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| <b>Application reference number</b> | 2026/0347 |
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| <b>Application Type</b> | Full – Change of Use |
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| <b>Proposal Description:</b> | Change of use to utilise a proportion of an existing outbuilding (Use Class C3) as a wellbeing retreat and meeting space (Use Class Ee and Ec2). Including minor alterations. |
| <b>Location:</b>             | Copster House, Rag Lane, Thurgoland, Sheffield, S35 7BA                                                                                                                       |

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| <b>Applicant</b> | Mr & Mrs Knight |
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|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Number of Third Party Reps</b> | None | <b>Parish:</b> | Thurgoland     |
|                                   |      | <b>Ward:</b>   | Penistone East |

### Site Description

Copster House is located on the edge of Thurgoland, to the west of the A629 Rag Lane. The site can be accessed either directly from Rag Lane, close to its junction with Roper Lane and Thurgoland Bank, or via Copster Lane, approximately 300 metres further north. The site comprises a large, detached dwelling, a large, detached stone barn and an agricultural style building and is surrounded by agricultural land.

The nearest residential properties are located approximately 100m to the south-west and at a lower level within the valley.

The stone barn subject to this application has previously been converted to ancillary residential accommodation and is currently used as a home office.

### Site History

There is no relevant site history over the last 40 years.

### Proposal

The applicant seeks permission to use the existing domestic barn as a coaching retreat to provide support, space and training for those requiring wellbeing, mental health support and faith-based learning. The sessions will be run for groups of up to 18 people, but generally for groups of 8-12. Sessions will run on a half day or full day basis, with start time between 9 and 10am and finish times between 1pm and 2pm and 4pm and 5pm for half day and full sessions respectively.

### Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for Barnsley consists of the Barnsley Local Plan (adopted January 2019).

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means, no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027, or earlier, if circumstances require it.

### Local Plan

The site is identified as Green Belt within the Local Plan and as such the following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

Policy GB1 Protection of Green Belt  
Policy GB3 Changes of use in the Green Belt  
Policy GD1 General Development  
Policy T4 New Development and Transport Safety  
Policy Poll1 Pollution Control and Protection  
Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and the National Planning Practice Guidance

In December 2024, The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") which is the most recent revision of the original Framework, published first in 2012 and updated a number of times, providing the overarching planning framework for England. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. This revised document has replaced the earlier planning policy statements, planning policy guidance and various policy letters and circulars, which are now cancelled.

Central to the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is at the heart of the framework (paragraph 10) and plans and decisions should apply this presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). The NPPF confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental; each of these aspects are mutually dependent. The most relevant sections are:

#### Chapter 13 Protecting Green Belt land

Paragraph 154 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exemptions (amongst others) applies

- h) other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it
  - iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction

### Relevant Consultations

Conservation Officer – No objections  
Forestry Officer – Verbal discussion - no objections

Highways Drainage – No objections details to be checked by Building Control  
Highways DC – No objections subject to conditions  
Parish Council Thurgoland – No comments to make  
Pollution Control – No objections received  
Public Rights of Way – No objections received  
Ward Councillors – No objections received

### **Representations**

The application has been advertised in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015.

Neighbour notification letters were sent to nearby residents, the application was advertised by way of a site notice posted adjacent to the site and advertised on the Council's website; no representations have been received.

### **Assessment**

The main issues for consideration are as follows:

- The principle of development
- The impact on the character of the area and the green belt
- The impact on neighbouring residential properties
- The impact on the highway network and highways standards
- The impact on the ecology of the site

For the purposes of considering the balance in this application the following planning weight is referred to in this report using the following scale:

- Substantial
- Considerable
- Significant
- Moderate
- Modest
- Limited
- Little or no

### **Principle of development**

Changes of use within the Green Belt are considered acceptable where the existing building is of a form, scale and design that is in keeping with its surroundings; is of a permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction; the 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.

The existing building comprises a stone barn located within the curtilage of the applicant's residential property. Whilst no structural survey has been provided, the building has previously been converted and is currently in use as ancillary residential accommodation to the main dwelling. Taking into account this established use, together with the apparent condition and quality of the structure, it is considered that sufficient information is available to assess the proposal and that a structural survey is not required in this instance.

As such, the proposal is acceptable in principle providing it does not adversely impact upon visual amenity, residential amenity and highway safety or the Green Belt.

## Highway Safety

As previously noted, Copster House is located on the edge of Thurgoland, to the west of the A629 Rag Lane. The site can be accessed either directly from Rag Lane, close to its junction with Roper Lane and Thurgoland Bank, or via Copster Lane, approximately 300 metres further north.

The applicant has confirmed that the southern access from Rag Lane will continue to serve the residential use of the property, whilst visitors associated with the proposed business use would utilise the access from Copster Lane, which provides more direct access to the proposed parking area. The parking area provides parking for 12no vehicles, in line with the guidance set out in the Supplementary Planning Document – Parking. Highways Development Control have raised no objections to the parking provision.

Highways Development Control were consulted on the application and initially raised concerns regarding the accuracy of the submitted visibility splays. Concerns were also raised regarding the width of Copster Lane and its ability to safely accommodate two-way vehicle movements.

In response, the applicant submitted amended visibility splays together with photographic evidence demonstrating two vehicles passing on Copster Lane. Following review of the additional information, Highways Development Control confirmed that the revised visibility splays are acceptable.

Highways have said it would be desirable to have a formal passing place along Copster Lane but have not said that this is required for them to not object to the scheme nor have they said that this is required as a condition.

Copster Lane is an existing hard-surfaced access road, albeit in a relatively poor state of repair. It currently serves the application site, surrounding agricultural land and Grants Farm, located approximately 0.5km to the north. Consequently, the lane already accommodates a range of vehicular movements associated with residential and agricultural activities.

The proposed coaching retreat would accommodate a maximum of 18 visitors per day. The applicant advises that users would attend as part of a single organised group, arriving at the beginning of a session and departing together at its conclusion. Half-day sessions would finish at approximately 2:00pm, whilst full-day sessions would conclude between 4:00pm and 5:00pm. As a result, vehicle movements associated with the use would be concentrated at the start and end of each session, rather than occurring throughout the day.

Whilst the Highways have said it would be desirable to have a formal passing place, it is noted that Copster Lane is an established access serving a number of existing users, including residential and agricultural traffic. The evidence submitted by the applicant demonstrates that vehicles are able to pass one another along the lane and no evidence has been provided to indicate that the existing arrangement gives rise to highway safety concerns.

Furthermore, the proposed coaching retreat would generate a relatively modest level of traffic, with a maximum of 18 attendees arriving and departing in organised groups. Vehicle movements would therefore be largely confined to the beginning and end of each session rather than occurring continuously throughout the day. Given the limited scale of the proposal and the existing function of Copster Lane, it is not considered that the additional traffic generated would materially worsen highway conditions or create situations where a formal passing place is necessary to maintain highway safety.

Whilst the provision of a passing place may improve accessibility for road users, it is not considered that its absence would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety contrary to NPPF paragraph 116, this carries significant weight in favour of the application. As such it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable and in compliance with Local Plan Policy T4.

### Visual amenity

The proposed development involves the change of use of an existing outbuilding located within the domestic curtilage of the host dwelling. Whilst a number of external alterations are proposed, these would not materially alter the scale, form, or overall appearance of the building.

The proposed external alterations are limited in scope and comprise the demolition of a small lean-to extension on the north-western elevation, the insertion of two new window openings measuring approximately 0.3m by 1.5m, and the replacement of an existing garage door with a window on the south-eastern elevation.

The lean-to extension is of poor design quality and is currently in a dilapidated condition. Its removal is considered to improve the overall appearance of the outbuilding. The proposed replacement windows are narrow in form and proportion and are reflective of the building's agricultural character. The replacement of the garage door with a window is similarly considered acceptable, as the proposed fenestration would match the appearance of the existing windows and integrate successfully into the elevation. As such, they would appear sympathetic to both the host building and its rural surroundings.

Whilst views of the outbuilding from public vantage points are limited, the proposed alterations are modest in scale and sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing building. The development would therefore preserve the visual amenity of the area.

It is not considered that the minor external alterations and change of use would have a detrimental impact on the openness of the green belt for the reasons outlined above and as such is considered acceptable and in compliance with Local Plan Policy GB1.

### Residential Amenity

The application site occupies a substantial plot in a relatively isolated location on the edge of Thurgoland. The site is surrounded by agricultural land, with the nearest residential properties situated approximately 100 metres to the south-west and at a lower level within the valley.

Whilst the proposed use would result in additional visitor trips to and from the site, the access and parking area serving the development are located to the north of the site and approximately 150 metres from the nearest neighbouring dwelling. Given this separation distance, together with the limited and concentrated nature of arrivals and departures associated with the proposed coaching retreat, it is not considered that vehicle movements would result in an unacceptable level of noise or disturbance.

Furthermore, the proposed coaching retreat is not a use that would typically generate significant levels of noise, activity, or disturbance. Activities would take place within an existing building on a site that is well separated from neighbouring residential properties. Consequently, the proposal is not considered likely to adversely affect the living conditions of nearby occupiers; this carries significant weight in favour of the application.

Pollution Control Officers have been consulted on the application, who have not raised any objections to the development. As such, it is not considered that the introduction of the coaching retreat would have an adverse impact on residential amenity and is considered acceptable and in compliance with Local Plan Policies POLL1 Pollution Control and GD1 General Development.

### Biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for all applications in April 2024, whereby developers must deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10%, resulting in more or better-quality habitat than before a development except where one of the exemptions (as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance) are met.

Local Plan Policy BIO1 states that development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity features by protecting and improving habitats; maximising biodiversity opportunities in and around new developments and encouraging provision of biodiversity enhancements. Policy BIO1 follows on to state that development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features by protecting ancient and veteran trees.

This application would not require the provision of BNG as it would meet the de-minimis exemption in that no more than 25m<sup>2</sup> of habitat would be affected.

Whilst the conversion of barns would ordinarily warrant ecological consideration, the building has previously been converted to residential accommodation, and the current proposal relates solely to a change of use. No alterations are proposed to the building fabric, roof structure or other features that may provide bat roosting opportunities. It is therefore not considered that the development would have an adverse impact on bats or other protected species. Notwithstanding this, bats remain protected under separate legislation and an informative can be attached to any approval as appropriate.

In light of the above, it is considered that the development is acceptable and in compliance with Local Plan Policy BIO1.

### **PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSION**

In accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF (2024) the proposal is considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposal is considered to be appropriate development in the green belt and would not impact significantly on the character of the area, highway safety, or upon residential amenity, and this weighs considerably in favour of the application.

All other material planning considerations have been fully explored by the appropriate consultees who have raised no objections to the proposal and holistically this weighs moderately in favour of the application.

The proposal is therefore, on balance, recommended for approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions**