Planning Application

Supporting Statement

10/00180/ 5 MAR 2010 - S M

for

Change of use of Agricultural Buildings
Salthouse Farm

-On behalf of-

Mr Robert MacGillivray
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Supporting Statement has been prepared to accompany a Planning Application at Salthouse Farm for the change of use of agricultural buildings to timber storage.

1.2 The farm is situated approximately ½ mile south of Werrington to the west of Stoke-on -Trent. The farm is situated off Salters Lane between the A52 and A520 and is accessed via a short private drive. The Grid Reference for the property is SJ940465. The farm is situated within the Staffordshire Moorlands Green Belt. The location of Salthouse Farm can be seen on the Location Plan at ***Appendix 1.***

1.3 Salthouse Farm extends to approximately 18.75 acres with a range of agricultural buildings, farmhouse and outbuildings. The surrounding area is predominantly agricultural with the nearest settlement being Werrington approximately ½ mile to the north. There are several smallholdings and farm units along Salters Lane. Stoke-on-Trent is approximately 4 miles to the west.

1.4 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has been consulted prior to submission of the application. Telephone discussions have taken place with Lisa Goldstraw, Planning Officer who indicated that there would be no objection in principle to the proposals.

2.0 Background

2.1 Mr MacGillivray in process of purchasing Salthouse Farm, a smallholding to the south of Werrington. The farm has previously been operated as a pig farm although this use has now ceased. The land is currently used for grazing and mowing although the agricultural buildings are still fitted out with some of the original pig pens. Due to the small size of the holding, the low prices for agricultural products and high price of inputs it would not be currently viable to operate the holding on a commercial agricultural basis.

2.2 Mr MacGillivray operates a timber business trading as Robert MacGillivray Panel Products Ltd from a site in Fenton, Stoke-on Trent. The company buys and sells timber and timber products with some processing of timber into products such as fence posts, pallets, sheds and other structures such as summerhouses. The unit at Fenton is currently used for both the processing and storage of timber. The unit is operating to full capacity and the processing operations are now becoming restricted due to the space required for the storage of timber. For the business to operate to full capacity additional storage space is required. The buildings at Salthouse Farm would be suitable for providing storage space for the timber leaving the existing premises at Fenton to be used for the processing and manufacturing of timber products and some minor storage.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 It is proposed to use the agricultural buildings at Salthouse Farm for the storage of timber in conjunction with the timber processing business operated from Fenton.

3.2 The buildings are located to the east of the house which will be occupied by Mr MacGillivray and consist of three steel portal framed buildings and a concrete block building. The holding was operated as a pig unit until the 1990s and the buildings used for pig housing. Two of the buildings are still divided into pig fattening pens, one is divided into 4 units and the fourth building has been used as an indoor tennis court/five a side football pitch.

3.3 It is proposed to use all four buildings for the storage of timber. In total the buildings will provide approximately 16,500 sq ft (1,522m^2) storage. Due to their shape and size, and means of access the buildings are well suited for storage use. It is possible that the timber stored will require some form of minor occasional processing before leaving the site and it is proposed that a small saw bench is located in one of the buildings. This will only be operated on an occasional basis if some of the timber is in particularly poor condition and requires trimming or needs to be cut to be transported off the site. Further details regarding size and use of the buildings can be seen in the Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

3.4 The yard area between the buildings will be utilised for the temporary storage of timber before it is moved into the buildings or while waiting collection off the site.

3.5 The use of the buildings for the storage of timber will allow more space at the Fenton site to be used for the processing and manufacturing of the timber products. This would enable the business to continue to move forward and increase production. This increase in production would lead to the creation of further jobs. It will also be required to station at least 1 full time worker at Salthouse Farm to load and unload the timber. It is anticipated that at most times there will be 2 workers on site at Salthouse Farm. The company currently has 6 full time workers with a further 2 part time. It is anticipated that storing the timber at Salthouse Farm and the increase in production that this will allow will lead to the requirement for a further 2 full time employees.

3.6 The buildings are structurally sound and capable of being used for storage without any substantial rebuilding or structural repair work.

3.7 The buildings will not be altered externally apart from some routine repairs. Internally the existing pig pens will be removed to create open space for the storage. There are two existing access tracks off Salters Lane leading to the farm. The northern access will be used for the vehicles associated with the timber storage and the southern access reserved for accessing the dwelling. Details of the access, appearance and landscaping can be seen in the Design and Access Statement.

3.8 The house at Salthouse Farm will be occupied by Mr MacGillivray. This will increase security at the site as the house is within site and sound of the agricultural buildings an create a live/work scenario.

4.0 Planning Policy Background

4.1 A review of existing planning policies that apply to this application has been undertaken. This section provides details on relevant policies taken from local, county, regional and national guidance. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase

Act 2004 introduced a new planning system for England, and requires a new Local Development Framework (LDF) to be produced. The LDF will consist of a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs) some of which will have Development Plan Status. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is continuing to prepare the Core Strategy and will then be in a position to prepare other Local Development Framework Documents. Until these documents are adopted the saved policies from the Development Plan within the former Local Planning Authority boundary will be relevant.

4.2 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan ~ The current Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 1998 and is currently the Council's main local planning policy tool.

4.3 Salthouse Farm is located within an area of Green Belt around Stoke-on-Trent which extends into the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan area. *Policy N2 Green Belt* is therefore relevant to this application. The policy follows National Policy Guidance in setting out that there will be a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt including the construction of new buildings except for certain purposes. Planning applications for any development considered inappropriate will need to justify the proposals. One of the purposes set out in Policy N2 for which development can take place in the Green Belt is "*c) the conversion of rural buildings of permanent and substantial construction to suitable alternative uses in accordance with Policy B21*"

4.4 The proposed development at Salthouse Farm involves the conversion of permanent former agricultural buildings which are in substantial construction and therefore in principal is in accordance with Green Belt Policy. Policy B21 Conversion of Rural Buildings sets out that the conversion of rural buildings to other uses will be permitted provided that certain criteria are met.

4.5 The buildings at Salthouse Farm are suitable for conversion and will not require any rebuilding work. The only external work required will be routine repairs and maintenance including repairs to the roof of the building to the north of the yard. Any materials used will be compatible in character and appearance with the existing buildings and local usage. The buildings will not require any significant alteration, extension or rebuilding. The only alterations to the buildings will be internal. The buildings were previously used for pig housing but are now redundant for agricultural purposes. The remaining pig pens and fittings will need removing to enable the storage of timber. Further details regarding the buildings can be seen in the Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

4.6 There are 4 buildings at Salthouse Farm and paragraph c) of Policy B21 sets out that where the proposal forms part of a group of buildings activities outside the buildings may be accepted provided that they do not detract from the appearance of the area. Most of the timber will be stored inside the buildings, but there will be times when the yard will be required for the temporary storage of timber before it can be moved into the buildings or while awaiting collection off the site. The timber will not be stacked high and will not affect the character or appearance of the area. There are buildings to 3 sides of the yard which provide good screening of the main yard area. Existing landscape features including hedges and trees help to screen the yard from the east which is the only open side and the applicant is happy to plant additional trees.

4.7 Due to their shape and size, and means of access the buildings are well suited for storage use. Paragraph d) of Policy B21 sets out that appropriate uses may include small workshops, storage and related employment uses. This is due to the traditional use of the buildings being non-residential and as such uses are more likely to be in character and less likely to require additional works.

4.8 The buildings will be accessed via an existing track off Salters Lane. Although the use will create traffic movement the access and surrounding road network are capable of accommodating this. There has previously been heavy traffic accessing the site in relation to the pig enterprise and also other agricultural uses. Further details regarding the access can be seen in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application.

4.9 To allow for essential minor processing to take place to some of the timber there will be a saw bench located in one of the buildings. This will only involve trimming the timber if in particularly poor condition or damaged, or cutting timber if necessary before it is transported off the site. No major processing or manufacturing will take place at Salthouse Farm as this will continue to be carried out at the Fenton site. This will be situated inside one of the buildings and will only create a low level of noise on an occasional basis. The nearest residential dwelling apart from Salthouse, which is to be occupied by Mr MacGillivray and his family, are School House approximately 220m to the north and The Elms and The Oaks semi detached cottages approximately 230m south of the site. There will be no smell, fumes or other environmental considerations that would have an impact on the character of the buildings and surroundings.

4.9 Although not strictly diversification, *Policy E3 Agriculture* does have some relevance as the application is for an alternative use for agricultural buildings. Alternative uses for agricultural buildings may be approved providing they diversify the rural economy and conform to normal planning criteria. The proposed change of use application for Salthouse Farm will enable the use of redundant agricultural buildings for a rural employment use in conjunction with an existing timber processing business. It will enable the existing business to expand production and create employment in the local area.

4.10 *Policy B13 Design* sets out the design criteria that development proposals should meet. The proposed change of use at Salthouse Farm will not involve new build and only routine external repairs will be required to the existing buildings. The content of this policy has been considered in more detail in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application.

4.11 Regional Policy has also been taken into account namely the saved policies in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan and the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. *Policy D4 Managing Change in the Rural Area* in the Structure Plan sets out that the essential character and economic and social fabric of rural areas should be maintained and improved – and that one of the ways to achieve this is encouraging development which assists in diversifying the local economy and underpins or improves services and community facilities. *Policy D5B Development in the Green Belt* sets out when development in the Green Belt may be permitted including 'reuse of buildings within the Green Belt may be appropriate provided that the new use does not have a materially greater impact on the

openness or quality of the Green Belt and that any conversion work does not disproportionally increase the size of buildings and is in-keeping with the surroundings'. The proposed development is in accordance with these policies at it involves the suitable reuse of existing buildings for the storage of timber. The buildings will not increase in size and no external alterations will be made. The development will allow an existing business to increase production and create employment. *Policy E7 Existing Industries* supports the needs of existing industry by both permitting firms to extend or expand unless unacceptable environmental conditions would result and also by promoting the reuse of land and redundant buildings to provide space for new employment.

4.12 The WMRSS is currently being reviewed, but policies of relevance to the application include *Policy PA14: Economic Development and the Rural Economy* which sets out that strategies should support the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprise. *Policy RR1: Rural Renaissance* also highlights the importance of diversifying the rural economy.

4.13 PPG2 – Green Belts states that with suitable safeguards, *'the re-use of rural buildings should not prejudice the openness of Green Belts, since the buildings are already there. It can help to secure the continuing stewardship of land especially by assisting farmers in diversifying their enterprises, and may contribute to the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts. The alternative to re-use may be a building that is left vacant and prone to vandalism and dereliction*'. Paragraph 3.8 goes on to set out that '*the re-use of buildings inside a Green Belt is not inappropriate development providing*:

a) it does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;
b) strict control is exercised over the extension of re-used buildings, and over any associated uses of land surrounding the building which might conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it (eg because they involve extensive external storage, or extensive hardstanding, car parking, boundary walling or fencing);
c) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and
d) the form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings. (Conversion proposals may be more acceptable if they respect local building styles and material, though the use of equivalent natural materials that are not local should not be ruled out)'.

4.14 The development is in accordance with this guidance set out in PPG2 as the storage of timber will not have greater impact than agricultural use or a use ancillary to the house. The buildings will not be extended and are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction. No external alterations will be required apart from routine repairs and maintenance work. The only external storage will be the temporary storage of timber while it is waiting to be moved into the buildings or taken off site. This storage will only take place within the existing yard which is enclosed by the buildings to 3 sides. There will therefore be no impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4.15 *PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* is also relevant to the application. This encourages planning authorities to support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas including the future expansion of business premises. PPS7 recognises that planning has an important role in supporting and facilitating development of land uses within the countryside which enable those who earn a living from, and help to maintain and manage the countryside to continue to do so. Much of the guidance within PPS7 has now been replaced by PPG4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth however paragraph 31 which encourages planning authorities to encourage the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible is still applicable.

4.16 *PPS4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* also supports the re-use of rural buildings in Policy EC6: Planning for Economic Development in Rural Areas. Paragraph EC6.c. sets out that in rural areas planning authorities should "*support the conversion and re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside (particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns and villages) for economic development*". *Policy EC12: Determining Planning Applications for Economic Development in Rural Areas* also sets out that local planning authorities should approve planning applications for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for economic development. The policy also sets out that the benefits should outweigh the harm in relation to '*i. the potential impact on the countryside, landscapes and wildlife, ii. Local economic and social needs and opportunities, iii. Settlement patterns and the level of accessibility to service centres, markets and housing, iv. The need to conserve, or the desirability of conserving, heritage assets and, v. the suitability of the building(s) and of different scales, for the re-use recognising that replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion*'. The proposed re-use of the buildings at Salthouse Farm will not harm the countryside, landscapes or wildlife and would benefit both the existing business operated by Mr MacGillivray and provide local employment. The site is only approximately ½ mile from Werrington. The buildings are not listed and of no archaeological value and are highly suitable for the storage of timber without significant rebuilding or alterations.

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

5.1 The proposed scheme would re-use existing buildings at Salthouse Farm which are redundant for agricultural purposes for the storage of timber in association with an existing business. The use of the buildings at Salthouse Farm will allow greater utilisation of the processing facility at Fenton and increased production. This will benefit the existing business and provide further jobs in the local area.

5.2 The proposals involve the use of existing buildings and no new buildings will be constructed. It is proposed to use the existing northern access for vehicles associated with the timber storage and retain the southern access for the house. No external work is required to the buildings apart for routine repairs and maintenance they are suitable for timber storage. The character of the buildings and the surrounding area will not be affected by the proposed use of the buildings.

5.3 Although the site is within the Green belt, the proposals fit with policy as the project involves the re-use of buildings. It will not have a materially greater impact than the

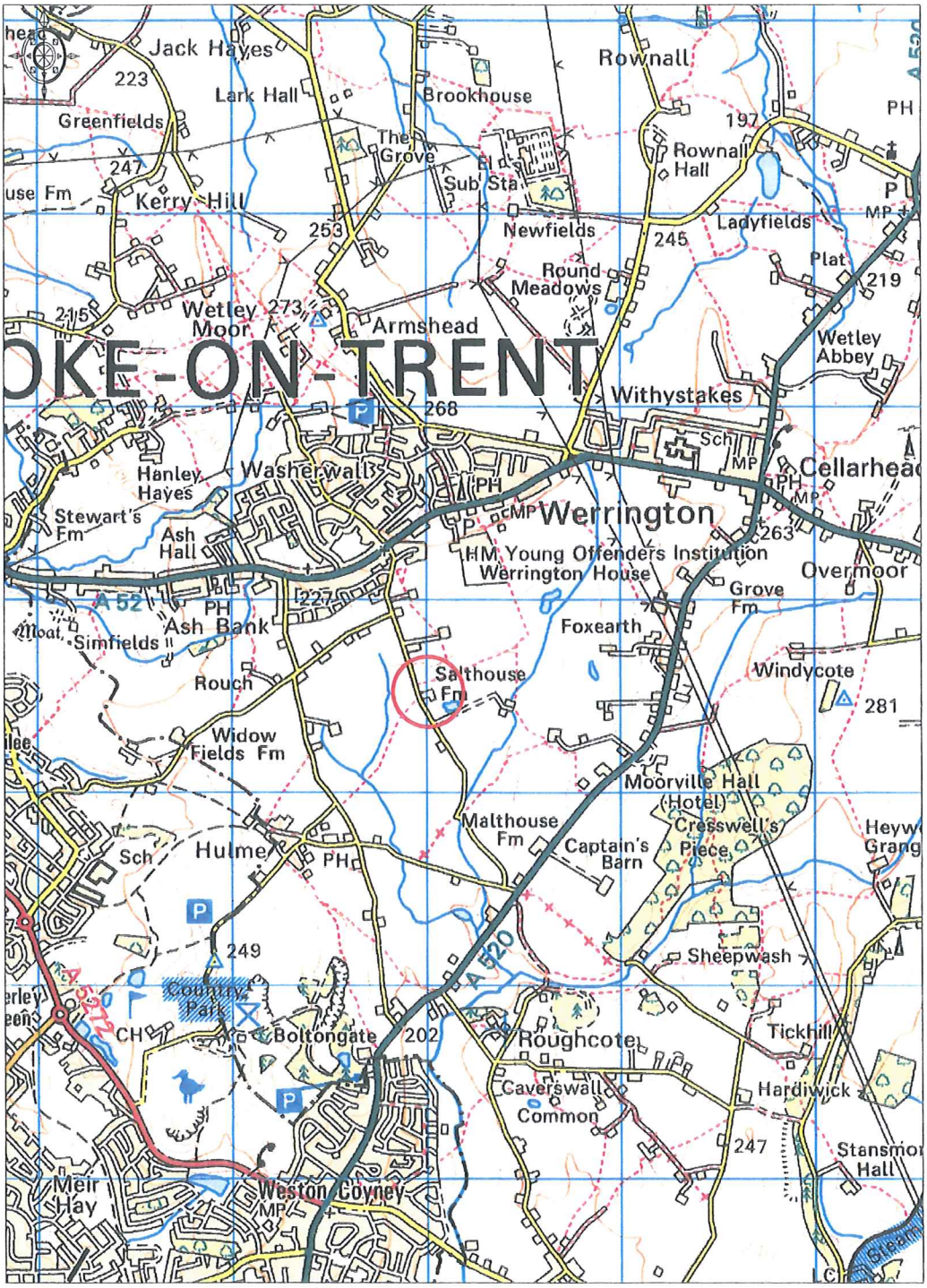
previous use on the openness of the Green Belt or the purposes of including land within it. The proposals also meet with other policy in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

5.4 The proposal meets Government Policy Guidance which is to support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas including the re-use of rural buildings.

Appendix 1

Location Plan

Robert MacGillivray Panel Products Ltd
Salthouse Farm - General Location



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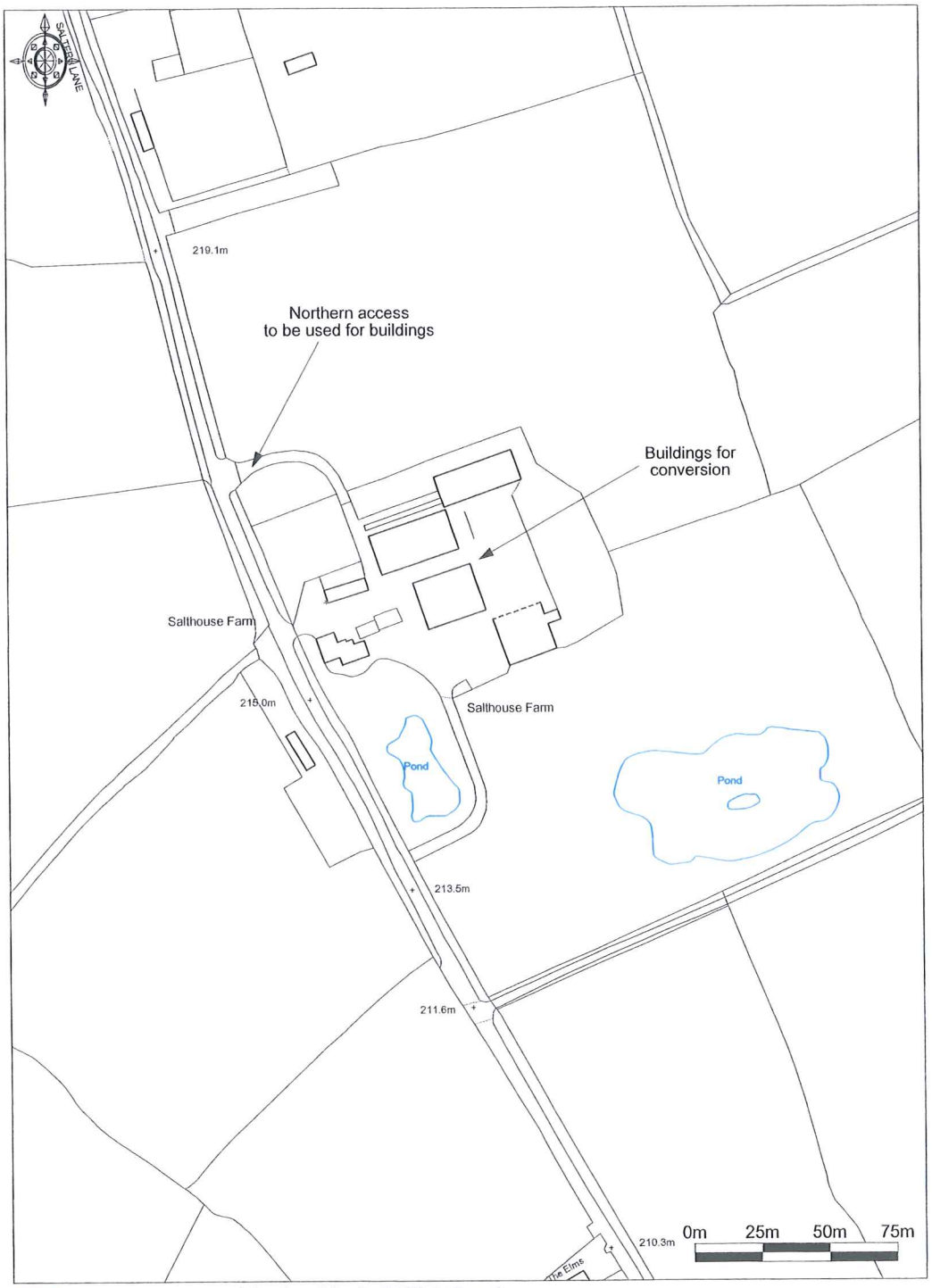
Appendix 2

Site Plan

Robert MacGillivray Panel Products Ltd
Change of Use of Buildings at Salthouse Farm



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Change of Use of Buildings at Salthouse Farm

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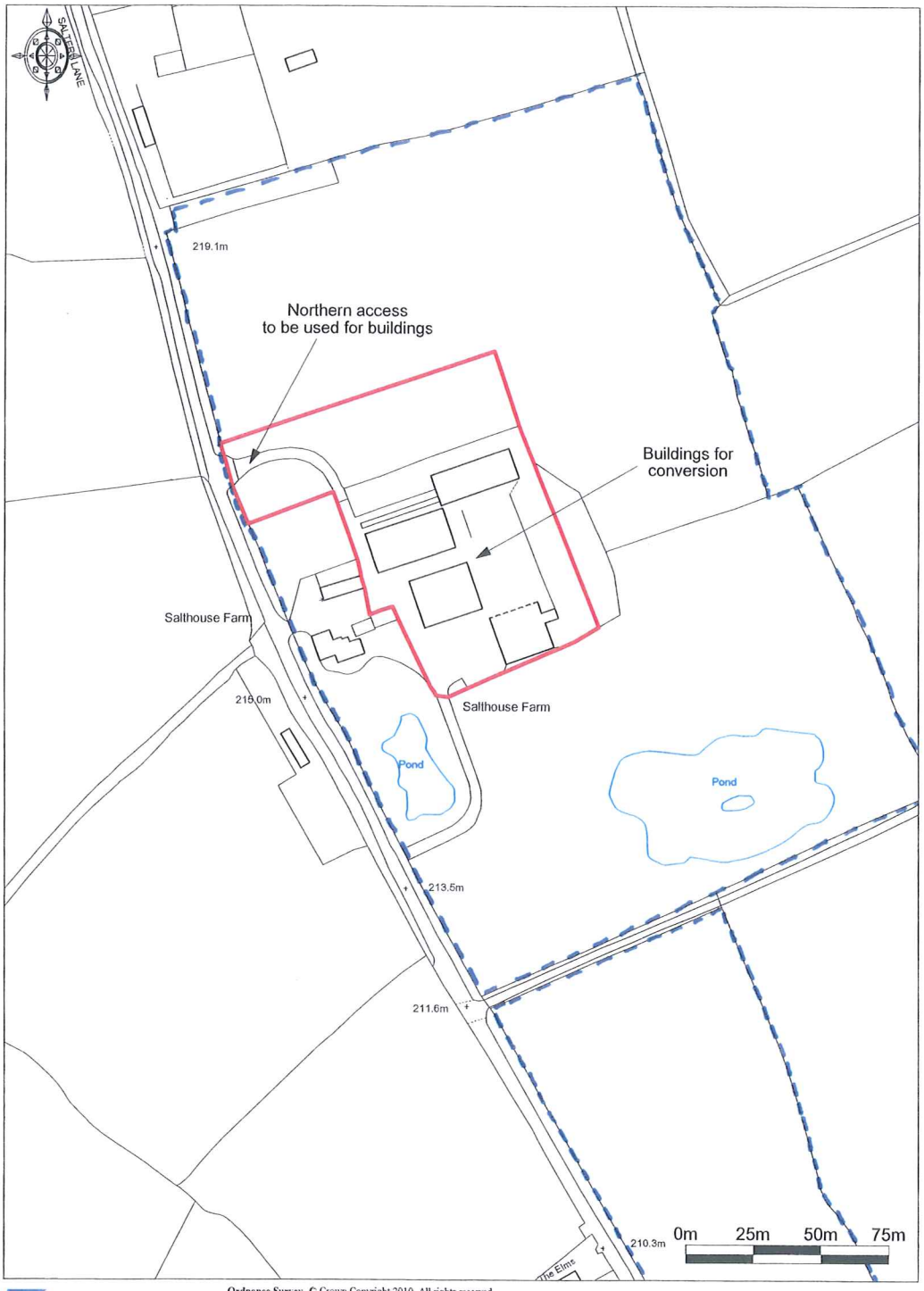

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