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

At paragraph 4 of PPS1, the Government sets out four aims for sustainable development which include:-

> ***"- effective protection of the environment;***
> ***- the prudent use of natural resources;***
> ***- the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment…."*** (TPC underlining).

This proposal falls within those aims.

At paragraph 5, the guidance proceeds to state:-

> ***"Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by:***

- ***contributing to sustainable economic development;***
- ***protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside and existing communities."***

This proposal will meet with these aims.

At paragraph 6.5 of PPS1, it states that:-

> ***"Planning should facilitate sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by… ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community."***

The business provides local jobs and supports the local agricultural industry. Without the subject business, local farms would have to buy and sell their produce much further afield. This business assists local sustainability.

At paragraph 21 with regard to the prudent use of those resources, the advice states:

> ***"The prudent use of resources means ensuring that we use them wisely and efficiently, in a way that respects the needs of future generations. This means enabling more sustainable consumption and production and using non-renewable resources in a way that do not endanger the resource or cause serious damage or pollution. The broad aim should be to ensure that outputs are maximised whilst resources used are minimised."***

With regard to sustainable economic development, at paragraph 23 of PPS1 it states:-

> ***"The Government is committed to promoting a strong, stable and productive economy that aims to bring jobs and prosperity for all. Planning authorities***

should:

i. recognise that economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits;

ii. recognise the wider sub regional, regional or national benefits of economic development and consider these alongside any adverse local impacts;…

iv. provide for improved productivity, choice and competition, particularly when technological and other requirements of modern business are changing rapidly;

v. recognise that all local economies are subject to change; planning authorities should be sensitive to these changes and the implications for development and growth; (TPC underlining)

vi. actively promote and facilitate good quality development, which is sustainable and consistent with their plans with regard to delivering sustainable development."

It is considered that this proposal conforms to the advice contained in PPS1.

3.1.2 Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts

At section 1.5 of PPG2 the advice sets out the purposes of including land in Green Belts. It is considered that the proposed extension to the building in the manner suggested would not harm any of those purposes.

Section 3 of the advice sets out the presumption against "inappropriate development" and states at paragraph 3.1:-

"Such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances." (TPC underlining)

Furthermore, at paragraph 3.2 it states inter alia:-

> ***"Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by material considerations."***

It is contended that in relation to this site "very special circumstances" do indeed exist, as will be demonstrated in the text of this statement.

At paragraph 3.15 in relation to visual amenity the advice states:-

> ***"The visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reasons of their siting, materials or design."***

It is considered that this proposal will not harm the visual amenities of the Green Belt. The scheme provides for the existing unsightly buildings at the site to be demolished and replaced by a more appropriate development in the form of an extension to the existing buildings, together with a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

It is accepted that the current lawful use of the site is one which would be identified as constituting a non-conforming use. However, it is considered that the continuation of the existing business and related issues of employment are clearly important material considerations to which significant weight should be attached (see PPS4 below). With the removal of the unsightly buildings and the provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme, this proposal will considerably reduce harmful impacts on the Green Belt. In the circumstances, the Council is invited to accept that whilst the proposed development may be deemed to constitute "inappropriate" development, it is clear that there are in existence the "very special circumstances" necessary to warrant the granting of planning permission. This is dealt with further in Section 5.2 below.

3.1.3 Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

This recently published document is particularly relevant to the consideration of this application.

Para 3 of the advice states:-

> ***"The policies in this PPS are a material consideration which must be taken into account in development management decisions where relevant. The development management policies in this PPS can be applied directly to the decision maker when determining planning applications".***

At Para 4 the document defines what constitutes "economic development" and states:-

> ***"For the purposes of the policies in this PPS economic development includes development within the B Use Classes Public and Community Uses and Main Town Centre Uses."***

This proposal clearly constitutes economic development.

With regard to the Government's objectives for prosperous economies, at Para 9 it states:-

> ***"The government's overarching objective is sustainable economic growth."***

To help achieve those objectives the advice states:-

> ***"raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural communities whilst continuing to protect the open countryside for the benefit of all."***

Policy EC6 ' Planning for Economic Development in Rural Areas' states:-

"Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the countryside is protected for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, and the wealth of its natural resources and to ensure that it may be enjoyed by all."

It is considered that this proposal will actually reduce the visual impact of the site and will, therefore, achieve those aims.

Policy EC2 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth states that LPA's should ensure that their development plan:-

"supports existing business sectors…."

PPS4 then sets out a number of Development Management Policies.

Development Management Policy EC10 relates to:-

"Determining Planning Applications for Economic Development"

and states:-

"Local planning authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development". TPC underlining

Policy EC10.2 sets out:

"All planning applications for economic development should be assessed against the following impact considerations:

a. ***whether the proposal has been planned over the lifetime of the development to limit carbon dioxide emissions and minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to, climate change***

b. the accessibility of the proposal by a choice of means of transport including walking, cycling, public transport and the car, the effect on local traffic levels and congestion (especially to the trunk road network) after public transport and traffic management measures have been secured

c. whether the proposal secures a high quality and inclusive design which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions

d. the impact on economic and physical regeneration in the area including the impact on deprived areas and social inclusion objectives

e. the impact on local employment

In terms of the proposal in relation to the above:-

a. The applicant is willing to discuss the nature and form of the building to reduce carbon emissions;
b. The applicant is willing to discuss the provision of a Green Travel Plan;
c. High quality design is achieved; and
d. The district suffers greatly from unemployment and this development will secure jobs.

Policy EC12 is also relevant and relates to:-

"Determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas."

This sets out that:-

"In determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas, local planning authorities should consider a number of criteria including:-

(b) <u>Support small scale economic development</u> where it provides the most sustainable options in villages, <u>or other locations, that are remote from local service centres, recognising that the site may be an acceptable location for</u>

development even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport."

This proposal conforms with PPS4 and significant weight should be given to this fact.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

3.2.1 Barnsley Unitary Development Plan

Volume 1, Part 1 sets out the Council's strategic policy framework. It sets out a number of goals. Goal A is defined as:-

"To bring about economic restructuring and encourage greater industrial and commercial activity in the borough so as to increase the scale and range of job opportunities."

It is a known fact that the Barnsley area was severely hit by the closing of the mines and the loss of jobs and job opportunities. Whilst the subject business is relatively small in scale, the proposal will result in job security which is of vital importance in these different times. The policy aims are defined to include A2:-

"To encourage the growth of existing firms."

A7 states:-

"To encourage growth and diversification of the rural economy…."

With regard to economic development, the section volume 1, part 2, Para 2.2 of the UDP states:-

"In response to industrial decline, economic development and employment creation has become a leading priority for the Council." TPC underlining

At Para 2.4 the advice goes on to outline problems of unemployment in the district.

Further, at Para 2.7 the advice states:-

> ***"In order to have a real impact on unemployment and to provide for the needs of an expanding workforce, a range of employment opportunities is needed, particularly manual jobs which tend to be found in the more land intensive, manufacturing, distributive and construction industries.***

Para 2.8 goes on to state:-

> ***"In order to continue the process of widening the economic base and diversity of the local economy, modern growth industries must be attracted from outside the borough in addition to encouraging the creation and growth of local businesses."*** TPC underlining

Policy ED4 states:-

> ***"PROPOSALS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADJOINING OR CLOSE TO HOUSING WOULD BE ASSESSED WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE LIKELY IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY IN TERMS OF:***
>
> a. ***AIR POLLUTION, INCLUDING SMELL, FUMES, SMOKE, SOOT, ASH, DUST OR GRIT***
> b. ***NOISE FROM OPERATIONS ON OR TRAFFIC ENTERING OR LEAVING THE SITE***
> c. ***VISUALLY INTRUSIVE BUILDINGS, PLANT, FENCING, LIGHTING OR OUTSIDE STORAGE.***

This proposal is for the provision of an extension for the storage of grain which will not lead to issues of harm in term of amenity.

The applicants are willing to discuss with the Council a restriction on the proposed extension limiting its use for storage purposes only, together with limits on any outside storage and the provision of any acoustic attenuation with regard to wagons entering the yard. It is noted at 2.35, the UDP identifies that:-

> ***"The need to provide jobs means that many of the proposed employment sites adjoin housing."***

Policy ED10 – Growth of Existing Firms states:-

> ***"THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING FIRMS WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO SATISFACTORY STANDARD OF DESIGN, THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING USES, ADEQUATE CAR PARKING, LOADING AND VEHICLE FACILITIES."***

The supporting text at 2.45 states:-

> ***"The growth of existing firms will be one of the most important ways in which the future employment needs of the borough's people will be met and this will often lead to situations where the firm wishes to expand its premises. The Council will encourage this process, but will seek to maintain a balance between the needs of those firms wishing to expand and the impact of such expansion on their neighbours and the services and facilities of the Borough. It will seek to avoid placing unnecessary obstacles in the way of expansion, but it will not neglect its overall responsibility to control development in a positive way which will benefit the Borough as a whole. Consequently, firms seeking to expand will be expected to take care with the siting and design of their proposals and to ensure that damage to other interests is avoided."***

It will be noted that the scheme as now submitted has evolved as a result of consultations with Planning Officers and is much changed since that first submitted. The proposed building has now been relocated away from the adjoining property and will be much further away than the unsightly buildings on the site which it is proposed should be demolished. The applicants are willing to work

with the Council in developing and agreeing any conditions considered appropriate in order to address any issues of amenity.

Policy ED13, Rural Diversification – this policy states:-

> ***"DEVELOPMENT WHICH LEADS TO THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE RURAL ECONOMY WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO GREEN BELT POLICIES, CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AND VISUAL AMENITY, HIGHWAY SAFETY, AGRICULTURAL LAND AND NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS.***

At Para 2.48, the advice outlines that in terms of the rural population:-

> ***"Most people will work in urban areas "there is the opportunity to encourage a variety of employment generating uses for local people". The diversification of the rural economy will continue to be important as the agricultural sector continues to decline with the affect that this has on job opportunities and the use of land and buildings in rural areas."***

With regard to Green Belt development, Policy GS7 states:-

> ***"WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND SUBJECT TO THE APPLICATION OF POLICIES GS8, GS8A, GS8B, GS8C, GS8D, GS8E, GS9 IN THIS PLAN DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT MAINTAINS THE OPENNESS AND DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND IN THE GREEN BELT."***

This proposal will result in the removal of existing unsightly buildings and the provision of a landscaping scheme for the site. The proposal will not, therefore, have a detrimental impact on the Green Belt in this area nor on the openness thereof.

Policy GS8 sets out that:-

"VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE REQUIRED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS".

Policy GS9 with regard to visual amenity states:_

"Development within the Green Belt and conspicuous from it, should not by reason of its siting, materials or design result in significant harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt".

It is considered that this proposal as a result of careful consideration and amendments together with landscaping proposals, will not give rise to significant harm.

Policy BE6 relates to the quality of development and design standards and states:-

"THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ACHIEVE GOOD DESIGN STANDARDS FOR ALL TYPES OF DEVELOPMENTS. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ASSESSED USING THE FOLLOWING DESIGN CRITERIA:-

- ***a. THE QUALITY OF LAYOUT AND SUITABILITY OF THE SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT;***
- ***b. THE USE, QUALITY, DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE TREATMENT OF OPEN LAND WITHIN THE SITE AND THE AREA AROUND THE BUILDINGS;***
- ***c. THE STANDARD OF DETAILED DESIGN AND FACING MATERIALS OF PROPOSED BUILDINGS;***
- ***d. THE SUITABILITY OF THE WHOLE DEVELOPMENT FOR ITS PROPOSED CONTEXT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ADJOINING LAND USERS.***

DESIGNS WHICH THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS UNSATISFACTORY IN TERMS OF ANY THESE CRITERIA WILL BE REJECTED. IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THE SCALE OF THE PROPOSAL WHEN JUDGED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EXISTING BUILDING IS SMALL AND SEEING IT IN ITS CONTEXT WILL NOT HAVE A MAJOR VISUAL IMPACT."

Policy ES1 relates to issues of harm to the environment by levels of pollution. This proposal will not give rise to such issues of harm.

A detailed landscape scheme has been submitted to ensure that the quality of the site is enhanced. The proposed extension building has been designed to ensure that it fits in with the existing building and will not form a conspicuous addition.

4.0 THE ISSUES

4.1 The Development Plan

The Development Plan is the starting point for the consideration of this application. It is considered that this statement, together with the supporting documents and plans, fully demonstrate that the proposal wholly accords with the Development Plan. Furthermore, due to the "very special circumstances" that arise in this instance, it is also considered that the proposal conforms with the Council's Green Belt policies (which is explored further below).

It is considered, therefore, that in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the presumption inherent therein should be weighed in favour of the applicants.

4.2 Other Material Considerations

4.2.1 "Very Special Circumstances"

It is acknowledged that this site is located within the Green Belt and that the proposal must be judged in the context of policies relating to that fact. In terms of Green Belt policy, the Council are invited to accept that whilst the proposal would constitute "inappropriate development", it is quite clear that the necessary "very special circumstances" exist in this case which warrant the grant of planning permission. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal conforms with the development plan (as outlined above).

The "very special circumstances" which exist in respect of the proposal include the following:-

(a) Impact on the Green Belt

Whilst the current development and uses of the site are lawful, they must be deemed to be non conforming uses and detrimental to the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt in this

location.

This proposal will result in a number of specific benefits which will improve the visual amenity of the Green Belt in this location, including the following:-

(i) Removal of unsightly and unattractive buildings;
(ii) Provision of an extension which will be in keeping with the existing modern buildings on the site; and
(iii) Provision of comprehensive landscape boundary treatment which will minimise the visual impact of the lawful use of the site.

It is clearly a statement of fact that the proposal will improve the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt in this location.

(b) Landscaping/Visual Impact

A full landscaping scheme is submitted with this application. This scheme will clearly enhance the character and setting of the Green Belt in this location.

(c) The Existing Business

The existing business at the site is long-established and provides not only jobs for an essentially local workforce but also supports local agricultural businesses.

Changes to legislation have resulted in changes to the requirement of the business in terms of the production of feedstuffs and fertilisers. These can no longer be produced in the current manner and the business can no longer continue unless separate storage facilities for the feedstuffs is provided. If action to rectify the situation is not taken, the businesses Quality Assurance Accreditation will be taken away with the result that the business will not be able to supply farms.

A number of options have been considered in order to overcome the problem, including moving the

whole business to a new location. However, this would not be economically viable and would be likely to result in the loss of business / trade as the business would be removed from its existing market area. Furthermore, the option of ceasing the production of fertilisers is not realistic as 25% of the company's business would be lost with the consequent loss of jobs.

This scheme will enable the business to continue and remain competitive and will secure the jobs of the current employees for the foreseeable future. It will also ensure that the business is in place to support local farming businesses.

It is considered that significant weight should be accorded to the issue of jobs and the need to satisfy the requirements of the local farming community.

(d) Planning Support Statement 4

PPS4 post dates the publication of the Council's Adopted DP Documents. As a consequence, the advice contained in the PPS supersedes the Council's adopted policies. It is clear from an examination of the policies and provisions of PPS4 that this proposal wholly accords with the advice contained therein.

(e) Jobs

The business is an important source of local employment with 12 local employees. The development will secure those jobs for the future and would possibly result in further job creation in the longer term.

5.0 CONCLUSION & BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

5.1 Benefits of the Scheme

This application seeks permission for the construction of an extension to the existing buildings to allow the business to conform to current regulations and continue to operate.

The details of the design and form of the proposal have been carefully considered in order to ensure that the scheme is in keeping with the existing buildings and will appear as a small-scale extension. It will be noted that the scheme has evolved and changed in order to minimise adverse visual impacts and includes the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme..

It is considered that there will be significant benefits accruing from the proposal, as follows:-

(i) The removal of unsightly buildings;
(ii) The full visual screening of the site and improvements to its appearance through to provision of a landscaping scheme. This will reduce the visual impact of the site with resultant benefits to the character and appearance of the Green Belt;
(iii) The securing of the future of the business and local employment.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is located in the Green Belt and the proposed use is “inappropriate”, it is contended that it has been clearly demonstrated that the necessary “very special circumstances” exist to justify the grant of planning permission.

The applicant remains willing to discuss all aspects of the proposal with the Council.