

Statement in support of application to change the use of land to garden, site adjoining Willenby, Lowe Lane, Stainborough.

This application proposes to change the use of an enclosed area of land to domestic garden, part of which will extend the garden of Strafford View, and the remainder extend the garden of Willenby. The proposal also involves the removal of a small outbuilding and the taking of a 2m strip of land within the curtilage of Strafford View to provide access from Willenby into the additional land, and also to enable the lowering of this strip of land to protect the adjoining building to the north east. The garden of Strafford View abutting the building has been raised to 1m above its floor level, and this is causing problems of damp within the building. The new retaining boundary wall will be built in natural stone.

The land lies within the hamlet of Stainborough. It is adjoined on two sides by dwellings, and on the third by an extensive public house car park and play area. The eastern boundary adjoins the recently upgraded Park Drive which gives visitor access to Wentworth Castle grounds. It has high hedges on the northern and southern boundaries and is overgrown. It is understood that the land was originally an orchard associated with the adjoining houses, though no trees remain.

The hamlet is washed over by the Green Belt, and this site also lies within a Conservation Area. No building work is proposed, and so the development falls to be judged against UDP policy GS7, which states that "Development within the green belt will not be permitted unless it maintains the openness of, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt." Using the land as garden will maintain the openness of the area, providing outbuildings are not erected on it in the future. This can be ensured by imposing a condition removing permitted development rights contained in Schedule 2, Part 1, Class E of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The applicant is content to accept such a condition. In addition, an existing building will be removed as part of the development.

The garden use will not conflict with any of the five purposes of including land in Green Belts as set out in paragraph 1.5 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 2.

UDP Policy GS9 and paragraph 3.15 of PPG2 also require that development within the green belt should, not by reason of its siting, materials or design result in significant harm to the visual amenity of the green belt. While the extension of a garden into farmland or other land outside a settlement may be visually intrusive, this site is visually within the hamlet, with housing on two sides and the large car park, play area and public house to the south. A garden would look neither visually intrusive or incongruous in such a location.

Because of the Conservation Area status there is a statutory requirement for new development to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area, and UDP Policy BE1 requires the same. It is considered that the appearance of Conservation Area would be significantly improved if the site was gardened rather than left in its unkempt state. It is too small a parcel of land to be used for keeping horses or arable farming. Other livestock would not be compatible with the location directly adjacent to houses. There is therefore no obvious use other than garden that would improve its appearance.