PLANNING STATEMENT

FOR THE

ERECTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO HOUSE A NEW PARLOUR AND DAIRY

AT

FOREST FARM

ASHBOURNE ROAD

CALTON MOOR

ASHBOURNE

DE6 2BU

ON BEHALF OF

BIRCHWOOD PARK FARMS

Report produced by:-

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PP.12188926: JUNE 2023 :

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- This Statement has been produced to accompany a full planning application relating to the erection of an agricultural building at Forest Farm which will be used to house a new parlour and dairy.

- A further planning application has also been submitted for a covered collecting yard which adjoins this development (PP.12188927).

- Building works are underway to complete new livestock housing which has been approved under Planning Applications SMD/2023/0149 and SMD/2023/0150.

2.0 AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION

- Birchwood Park Farms currently operates across three land holdings, farming approximately 675 acres (273.258 hectares).

- The farm partnership has grown over a number of years, initially started in 1991 on a 90 acres dairy farm near Burton on Trent with a herd of approximately 60 cows. In 2000, the family moved to Birchwood Park Farm, allowing the herd size to increase to 140 head.

- In 2011, the land at Moor Lane, Stockwell Heath was purchased and more recently Forest Farm in 2016. Over this period, the applicants have restructured their business to facilitate growth and increased the size of the dairy herd to 300 cows with approximately 650 head of cattle in total.

- Birchwood Park Farms has achieved organic status with milk being sold to ARLA who supply McDonalds restaurants. The organic milk market is more stable than commercial milk prices.

- Organic dairy farms operate a lower stocking density than conventional units and therefore the applicants have built up a substantial landholding to meet the certification requirements. Furthermore, the environmental objectives achieved with the organic certification complement the applicant's business.

- Birchwood Park Farms operates across three main farm units. These units can be summarised as follows:

BIRCHWOOD PARK FARMS - FARM HOLDINGS

	Acres	Hectares
Birchwood Park Farm, Roston Dairy unit, Grassland and Arable	354	143.262
Moor Lane Farm, Moor Lane, Stockwell Heath Finishing unit and Licensed TB Finishing Unit, Grassland and Arable	165	66.775
Forest Farm, Swinscoe, Ashbourne Dairy unit, all grassland	126.22	51.081
Land at Darlbury Lees, Ashbourne Cattle grazing	30	12.141
TOTAL LAND FARMED	**675**	**273.258**

- All dairy youngstock are homebred, breeding their own herd replacements.

- With the exception of Birchwood Park Farm, the above farms are owned by the applicants. Birchwood Park Farm is the only tenanted holding and is in need of significant capital investment to improve the standard of the livestock housing at the farmstead. Due to the complications in relation to tenancy law, security of tenure and financial implications, it is not possible to invest further capital into Birchwood Park Farm as the applicant do not own the freehold interest.

- Therefore, to secure the future of the farm partnership, the applicants intend to carry out a program of investment at Forest Farm to expand and improve the standard of livestock housing available along with commencing organic milk production at this holding.

- The proposed agricultural building will house a new parlour, dairy (including milk storage tank and refrigeration facilities), office and rest room. This proposal is a significant investment for the business to provide modern milking facility for the organic herd and this scheme is an integral part of the overall investment.

3.0 PRINCIPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- Local Plan Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that rural areas of the District will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside (amongst other associated development, for example farm diversification).

- This agricultural holding is a long-established agricultural enterprise operating across three farms. The proposed building will house modern dairy milking facility which is an essential investment to improve the business. Therefore, the proposed accords with Policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

4.0 SITING & DESIGN

- The site is within the 'White Peak' Character Area and the 'Limestone highland fringe' landscape character type, as identified in the Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA). In terms of new agricultural buildings, the LSCA states for this landscape character type: *'The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.'*

- The proposed building is sited adjacent to existing modern agricultural development and will be cut-in to the existing landform. The proposed building sits immediately adjacent to the existing larger cubicle housing range approved under Planning Applications SMD/2023/0149 and SMD/2023/0150.

- Although the proposed building follows the same alignment, eaves height and roof pitch of the adjacent building, the scale and massing is less due to the reduced gable width. Therefore, the overall gable height is lower.

- The materials used replicate those used on the existing building and common on development of this type and nature.

5.0 ACCESS

- Access to the proposed building is gained through the existing yard area from the public highway.

6.0 VISUAL IMPACT

- The proposed building will be cut-in to the existing landform to create a level platform. Furthermore, the building is sited in a natural dip in the landscape with a rising land level towards the North.
- This significantly reduces the visual impact of the building particularly when viewed from the North. Any views of the building from the public highway on the higher ground to the North are in context with the existing built development.
- From the South, there are no public roads or footpaths where the development would be clearly visible. Any distant views of the proposed building are in context with other adjacent agricultural development with the backdrop of the higher land behind.

7.0 AMENITY

- There are no residential dwellings, other than the applicant's farmhouse, that are located in close proximity to the development. Therefore, the proposed accords with Local Plan Policy DC1.

8.0 SOIL DISPOSAL

- Excavation works are proposed to create a level platform and to cut-in the proposed building into the existing landform.
- Excess soil will be used to fill an area of undulating land to the South East of the wind turbine where excess soil can be levelled to fill hollows in the field bringing the level upto the natural gradient of the field. Works have already been approved to dispose of excess soil in this location as part of Planning Approval SMD/2021/0273 however there is still further capacity in this area to fill this hollow.

Photograph i): Aerial Plan of Forest Farm



- The hollows and undulations within the area outlined by the green perimeter make this area of pasture difficult to manage and access with machinery, for example pasture topping with a tractor.
- The undulations within the green perimeter denoted by points A) – D) will be filled with excess soil to bring the field levels upto the natural gradient of the land running from points A- B,C & D and points B-C.

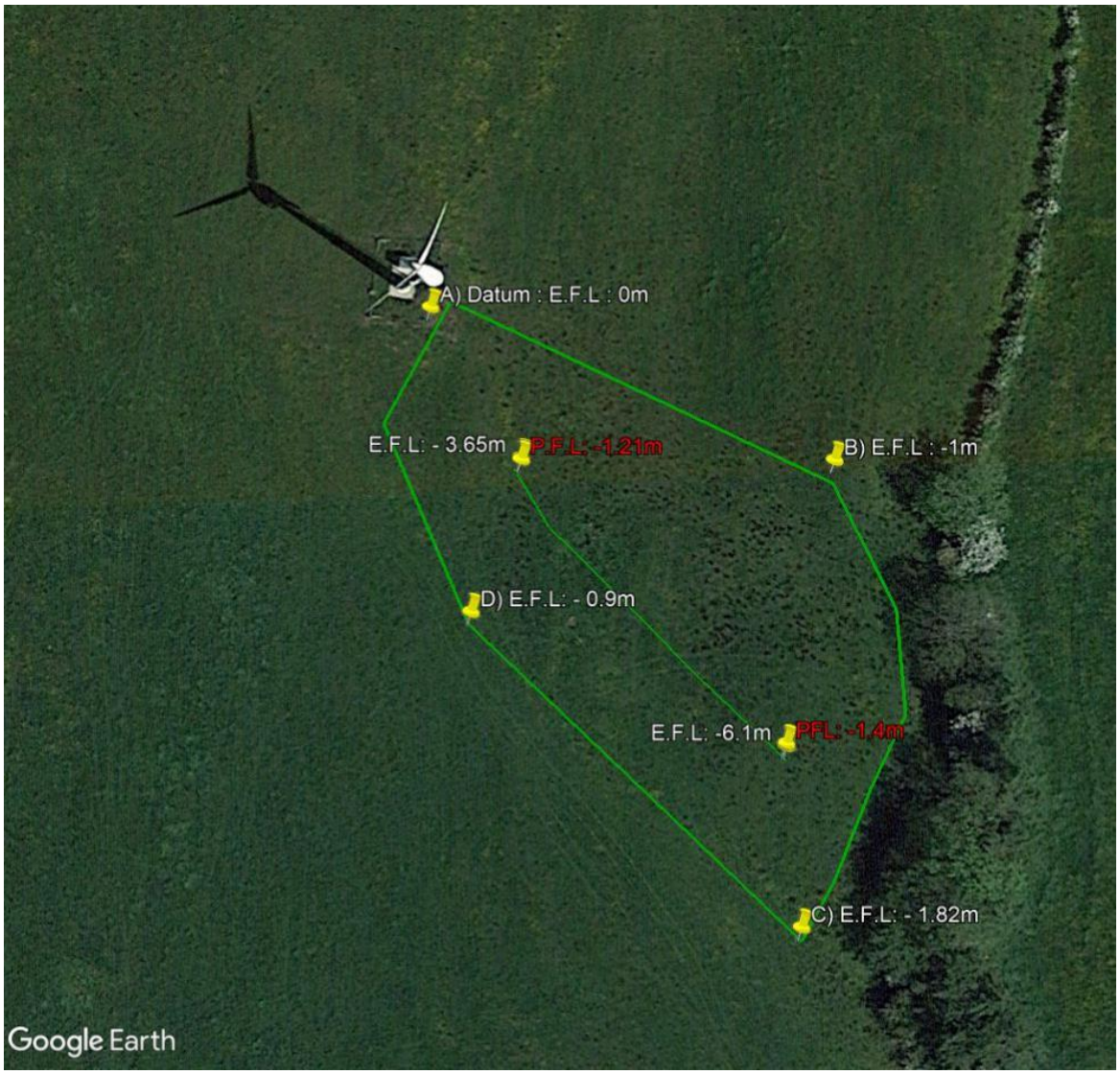
KEY –

Datum – reference level at the base of the wind turbine

E.F.L – Existing Field Level

P.F.L – Proposed Field Level

Aerial Site Plan of Soil Disposal Area



- The area where soil has been filled and graded will be covered with 150mm-200mm of top soil suitable for pasture reinstatement.
- The soil surface will be prepared for seeding with a mixed pasture seed mix to establish a grass sward suitable for grazing livestock.
- Soil will only be leveled no higher than the gradient of existing land topography around the green perimeter to fill in the undulates holes in these areas of the field.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- This scheme is part of a substantial capital investment program at Forest Farm to provide modern dairy and milking facilities to serve the existing organic dairy herd.
- The proposed building is an integral part of the investment program and is required to serve an existing established farm enterprise.
- The building has been carefully sited, adjacent to existing agricultural development following the same alignment and utilising similar materials. The overall scale and massing of the proposed building is less that the adjacent range which is under construction due to the reduced width and overall ridge height.
- Due to the design, topography of the land and site within a natural hollow, the proposed building sits comfortably within the local landscape.
- The proposal also accords with all National and Local Planning Policies.
- Finally, consideration should also be given to the positive contribution which this farm business makes to the local landscape, rural economy and food production, managing a substantial amount of land across three holdings.