PLANNING STATEMENT

- Date Issued: April 2018

SITE ADDRESS:

- Little Blakeley Lane Farm,

APPLICANT:

- Mr. O. Whilock

PROPOSAL:

RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF A BARN ADJOINING AN EXISTING BARN.

KEN WAINMAN ASSOCIATES LTD

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The applicant farms 90.4 hectares (223 acres) producing primarily hay and haylage for sale. The business began in 2012 and the acreage farmed has increased from 6.5 hectares (16 acres) to its present level in the last six years. The land farmed consists of the 6.5 hectares immediately around the Farm and 83.9 hectares of rented land. Until last year the Farm and the 6.5 hectares of land immediately around it was rented on a farm tenancy but the applicant bought the land in late 2017.

1.2 The application seeks retrospective approval for a barn that was erected without planning permission in 2016/2017. The partially erected barn and the nearby hardstanding were subject to enforcement action and went to appeal. The Inspector, in December 2017, made a split decision – the majority of the hardstanding was allowed but the appeal in relation to the partly erected barn was dismissed. The building appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the enforcement notice related to a partially completed structure which unlike a completed agricultural building was not appropriate development in the Green Belt. However, to allow the case for the completed building to be properly assessed the Inspector increased the time for compliance from three months to six months to allow a planning application to be made. The Council's Enforcement Officer, Ms. J. Howard, dealt with the enforcement and the appeal.

1.3 This application seeks approval for the barn which was completed in 2017. The barn can be seen on the aerial photograph below. The red line roughly shows the footprint of the barn which is the subject of this application.

Fig. 1



1.4 Until the summer of 2017 the applicant farmed the 6.5 hectares around the farm plus some 23.2 hectares of rented farmland over 10 sites in the locality. Together the land around the farm and the ten rented sites amounted to 29.7 hectares. The map on page 34 of the agricultural appraisal shows the rented sites.

1.5 In summer 2017 the applicant began leasing a further 60.7 hectares (150 acres) of land in Cheshire from which he took a crop in late summer 2017. The total amount of land farmed. Also, in late 2017 the applicant erected a polytunnel for housing calves on the hardstanding to the south of the application barn. A retrospective application (SMD/2017/0815) for this barn was approved in February 2018.

2. THE APPLICANT'S CASE

2.1 The case in support of the application is that:

- **The building is necessary for the purposes of agriculture.**

  The applicant produced over 1000 round bales of haylage, 1200 round hay bales; and 3000 small bales of hay in 2017 which was a relatively poor year because of the wet weather. In 2018 the applicant hopes to produce 1500 round haylage bales, 2000 round hay bales and 5000 small hay bales. The haylage is wrapped in polythene and stored outside on the hardstanding but the round hay bales and small bales need protection from the weather and therefore need to be stored in the barn as is straw. The applicant is intent on growing the business and is looking to acquire more land. The storage space – both indoor and outdoor - in advance so that as land is acquired the crops can be stored.

  An agricultural appraisal is submitted with the application. This was prepared for, and submitted with, the enforcement appeal and does not include the land in Cheshire which was rented after the appraisal was written. The appraisal shows that the farm was a functioning operation in May 2017 and made a profit. The applicant is intent on growing the business and the acquisition of the land in Cheshire and the construction of the calf-rearing tunnel (now in operation) shows this. The applicant is also looking to further develop the business in the future.

The original barn on the site, granted planning permission is used for the storage of machinery as well as small hay bales and straw and the barn that is the subject of this application is used for the storage of round hay bales. The adjoining photograph (Photo 1) shows the barn in July 2017.

Last year was a poor year for hay and haylage production because of the wet weather. In a normal year usually two crops are taken and in drier weather three crops are harvested. Last year two crops were taken from most of the fields although only one was taken from some.

Photo 1



- **A new agricultural building is appropriate development in the Green Belt and as such it does not harm the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with its purposes.**
- **Agricultural buildings in the countryside (including the Green Belt) and the hardstanding are in accord with the Core Strategy policies SS1 (Development Principles): SS1A (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development); SS6c (other Rural Areas), and R1 (Rural Diversification).**
- **The building is in accord with Chapter 3 in the National Planning Policy Framework.**
- **The building is a well-designed agricultural building and does not harm the character of the countryside or harm the landscape.**
- **The Inspector in the appeal relating to the building stated that he considered that the merits of the Completed "extension" to the original approved barn "has not been fairly considered in the appeal" (para. 832). He extended the time for compliance to allow an application to be submitted.**
- **Landscaping to the north of the barn would be provided as part of the proposed landscaping approved on the planning application for the calf-rearing polytunnel.**