

Planning Statement

CHANGE OF USE FROM A MIXED USE OF CATTERY AND AGRICULTURE TO A MIXED-USE OF CATTERY, EQUESTRIAN STABLES, WINTER CARAVAN STORAGE, DOMESTIC STORAGE AND HONEY EXTRACTION, PROCESSING AND JARRING

CONISTON FARM, STAINCROSS, BARNSLEY

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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 Coniston Farm. At the moment, the site comprises of a mix of cattery and agricultural uses. The agricultural use at the farm has significantly reduced in recent years and no longer amounts to a working farm, and the owners now wish to find appropriate alternative uses for the agricultural buildings.

The application proposes a mix of beneficial but low-key uses that are compatible with the character and function of the site and the surrounding area for a mix of private and commercial uses. The already established cattery use is to be retained. In addition, the applicant manages an existing apiary within the farm. At the moment, all honey extraction, processing and jarring has to be carried out within the farm house due to a lack of alternative space. It is proposed to use two of the existing agricultural buildings to carry out these functions. This will not represent any material increase in the scale of the bee keeping or honey production activities but will simply provide a suitable and dedicated space for these operations.

The proposal also includes the return of a former stables building to stables to be used for the keeping of horses by the applicant. This would be for private use, and not a commercial operation. One building is also proposed to become domestic storage space for the occupiers of the farm house.

Finally, two adjoining buildings are to be used for winter caravan storage. This would provide a secure and sheltered storage facility for caravan owners to use during winter months when caravan use is typically reduced. The caravan storage would operate on a 'for the season' basis whereby caravans are parked up at the start of winter, and removed in early spring. Once parked, caravans would not leave in between times and, as such, the actual activity of moving caravans to and from the site will be minimal.

The existing cattery use is to remain unaltered.

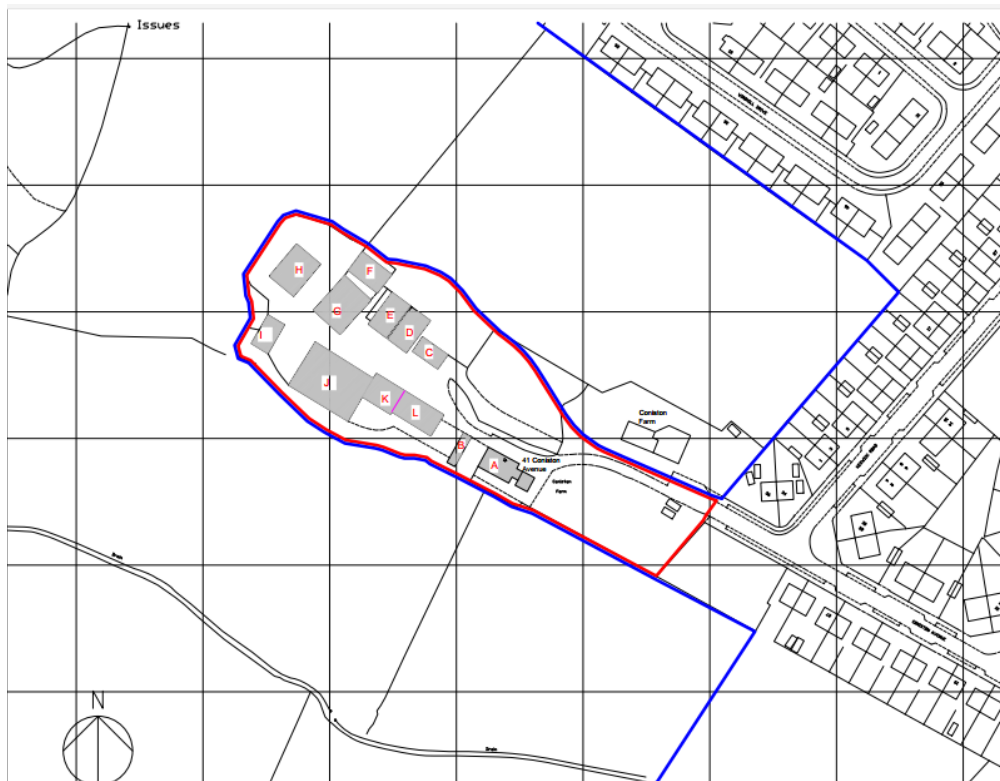
Overall, the scheme proposes a range of appropriate activities that would make beneficial use of the agricultural buildings, without causing any adverse impacts.

The site is within the Green Belt. 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 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 Coniston Farm, which lies at the northwestern end of Coniston Avenue in Staincross village:



The site contains a series of substantial outbuildings that have established use for agricultural activity and a cattery business, and associated outdoor areas.

The site is no longer a working farm as a result of a decision made by the owner. However, all the infrastructure required for a farm business remains and agricultural use could resume. The agricultural buildings are permanent and substantial structures, but are not currently in beneficial use.

As noted above, the applicant also manages an apiary on the farmland. This produces honey which is sold through local retailers.

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 nearest being Windhill Gate Farmhouse which is over 400m from the application site.

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 change of use from a mix of agricultural and cattery uses to a mix use comprising, cattery, stables, honey extraction, processing and jarring, domestic storage and winter caravan storage. Each of the proposed uses is discussed in more detail further below.



4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

Recent planning history for the site comprises of:

- 2023/0796 Demolition of existing buildings and construction of 5no. dwellings (Amended documentation May 2024)
- 2022/0886 Demolition of existing buildings and construction of 6no. dwellings

Both applications were withdrawn prior to a decision being made after it had become clear that the LPA was not willing to grant planning permission. Having been unable to obtain the LPA's support for residential redevelopment of the site, the applicant has now decided to find alternative uses for the existing buildings instead.

Prior to the above applications, planning permission for the use of three buildings as a cattery was approved in 2000 under application reference B/99/0606/DT.

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

Whilst the site is located in the Green Belt (and compliance with Green Belt policy is demonstrated further below), it is still in a sustainable location. The site is very clearly an extension to the main built-up area of Staincross, which itself forms part of Urban Barnsley. The site is accessed directly from Coniston Avenue and is only a short distance from the existing dwellings on Coniston Avenue. The application site boundary touches the defined settlement boundary for Urban Barnsley. As such, the development is immediately next to the defined settlement. As such, the site is not in any way remote or isolated and is in a sustainable and accessible rural location.

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 proposal includes a mix of economic and domestic use. The economic uses (caravan winter storage and honey extraction and processing) both fall within the above criteria.

Caravan Winter Storage

The caravan storage element of the scheme would allow a maximum of 10 touring caravans to be parked in a secure and sheltered environment through the winter months. As noted further above, the business model is based on caravans being parked at the site all winter, rather than being regularly taken to and from the site as would be the case at a regular

summer storage facility. This is a low-key use that would generate a reliable income from two of the existing buildings. It is a use that is related to tourism and recreation, and represents sustainable diversification at the site. The caravan storage fully accords with policy E6.

Honey extraction, processing and jarring

The applicant has established a successful apiary on the farmland. The bee keeping operation produces honey that is sold through local retailers. The extraction of honey from hives, processing and jarring all takes place in the farmhouse at the moment, with there being no dedicated space for this function.

It has been well-established through case law that whilst the keeping of bees for food production could possibly be said to amount to the keeping of livestock as an agricultural activity, the activity of processing and jarring honey is not an agricultural activity. This was confirmed in appeal reference 3228806 in which the Inspector confirmed that a honey barn for the processing and jarring of honey would be a manufacturing process, rather than an agricultural use.

For this reason, use of two of the existing farm buildings for honey extraction, processing and jarring comprises a material change of use from an agricultural to a non-agricultural use.

No overall intensification in the bee keeping activity at the farm is proposed, and there is no intention to increase the overall output of honey. However, having dedicated space for the extraction, processing and jarring (as opposed to this being done in the farm house as is the case at the moment) would greatly improve the efficiency of the business and will, therefore, result in the growth of the business without any material increase in the intensity of the operation. The honey extraction, processing and jarring use fully accords with policy E6.

Non-commercial uses

The proposed equestrian stables and domestic storage uses are solely for private use by the residents of the farm house. Two generations live in the farm house and there is a need for

additional space for the storage of normal domestic paraphernalia including bikes, tools, gardening equipment, decorating supplies etc.

The stables will be used to keep two horses that will graze the associated farm land.

These domestic uses raise no conflict with policy.

Overall, all of the proposed uses are 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 elements of the scheme fully accord 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 uses, without the need for any rebuilding. Indeed, there is no need for any physical works to any of the existing buildings at all. All of the proposed uses are entirely compatible with the existing buildings in their present state. The proposed uses 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 caravans will be enclosed within buildings that have always been used for livestock and machinery storage. The honey extraction and processing will be carried out within shipping containers that will be placed inside of the existing buildings so will have no visual impact from outside of the site. The stabling of horses is entirely in keeping with the rural landscape and there would be no visual impact of keeping domestic paraphernalia within one of the buildings.

Furthermore, whilst the scheme proposes a series of different uses, each one is very low key and cumulatively the uses will still be less intensive than the established agricultural use at the peak of its activities.

None of the proposed new uses generate any significant traffic movements or footfall. The honey production is all carried out at the farm, no deliveries of raw materials are required other than very occasional stocks of empty jars. Filled jars are taken away from the site and delivered to local retailers by the applicant in a normal domestic car or small van. There are no large goods vehicles involved in the process at all, and this will not change.

As noted above, caravans are to be brought to the site at the start of winter and collected at the start of spring. There will be no traffic movements or other activity associated with this use in between times. The collection and drop offs will be strictly by appointment. With only 10 storage spaces proposed, this can be very easily managed to ensure only one van is being picked up or dropped off at any given time, and will only generate 20 trips a year. The domestic storage use will be entirely for the applicants of the farmhouse so will generate no traffic at all and very little by way of associated activity. The stables will again be for the private use of the farmhouse so will only generate very infrequent activity in terms of vet's visits and feed deliveries.

As such, the proposed uses are entirely in keeping with the local character.

As noted further above, the agricultural activity at the site has been greatly reduced in recent years for personal reasons and no longer comprises a working farm. 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 each of the individual uses as proposed, and all of those uses taken cumulatively, would be low-key and generate little activity in comparison to the established use. This, taken with the position of the site at the edge of the settlements means that there would be no adverse impact on the amenity of any neighbouring residents.

Highways

The site will continue to be accessed via Coniston Avenue, with no changes to the existing access and parking arrangements necessary.

As detailed above, the domestic storage and stables uses will generate little to no traffic and would not materially change the existing situation. The honey extraction, processing and jarring use already take place at the site and there is no intention to intensify the honey production or to change the existing delivery arrangement. As such, there would be no material increase in traffic generation as a result.

It is acknowledged that caravan storage on a larger scale could be problematic if it would lead to significant numbers of caravans being towed around the local highways network. However, that is not the case. As set out above, the caravan storage would only generate 20 towing trips per year. The timings of these trips would be managed through a booking system so there would never be more than one caravan accessing or leaving the site at any given time. When trips do happen, they would only span a few days each year, with there being no traffic movements at all for the vast majority of the year. As such, the caravan storage use would not generate traffic to a level that would result in any issues of highways safety or efficiency.

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.