

# Planning Statement

**CHANGE OF USE FROM AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL AND  
DWELLING TO USE AS A BUILDER'S YARD**

**BIRKLAND FARM, FULLSHAW LANE/GILBERT HILL, LANGSETT,  
S36 9FD**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared to support the submission of an application for full planning permission for the material change of use of land at Birkland Farm. At the moment, the site comprises of a mix of agricultural, commercial and residential use, and contains a number of buildings that are utilised for these purposes.

The level of agricultural activity at the site has been reduced significantly in recent years, and the commercial use has also become more infrequent and low-key. The numerous buildings within the farm have, therefore, become largely redundant. The applicants now seek to find appropriate alternative uses for the buildings in the form of a builder's yard.

The applicant is a highly reputable South Yorkshire based building company that operates throughout Yorkshire and beyond. The farm is in an ideal strategic location for a new base as it is roughly equidistant between Sheffield and Barnsley.

The proposed builders yard use is completely compatible with the character and function of the site, given its established agricultural and commercial use. The use would greatly assist with the sustainability of the establish building business, reducing trips between stored materials & equipment and building sites by providing a dedicated storage hub in an ideal location. The reuse of the existing buildings for the storage of building materials would have no impact on Green Belt openness, and there would be no adverse amenity impacts.

Overall, the scheme proposes an appropriate economic development that would make beneficial use of the agricultural buildings, without causing any adverse impacts. The proposed reuse of the existing buildings is a form of development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt and the application is fully compliant with Green Belt policy.

This statement now proceeds to give details of the site. The details of the proposal are then set out. The planning merits of the scheme are then discussed in relation to relevant planning policies contained in the statutory development plan, together with Government

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guidance principally set out in the NPPF. It will be demonstrated that the proposal would have no adverse impacts and accords with all relevant policy and guidance.

## 2.0 THE SITE

The application site is Birkland Farm, which lies to the western side of Gilbert Hill and Fullshaw Lane in Langsett:



The site contains a series of substantial buildings that have established use for agricultural activity, commercial activity in the form of a butchery and meat processing business and as a residential dwelling.

The agricultural and commercial activity at the site has become minimal as a result of a decision made by the current owner. However, all the infrastructure required for a farm and meat processing business remains and the intensity of these use could return to previous levels at any time. The agricultural and commercial buildings are permanent and substantial structures, but are not currently in beneficial use.

The site lies within the Green Belt.

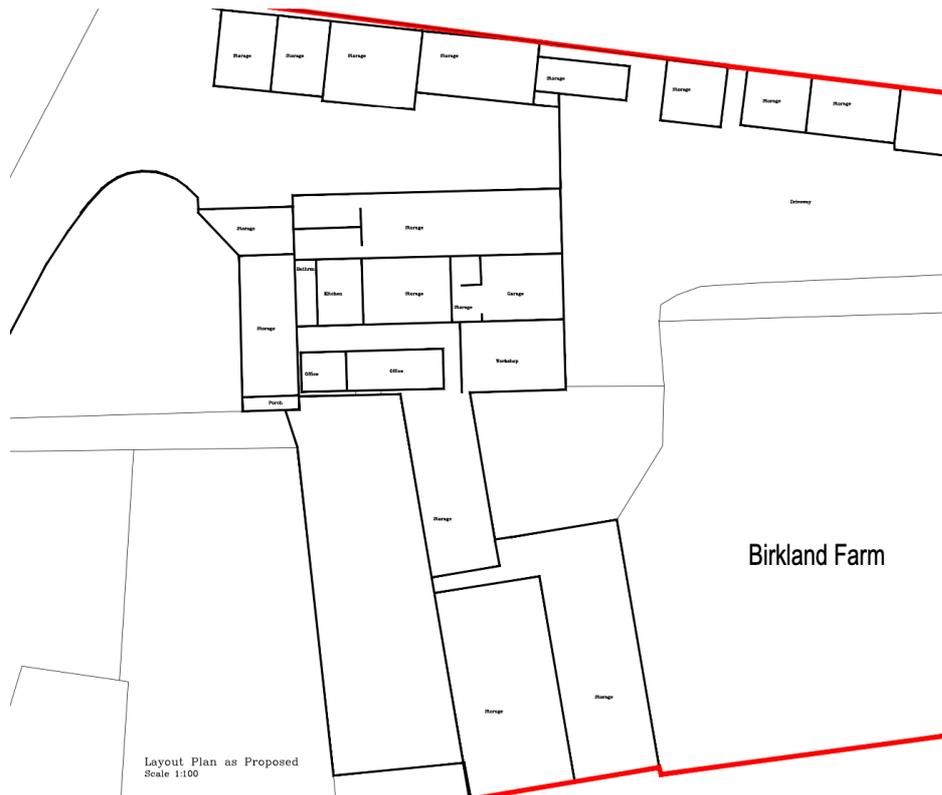
The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings in close proximity.

The site is within Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk of flooding) according to the Environment Agency's flood risk maps.

The site is within a Coal Authority Development High Risk Area.

### 3.0 THE PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for a change of use of the site from the established agricultural, commercial and residential uses to a builder's yard.



The majority of the building space will be used for the storage of building materials pending their transportation for use on active building sites. A small amount of the building space would be used as ancillary office and welfare accommodation for the proposed builder's yard.

The existing buildings provide ample space for the required storage, and there is no need for any external storage space.

#### 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

Recent planning history for the site comprises of:

- 2024/0252 Outline application for the removal of buildings (agricultural, commercial and dwelling) and erection of 1no. detached dwelling (access and layout only considered at this stage) – Application approved 19 September 2024.
- 2023/0888 - Lawful development certificate for existing use of agricultural building as a residential dwelling – LDC issued 21 December 2023

The planning history confirms the established use of the site for a mix of agricultural, commercial and residential purposes.

## 5.0 ALLOCATION AND POLICIES

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Development Plan consists of the Barnsley Local Plan which was adopted in January 2019 and the Joint Waste Plan.

Material considerations exist in the form of national policy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as updated in July 2021 and the suite of documents comprising National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The Council's SPDs are also considered of relevance.

The site is within the Green Belt as identified under the local plan.

### National

The NPPF is reflective of the guidance contained within the NPPG. The following sections of the revised NPPF are considered of direct relevance to the current proposal:

- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 - Decision-making
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The overarching message of the NPPF is that LPAs should adopt a positive and pro-active approach to planning proposals, particularly those that result in sustainable development. LPAs should not place unnecessary burdens on developers and should look to support appropriate schemes such as this.

### Barnsley Local Plan

- SD1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- GD1 General Development

- LG2 The Location of Growth
- E6 Rural Economy
- T3 New Development and Sustainable Travel
- T4 New development and Transport Safety
- D1 High Quality Design and Place Making
- LC1 Landscape Character
- BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- GB1 Protection of Green Belt
- GB3 Changes of use in the Green Belt

#### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Regard has been had to the LPA's Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPD.

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas including through conversion of existing buildings.

Policy E6 is supportive of economic development in rural areas if it:

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

The proposed builder's yard represents an economic use that falls within the above criteria. The applicant is Whitshaws Builders Ltd – an award-winning bespoke construction company based in Sheffield and Barnsley and operating throughout Yorkshire and beyond.

The application site is halfway between Sheffield and Barnsley so provides an ideal location for storing and delivering materials to active construction sites in urban Barnsley and Sheffield, and the surrounding rural settlements. The business anticipates that this will significantly reduce the current delivery mileage for the transportation of materials and equipment to construction sites throughout south Yorkshire.

It is acknowledged that the site is outside of a defined settlement. However, it is inherent that the transportation of building materials will need to be by private commercial vehicle. The proximity of a builder's yard to public transport links is irrelevant as it would not provide a viable transport option in any case. As such, in accessibility terms it is largely irrelevant whether the site is within or outside of a defined settlement. It is, however, noted that the site is a very short distance from the A616 and, as such, benefits from excellent road transport links.

It should also be stressed that the proposal does not include any kind of builder's merchant use that would attract visiting customers. Instead, it would provide a safe and secure storage for low volumes of very large building materials and equipment.

As such, the intensity of the proposed use would be low. Two or three staff members would be employed directly at the site in order to provide security and coordinate deliveries, equipment maintenance and cleaning etc. The regularity of trips to and from the site for employees to attend work will, therefore, be comparable with those associated with previous works at the agricultural and commercial uses.

The transportation of building materials and construction plant will be relatively infrequent. The business will typically have 5 operational sites in South Yorkshire that would be serviced from this storage yard. Each would typically require one delivery of materials and equipment per week (some require deliveries on a much less frequent basis). This means that a typical week will see just 5 deliveries leave the yard to go off to building sites. This level of activity would be comparable to tractor and trailer movements and commercial deliveries associated with the previous agricultural and commercial activities.

It can be seen, therefore, that the proposed builder's yard comprises an alternative commercial use of the existing buildings, that would be very similar to the established use in terms of impacts. The proposal represents the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy.

The proposed use is appropriate and suitable for this location and raise no conflict with the adopted spatial strategy set out in policies SD1, GD1 and LG2. Furthermore, the commercial development fully accords with policy E6 and section 6 of the NPPF.

### **Green Belt**

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF sets out a 'closed list' of development types that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, provided they preserve openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes:

*“The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction”*

Policy GB3 is reflective of this and sets out that the change of use of buildings will be allowed provided that:

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

The existing buildings are all of permanent and substantial construction. They have stood for many years and are showing no signs of any structural issues. The buildings have been inspected by an architect and a note has been provided to confirm that the buildings are fit for the proposed alternative use, without the need for any rebuilding. Indeed, there is no need for any physical works to any of the existing buildings at all. The proposed use is entirely compatible with the existing buildings in their present state. The proposed use can slot straight into the existing buildings and no construction work at all is necessary.

The existing buildings are all of agricultural appearance and character. They clearly reflect the character and function of the rural landscape and are in keeping with their surroundings.

The alterations to the site as a result of the proposed change of use will be purely functional, with no visual differences being evident. The stored building materials and equipment will be enclosed within buildings, and there will be no external storage necessary.

Furthermore, as set out further above, the uses will be no more intensive than the established agricultural and commercial uses at the peak of their activities.

As such, the proposed use is entirely in keeping with the local character.

As noted further above, the agricultural and commercial activity at the site has been greatly reduced in recent years though the choice of the owners. As such, there will be no pressure at all for new agricultural buildings to replace those proposed for new uses. In any case, all of the buildings will remain in their existing condition. This means that, in the unlikely event that agricultural activity was to resume at the site, the existing buildings could very easily be returned to their former agricultural use and there would be no need for new buildings.

The proposed change of use of the buildings is an appropriate form of Green Belt development and fully accords with policy GB3 and section 13 of the NPPF.

### **Amenity**

It is demonstrated above that the proposed use would be comparable in terms of activity to the established use. The builder's yard is essentially a storage use, and is not inherently noisy. No processing is to take place at the site and there would be no associated pollution impacts. There are no neighbouring residential uses that would be adversely impacted by the proposed use.

### **Highways**

The site will continue to be accessed via the well-established farm access point from Gilbert Hill / Fullshaw Lane. The farm access has been used for farm and commercial vehicles (tractors, trailers, hay waggons etc.) for many years and the access is clearly suitable for accommodating this type of vehicle movements. The builders yard use would also involve commercial vehicles coming to and from the site for deliveries, but this would be on an infrequent basis as set out further above. As such, there would be little difference in types and volumes of traffic movements in comparison to the established use.

The proposed development is in full alignment with both local and national policies concerning the impact of highways.

### **Ecology**

The proposal is solely for the change of use of the existing buildings with no physical works necessary at all. As such, there will be no impact on ecology interests or protected species. As the proposal is wholly for the reuse of existing buildings, it falls under the de minimis exemption from BNG requirements.

The development proposal fully accords with local and national policy in this respect.

### **Flood Risk**

The application site is within flood zone 1 as identified by the Environment Agency so is not at undue risk of flooding.

### **Land Stability and Contamination**

The site is within a Coal Authority Development High Risk Area. Pure changes of use of land or buildings that do not involve ground works are exempt from requiring a Coal Mining Risk Assessment.

As no ground works are necessary, and as none of the proposed uses would be more vulnerable to land contamination, there are no issues in this respect.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposal represents the suitable and sustainable reuse of buildings and is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. The new uses would give rise to no adverse impacts and the scheme is fully policy compliant.

The Applicant is willing to discuss any issues that may arise during the consideration of the proposal with the LPA.