

Planning Statement

**Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings and Associated Development
Marsh Side Farm, Tan House Lane, Rushton, Staffordshire Moorlands**

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application (with Listed Building consent), for the change of use of three agricultural buildings at Marsh Side Farm to form a children's nursery, together with the erection of two permanent tipis and the siting of three repurposed shipping containers to provide toilet facilities and a staff room.

The statement should be read alongside the submitted plans, the Design and Access Statement, and other supporting information. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the proposal accords with national and local planning policy and represents sustainable development.

2. Site Description

Marsh Side Farm is located off Tan House Lane within the open countryside of Staffordshire Moorlands, outside of any Green Belt designation. The site forms part of an established farmstead and includes three agricultural buildings arranged around a traditional farmyard.

The farmstead also includes a farmhouse which is a **Grade II listed building**. No works or alterations are proposed to the listed farmhouse, which does not form part of the application site.

Access to the site is via Tan House Lane, a no-through rural lane serving Marsh Side Farm and three additional dwellings. Tan House Lane connects to the A523 at a junction located within a 30 mph speed limit.

3. The Proposed Development

The application seeks permission for:

- Change of use of three existing agricultural buildings to a children's nursery.
- The erection of two permanent tipis (approximately 10.3 metres in diameter) to provide covered learning and activity space.

- The siting of three repurposed shipping containers (approximately 2.5m x 6m) to provide toilet facilities and a staff room.
- Provision of a dedicated on-site car park for up to 12 vehicles within the farm holding.

The proposal makes use of existing buildings and introduces low-impact, reversible structures that are appropriate to the rural context.

4. Planning Policy Context

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Key relevant sections include:

- **Paragraphs 8 and 11** – Supporting sustainable development by balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives.
- **Paragraph 85** – Supporting the sustainable growth and diversification of rural businesses, including farm diversification.
- **Paragraph 92** – Supporting the provision and retention of community facilities and services.
- **Paragraph 192 & 193** – Protect and enhance Biodiversity and enhancing public access to nature
- **Paragraphs 200–208** – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The proposal supports economic growth through job creation, provides an essential community facility, reuses existing buildings, and preserves the setting of the Grade II listed farmhouse.

The proposal outlines plans to establish a wildflower garden aimed at supporting local pollinating insects, particularly bees. Additionally, native hedgerows will be planted along the boundary adjacent to the footpath near the proposed tipis. There is also an intention to expand the size and functionality of the existing kitchen garden to enhance the farm-to-fork educational experience. This initiative will be integrated into the nursery curriculum, enabling children to actively participate in produce cultivation. Complemented by the care of chickens and ducks (for egg production), as well as sheep and alpacas, these measures collectively contribute to farm diversification and long-term sustainability.

4.2 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan provides the local policy framework. The most relevant policies include:

- **SS1 – Development Principles:** Requires development to be well designed, safe, accessible, and to contribute positively to the local area.
- **SS2 – Future Development in the Rural Areas:** Supports development in rural areas where it sustains rural communities and the rural economy.
- **DC1 – Design Considerations:** Requires development to respect local character and landscape.
- **DC2 – Historic Environment:** Requires development to preserve the significance and setting of heritage assets.
- **E2 – Employment Opportunities:** Supports development that strengthens the local economy and provides employment.
- **CF1 – Community Facilities:** Supports the provision of community services where a local need is identified.

The proposal is considered to accord with these policies by delivering a well-designed rural enterprise, preserving heritage significance, and providing a much-needed community facility.

5. Principle of Development

The principle of reusing agricultural buildings for a nursery is acceptable in planning terms. The NPPF and Local Plan actively support rural diversification and the reuse of rural buildings where proposals are of an appropriate scale and do not harm the countryside.

Rushton village currently has no nursery provision. The proposed development would address this deficiency and provide an accessible service for local families, thereby supporting the sustainability of the rural community.

6. Impact on Character, Landscape, and Heritage

The development makes use of existing buildings and introduces new elements that are modest in scale and appropriate in appearance. The tipis and shipping containers are visually lightweight and reversible.

The Grade II listed farmhouse has been carefully considered. As no works are proposed to the listed building and the nursery uses are contained within separate agricultural structures, the proposal preserves the setting and significance of the heritage asset, in accordance with policy DC2 and the NPPF.

7. Highway Safety and Access

Access to the site is taken from Tan House Lane, which connects to the A523 at a junction within a 30 mph speed limit. The nursery will operate with managed drop-off and pick-up times, and traffic movements will be modest in scale.

The provision of a dedicated on-site car park for up to 12 vehicles ensures that parking demand can be accommodated within the site, avoiding on-street parking and ensuring safe access and egress. Two-way access to the car park is provided, and vehicles can manoeuvre safely within the site.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in highway safety terms.

8. Economic and Community Benefits

The applicants operate an existing Ofsted Outstanding nursery in Congleton, employing 14 staff. That business contributes over £250,000 annually in wages and supports local food suppliers.

The proposed nursery will create new employment opportunities in Rushton, support local businesses through regular food supply contracts, and provide a valuable service to the local community. The proposal will also secure the long-term maintenance of Marsh Side Farm and support continued agricultural use of the wider landholding.

9. Planning Balance and Conclusion

In planning balance, the proposal delivers clear economic and social benefits, makes efficient use of existing buildings, preserves the setting of a listed building, and introduces no unacceptable impacts in terms of highways, landscape, or amenity.

The development accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and represents sustainable development. It is therefore concluded that planning permission should be granted.

Prepared by: [Name]

Date: [Date]