



PLANNING STATEMENT

FOR THE

ERECTION OF A GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING

AT

FOREST FARM

ASHBOURNE ROAD

CALTON MOOR

ASHBOURNE

DE6 2BU

ON BEHALF OF

BIRCHWOOD PARK FARMS

Report produced by:-

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- This Statement has been produced to accompany a Prior Notification relating to agricultural development at Forest Farm to seek permission for the erection of a general purpose agricultural building to store straw and grassland machinery
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council have already approved a phased expansion of the farm to create a new dairy unit and this scheme will allow the business to carry out further improvements to the holding and install the required infrastructure for the operation of a modern dairy unit.
- The development proposed is adjacent to the existing modern dairy unit which is under construction.

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 are carrying out a program of investment at Forest Farm to provide expand and improve the standard of livestock housing available. It is also the intension to commence organic milk production at this holding.
- The existing livestock buildings will provide modern accommodation for the dairy herd and youngstock along with the installation of a new purpose built dairy and parlour.

3.0 MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT ORDER 2015

- Schedule 2, Part 6 of the above Act allows *“The carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of—*
 - (a)works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or*
 - (b)any excavation or engineering operations,**which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.*
- The agricultural unit extends to 275 ha with Forest Farm extending to 51ha.
- The proposed general purpose agricultural building is needed to store barley and wheat straw which is required at Forest Farm to provide winter feed and bedding. Barley straw is fed to youngstock and wheat straw is used for animal bedding for the youngstock. Some of the straw is produced from the arable land forming part of the agricultural holding with the remaining straw being purchased in bulk during the harvest season. The applicant must ensure that the holding has a sufficient volume of storage for both home-produced and purchased straw.
- Part of the building will also be used to store the grassland machinery. This equipment is of high value and should be dry stored when not in use to improve the longevity of this machinery and reduce the risk of theft.
- Therefore, it is considered that this proposal is reasonably necessary for agricultural purposes on this unit.
- Comments in relation to specific elements of the Act are included below-
- **A.1 Development is not permitted by Class A if—**
 - *(a)the development would be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area;*
 - **Forest Farm is 51 ha.**
 - *(b)it would consist of the erection or extension of any agricultural building on an established agricultural unit (as defined in paragraph X of Part 3 of this Schedule) where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use) of this Schedule has been carried out within a period of 10 years ending with the date on which development under Class A(a) begins;*
 - **No Class Q or S development has been carried out.**
 - *(c)it would consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling; N/A*

- (d)it would involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes;
All of the development proposed is design for agricultural purposes.
- (e)the ground area which would be covered by—
- (i)any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations [**F1**would exceed 1,000 square metres]; or
- (ii)any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A [**F2**would exceed 1,500 square metres],
F3... calculated as described in paragraph D.1(2)(a) of this Part;
- Below is a breakdown of the buildings erected in the last 2 years-

Table 1 : Breakdown of Floor Space for Relevant Existing Buildings at Forest Farm

	Planning Reference	Floor Area (M2)	Use	Determined	Erected	End of 2 Year Period
Cubicle Housing Phase I	SMD/2023/0149	743	Livestock housing	19/05/2023	10/09/2023	10/09/2025
Cubicle Housing Phase II	SMD/2023/0150	650	Livestock housing	19/05/2023	10/09/2023	10/09/2025
Covered Collecting Yard	SMD/2023/0333	325	Livestock handling	30/08/2023	20/07/2024	20/07/2026
Parlour and Dairy	SMD/2023/0331	372	Livestock handling	30/08/2023	20/07/2024	20/07/2026

- Following discussions with the planning officer, Ben Hurst, following the determination of Planning Application DET/2025/0009 and taking into account the implications of alternative planning application options, it was agreed that the Council would consider a conditional approval on the basis that the proposed building would not be 'provided' until after the 11th September 2025, once the 2 year period for Approvals has SMD/2023/0149 and SMD/2023/0150 elapsed.
- On the basis that the proposed building is not provided (i.e. completed and occupied) before 11th September 2025, the scheme will be compliant with the paragraph D.1(2)(a) of Part 6.
- A table is provided below to summarise the floor space calculations to include the proposed building.

Table 2 - Breakdown of Floor Space for the basis of Conditional Approval

	Planning Reference	Floor Area (M2)	Use	Determined	Erected	End of 2 Year Period
Covered Collecting Yard	SMD/2023/0333	325	Livestock handling	30/08/2023	20/07/2024	20/07/2026
Parlour and Dairy	SMD/2023/0331	372	Storage	30/08/2023	20/07/2024	20/07/2026
Proposed Building		446	Fodder Storage			
Total		1143				

- Part of the building will also be used to store the grassland machinery. This equipment is of high value and should be dry stored when not in use to improve the longevity of this machinery and reduce the risk of theft.
- *(f)the height of any part of any building, structure or works within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 3 metres; N/A*
- *(g)the height of any part of any building, structure or works not within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 12 metres; The ridge height is 6.72m*
- *(h)any part of the development would be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road; The proposed development is more that 25m from the classified road.*
- *(i)it would consist of, or include, the erection or construction of, or the carrying out of any works to, a building, structure or an excavation used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge where the building, structure or excavation is, or would be, within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building; The building is not used for this purpose.*
- *(j)it would involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2(4) land which are connected with fish farming; F4... N/A*
- *(k)any building for storing fuel for or waste from a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system—*
- *(i)would be used for storing waste not produced by that boiler or system or for storing fuel not produced on land within the unit; or N/A*
- *(ii)is or would be within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building [F5; or N/A*
- *(l)the erection or extension of a building would be carried out on land or a building that is, or is within the curtilage of, a scheduled monument]. N/A*

- Therefore, the proposed development accords with all relevant elements of the GPDO.

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). 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 agricultural building is sited adjacent to existing modern agricultural development and will be cut-in to the existing landform.
- The materials proposed replicated those used on the adjacent agricultural development.

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 development will be cut-in to the existing landform to minimise the height of the structures.
- This significantly reduces the visual impact of the development particularly when viewed from the North.
- From the South, there are no public roads or footpaths where the development would be clearly visible. As the proposed building sits below the new dairy complex, any distant views of the proposed development are in context with other adjacent agricultural unit with the backdrop of the higher land behind.

7.0 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

- Agricultural development under the GPDO is exempt from BNG.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- This scheme is part of a substantial capital investment program at Forest Farm to provide a modern organic dairy unit that can remain economically viable in a challenging dairy sector.
- The Farmers Guardian published on the 31st July 2024 that ***“440 dairy producers left the industry between April 2023 and April 2024, with the majority of producers leaving over the winter months. AHDB Dairy’s latest survey of major milk buyers estimated there were just 7,130 dairy producers in Great Britain as of April”.***
- The economic challenges faced by the dairy sector is a material planning consideration which should be given **significant weight** to ensure that existing dairy farmers can remain economically sustainable.
- The proposed agricultural building has been carefully sited, adjacent to existing agricultural development and is of a size and scale which is both functionally justified and proportionate to the new dairy unit.
- Due to the design, topography of the land and site within a natural hollow, the proposed development sits comfortably within the local landscape.
- On the basis that a Planning Condition is attached to the approval in relation to paragraph D.1(2)(a) of Part 6, the proposal accords with all relevant elements of the General Permitted Development Order 2015.
- 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.