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**Detailed Application for 1 No Dwelling
Including Hydro Turbine Power Plant**

Planning Support Statement

**LAND AT BLACKERGREEN LANE,
SILKSTONE, S75 4NS**

Mr P England

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The proposal which forms the subject of this application is for planning permission for 1 No. detached dwelling and a hydro turbine power plant at a site off Blackergreen Lane, Silkstone. The proposal also involves a comprehensive landscaping scheme for the site and the property will be constructed to Passivhaus standards.

The principal aim throughout the preparation of the proposal has been to develop a scheme which is outstanding and achieves the highest standard of architecture, whilst at the same time ensuring it is sensitive to the area thereby enhancing its immediate setting.

It is considered that this architectural scheme will offer an outstanding proposal providing for a dwelling on this currently unused area of brownfield land adjacent to Blacker Dam. Full details in respect of architectural design issues, the design brief, site analysis, inspiration, design, hydro power and sustainability are set out in the accompanying Architect's Design Statement.

The following supporting documents/information is submitted with the application:-

1. Full layout plans and details by Roy Harrison Architect;
2. Planning Support Statement by Townsend Planning Consultants;
3. Architect's Statement by Roy Harrison Architect;
4. Architect's Presentation to Design Panel by Roy Harrison Architect;
5. Landscape Appraisal by CF Landscape Design;
6. Hydro Turbine details; and
7. Photographs, maps and extracts showing historical development of the watercourse and the previous cafeteria on the site.

It is considered that this statement, together with the accompanying documents, clearly

demonstrate to the Council that the proposal accords with planning policy as set out in the development plan (as relevant) and the NPPF and, when judged against this and all material considerations, it is clearly the case that planning permission should be granted. This statement demonstrates that notwithstanding the fact that the site is located wholly within the Green Belt, there exist the “very special circumstances” necessary to justify the grant of planning permission for the development of the site for this proposed scheme.

This statement proceeds to provide details of the site and the evolution of the proposal. Relevant planning policy, central government advice in the form of the NPPF and local planning policies are then discussed. The issues that the proposal raises are also examined and the conclusion is finally reached that planning permission should be granted for the proposal which achieves the highest quality aesthetic design and is sensitive to its setting within the landscape.

It is considered that the proposal is wholly acceptable when judged against the development plan and all material considerations. Nevertheless, the applicant remains willing to discuss all aspects of the proposal with the Council.

2.0 THE SITE, PROPOSAL AND BACKGROUND

The subject application site extends to some 673 square metres or thereabout and forms part of a former car park area to the adjacent fishing lake, Blacker Dam. This application seeks the construction of 1 No dwelling located adjacent to the existing watercourse (Silkstone Beck) close to the lake and incorporates in the submission a hydro turbine power plant for generating electricity for the proposed dwelling.

Detailed discussions have been held at pre-application stage with the Council's CABE Design Review Panel. The proposals from initial concept through to the finished scheme have been presented to Design Review Panel on two separate occasions and the scheme has been amended and evolved through specific feedback on design and landscape issues received from the Panel. The scheme presented is the outcome of the ongoing design process.

The subject site forms a largely cleared site adjacent to Blacker Dam and is accessed via Blackergreen Lane. The site is adjacent to Silkstone Beck and, by reference to historical maps, it is clear that historically the water has been used to provide power to at least 9 mills along the beck (see attached extract plans), including one on the subject dam. The adjacent area is heavily treed and provides for an attractive environment. The cleared former car park area is relatively featureless and open. It is understood from photographic records that there was a cafeteria previously adjacent to the site. Beyond the dam and the immediate environs is undulating agricultural land.

In respect of the proposal, full details of the design ethos and proposal are set out in the detailed architectural statement by Roy Harrison Architect. It will be noted that the scheme has evolved and developed to take account of the feedback received from Design Review Panel.

The proposal is to provide a dwelling which will have a number of design features:-

- (i) The site is situated on and adjacent to the existing watercourse (Silkstone Beck) and is located specifically in the context of the watercourse to allow the generation of electricity through hydro turbine to power the subject dwelling. It will be noted as outlined above, in terms of the context of the history of the site and watercourse, a feature of this area in the past has been the construction of watermills along the watercourse. Most of these have been lost over time, however, this proposal follows the historical legacy and function of utilising the watercourse to provide power.
- (ii) The details of the concept adopted and how this came about are set out in the Architect's Design Statement.
- (iii) As part of the development enhanced landscaping will be provided within the site. Currently the site is open as it was a cleared area used for parking by a local fishing club. That will be planted to enhance the ecological and landscape value of the site, as set out in the subject scheme.
- (iv) Wherever possible eco techniques will be utilised in the construction (see Architect's Statement on sustainability) and the development will be to Passivhaus standards. .

It is acknowledged that this submission is located within the Green Belt and as such the development would normally be deemed to be 'inappropriate' development. It is considered that in this instance the 'very special circumstances' to justify the development are set out in detail. It is considered that para 55 of the NPPF is particularly relevant to the consideration of this application and is a material consideration that can form 'very special circumstances'. It is considered that the proposal put forward to the Council gives the

opportunity to provide a scheme which meets with the highest standards of architecture and constitutes innovative design.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that in considering planning applications, the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. NPPF 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 – The National Planning Policy Framework

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:-

In the ministerial forward it states:-

“Development that is sustainable should go ahead without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development that is the basis for every plan and every decision”.

Furthermore:-

“In order to fulfil its purpose in helping achieve sustainable development, planning responses will be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives.”

Para 6 of the advice goes on to state-

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.”

At Para 7 it proceeds to outline the three dimensions of sustainable development, which include economic, social and environmental.

In terms of the social role:-

“By providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment.”

With regard to the environmental role:-

“Enhancing our natural built and historic environment and as part of this helping improve biodiversity use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”

At Para 14 the advice goes on to state:-

“That the heart of national planning policy framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which is seen as a golden thread running through both planning making and decision taking.”

At Para 17 a number of core strategies are set out which include:-

“• Proactively driving support to sustainable economic development to deliver

homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places the country needs;

- ***Always seeks to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;***
- ***Support the transition to a low carbon future;***
- ***Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.”***

Para 55 then goes on to state:-

“Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as...

- ***The exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should be***
 - ***Be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;***
 - ***Reflect the high standards in architecture;***
 - ***Significantly enhance its immediate setting;***
 - ***Be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”***

It is considered that this proposal constitutes an outstanding and innovative design which will raise the standard of design in rural areas and reflects the highest standards of architecture. It is considered by use of form, design and materials that it will significantly enhance its immediate setting. The pallet of materials and form mean that it is sensitive to defining the characteristics of the area.

The subject proposals have evolved through fully complying with the requirements of the above statement and it is considered that the proposal meets those standards.

Para 56 goes on to deal with good design and states:-

“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”

Good design had been achieved in this instance.

At para 57 it goes on the state:-

“It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.”

At para 61 it goes on to state:-

“Although visual appearance and architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural built and historic environment.”

This proposal sensitively integrates the proposal into the nature and historic environment.

At para 63 it goes on to state:-

“In determining applications great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the

area.”

At Para 88 with regard to the Green Belt it states:-

“When considering any application local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and by any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

It is considered that in this instance “very special circumstances” do exist as outlined in this statement (in particular compliance with Para 55 of the NPPF) and the enhanced landscaping/ecology of the site. The property will also be constructed to Passivhaus standards.

With regard to decision taking at 186 it states:-

“Local Planning Authorities should approach decision taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The relationship between decision taking and plan making should be seamless, translating plans into high quality development on the grounds.”

It is considered that this proposal wholly complies with the NPPF.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

The statutory development plan for the area is the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council UDP and the Barnsley MBC Core document. It should be noted that only those

policies referred to in the Schedule of Saved Policies contained within the Secretary of State's Direction to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council dated September 2007, have been considered in the preparation of this planning support statement.

3.2.1 Unitary Development Plan (Saved Policies)

The following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of this application:-

(i) GS6/WR10

The site falls within the Green Belt as shown on the proposals map.

3.2.2 Core Strategy

The following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of this application:-

(i) CSP 1: Climate Change

In line with the requirements of this policy the main focal point of the proposal is the water turbine which will provide renewable energy for the property and in turn reduce the carbon footprint of the property through this clean energy source. The property has also been designed to meet Passivhaus standards.

(ii) CSP 2: Sustainable Construction

The proposal meets the requirements set out by this policy.

(iii) CSP 3: Sustainable Drainage Systems

The proposal incorporates/can incorporate SUDS.

(iv) CSP 6: Development that Produces Renewable Energy

The proposed water turbine has been designed in a manner as not to significantly harm:

- ***“THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA***
- ***LIVING CONDITIONS***
- ***BIODIVERSITY, GEODIVERSITY AND WATER QUALITY***
- ***HERITAGE ASSETS, THEIR SETTINGS AND CULTURAL FEATURES AND AREAS***
- ***HIGHWAY SAFETY, AND***
- ***INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING RADAR”.***

(v) CSP 26: New Development and Highway Improvement

The proposal will utilise the existing car park access which meets the requirements of this policy.

4.0 THE ISSUES

4.1 The Development Plan

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. Whilst it is accepted that in terms of Green Belt policy the proposal constitutes “inappropriate development”, it is clear that the necessary “very special circumstances” exist in this case to justify the grant of planning permission. The proposal conforms to the advice set out in the NPPF (both Para 55 and the Green Belt). This fact, together with the landscape and ecological benefits of the scheme (conserving and enhancing the natural environment), sustainability and climate change (Passivhaus), justifies the grant of planning permission.

Taking account of all of the circumstances set out above, it is considered that the proposal conforms to the development plan.

4.2 Other Material Considerations

It now falls for the proposal to be considered in the context of other material considerations. It is considered that these point to the grant of planning permission.

4.2.1 Green Belt Policy

In the context of the site’s Green Belt location, it is acknowledged that this proposal constitutes “inappropriate development” and that by reference to Para 89 of the NPPF in order to justify such development, it is necessary to demonstrate the existence of “very special circumstances”. The Courts have held that issues can be combined to amount to “very special circumstances” and it is contended that the combination of the following

amount to such “very special circumstances”:-

- (i) The submitted proposal is of both exceptional quality and innovative design, proposing as it does the construction of a dwelling to Passivhaus standards. The scheme provides the highest standards of architecture whilst at the same time being sensitive in form and nature to its site and setting. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal must be deemed to conform to Para 55 of the NPPF (referred to in more detail in Section 5.2.2 below).
- (ii) The proposal will provide for the landscape enhancement of the site which will significantly enhance its immediate setting.
- (iii) As a Passivhaus, the site constitutes sustainable development and will have a reduced the carbon footprint. As set out in the NPPF, there must be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- (iv) The adoption of hydro-power, which is an historic feature of Silkstone Beck, provides innovative design which reflects the historic functioning of the watercourse.

Therefore, it is contended that there is no conflict with Green Belt policy as the necessary “very special circumstances” exist in this case as set out above.

It is considered that the proposal will not impact harmfully on the openness of the Green Belt as all domestic elements will not be visible from the surrounding area. The site already has a vehicular access which will be reused.

4.2.2 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework clearly states that isolated new homes in the countryside should be avoided unless “very special circumstances” arise. It is considered that in this instance, it has been clearly demonstrated that such “very special circumstances” exist, including the following reasons:-

The proposal consists of a scheme which is of exceptional quality and the dwelling has been designed to Passivhaus standards with hydro-power from the watercourse. The design of the property is innovative, incorporating as it does features and materials which have been designed to take account of the form, layout and topography of the site. The pallet of construction materials will set the building down in the landscape and be sensitive to its woodland setting. It will provide a dwelling of outstanding design where the highest standards of architecture have been achieved. The scheme for the development of the site and grounds will demonstrably enhance its ecological and value and will be sensitive to the characteristics of the local area. The scheme has been fully considered in the context of a Landscape Appraisal.

In all circumstances, it is considered that the proposal wholly conforms to Para 55 of the NPPF and that this fact should be accorded significant weight in the determination of the application.

4.2.3 Design

Taking account of the NPPF and Local Plan policies, it must be recognised that the issue of the impact of the proposed building and landscaping scheme must be a significant consideration. The scheme evolved through ongoing assessment and feedback from the Council’s Design Review Panel. The design is to Passivhaus standards and, therefore,

highly sustainable. Full details of the ethos adopted with regard to the design of the proposal are set out in the accompanying architect's statement. It is clear from Design Review Panel that the scheme constitutes the highest standards of architecture.

4.2.4 Landscaping

It is considered that it must be recognised not only by reference to the NPPF but also to Local Plan policies that the issue of the impact of the proposed building and the landscaping scheme is a significant consideration. The scheme has evolved through a detailed landscape analysis being carried out, which examined both the characteristics of the existing landscape and the impact of the proposal from various public vantage points. From that analysis, the landscape scheme evolved seeks to:-

- (a) Enhance the site in landscaping terms; and
- (b) Provide for the external functions of the facility in a sensitive manner and ensure that the external space could be both blended into the overall landscape and at the same time allow it to function properly as a dwelling.

It is considered that these criteria have been fully achieved by the proposal as submitted.

4.2.5 Sustainability

Full sustainability issues are set out in the accompanying Architects Statement. The scheme involves the development of a Passivhaus with the use of hydropower generated as part of the development.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 It is considered that this proposal provides the Council with a unique opportunity to facilitate the provision of a proposal of the highest quality architecture which is sustainable and will enhance its immediate surroundings and landscape.
- 5.2 It is considered that the proposal fully conforms to the requirements of policy for such a dwelling to be located within the Green Belt and the “very special circumstances” to justify such development arise in this instance. The scheme achieves the highest quality design which will sit well in the landscape; it is of an innovative nature and design; and reflects the highest standards of architecture, and as such the proposal conforms with the NPPF Para 55. The scheme will significantly enhance its immediate setting but at the same time will be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the immediate area and its historic past.
- 5.3 The applicants remain willing to provide whatever further information may be required by the Council. It is, therefore, considered that planning permission should be forthcoming.