

Office Building, Former Panflora Nurseries Site Planning Statement

On behalf of

Barns Lane Holdings Limited

October 2021

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The application site relates to a vacant red brick office building and adjacent land, located between Barns Lane and Sawpit Street, Dunham Massey. The application site was part of a larger planning unit formerly occupied by a landscape and contracting business that ceased operations in 2018.
- 1.2. The occupancy of the existing office is restricted by condition 3 of planning permission H/35578 for '*agricultural or landscape gardener's business and for no other purposes purpose in Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987*'.
- 1.3. Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the existing office space to allow unrestricted E (g) (i) (formerly B1) use alongside works for adjacent parking and associated works to accommodate an overflow car park and landscaping, with a new gated access taken from Sawpit Street.
- 1.4. The overflow car park will be located on part of the former landscape business's yard space and land to the west of the application site is to be built out for residential use pursuant to planning permission 100346/FUL/20. This renders the application site inoperable for an agricultural or landscape gardener's business, given the necessary yard space and barns for storage of equipment and stock.
- 1.5. The removal of the existing restriction would allow an alternative business to benefit from occupation of the vacant building. The proposed development is not speculative as Edgefold Homes Limited, the developer of the adjacent residential scheme, propose to take up occupancy. The office would be occupied immediately and would support local jobs for this developer.
- 1.6. Pre-application discussions have been held with Dunham and Warburton Parish Councils, which has led to the inclusion of the proposed overflow car park to remove any risk of additional on-street parking in the vicinity of the office.
- 1.7. The reuse of the office building and use of the land for an overflow car park would not be 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, as it preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 1.8. The reuse of an existing office on a brownfield site is encouraged within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the proposed development does not conflict with the policies contained within the development plan. Therefore, the proposals should be approved without delay.

2. Introduction

2.1. P4 Planning has been instructed by Barns Land Holdings Limited to submit a full planning application for the following proposal:

'Change of use of existing restricted office building to allow unrestricted office use (Class E (g)(i)) with associated works for adjacent parking and for works to create an overflow car park on existing yard area with new gated access from Sawpit Street and associated landscaping'

2.2. The application site relates to a vacant office building and adjacent land located between Barns Lane and Sawpit Street, Dunham Massey.

2.3. The application submission pack has derived from review of the validation checklist and comprises the following documents:

- Application Form and Certificates
- Cover Letter
- Application Drawings
- Design and Access Statement
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Tree Survey
- This Planning Statement

3. Site Description and Planning History

Application site and surroundings

- 3.1. The application site relates to a vacant office building and adjacent land (0.21 hectares in size) that was part of a larger planning unit formerly occupied by a landscape and contracting business (Hultons) that ceased operations in 2018. A location plan is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2. The office building sits at the entrance to the former landscape business off Barns Lane, where their operations also comprised a large area of hard standing and two large barns in addition to the office.
- 3.3. The remainder of the application site to the north and west is largely wooded, although there is a cleared area immediately under the electricity cables towards the corner with Sawpit Street.
- 3.4. **Appendix 2** contains site photographs of the office building and some of the adjacent land taken in early 2020, with photos of an existing storage area (site of proposed car park) taken in 2014.
- 3.5. Although not part of this application, the wider former Hultons site to the west of the application site has recently been granted planning permission for the demolition of the barns and the erection of seven residential dwellings (application reference 100346/FUL/20).
- 3.6. The application site is less than a 10-minute drive from the edge of Altrincham and about 12-minutes from Partington. The site entrance is 250 metres from the Trans Pennine Trail which provides dedicated foot and cycle access to nearby Altrincham and Lymm, which are both within 15-20 minutes from the site by bicycle.
- 3.7. The site is located within designated Green Belt and within Flood Zone 1. It does not contain, nor is it adjacent to any designated heritage assets and there are no Tree Preservation Orders within or adjacent to the site. Nor is the site within a Coal Mining Reporting Area.
- 3.8. The site is within the 'Settled Sandlands' landscape character area, the key features of which are:

'Dominant agricultural land use, arable with some pasture; medium to large sized fields, generally defined by hedgerows and prominent hedgerow trees; generally low-lying, gently rolling topography, particularly down to the River Bollin floodplain; dispersed farmsteads throughout, linked by meandering country lanes with two main cluster settlements at Dunham Woodhouses and Warburton; the vernacular style, particularly in farm buildings, with their traditional use of materials, is a distinguishing visual feature; small, isolated blocks of woodland; the presence of several watercourses and ponds.'

Relevant Planning history

- 3.9. The planning history was carried out through a desktop search and summarised by application below and in part relates to the wider former nurseries site which includes the office and adjacent land, subject of this application.

7/10/5095

- 3.10. Granted planning permission in 1970 for a 'Proposed vehicular access'. Further details were not available from the desktop search.

H/27664

- 3.11. A planning application was submitted but subsequently withdrawn in 1989 prior to its determination for the 'Erection of offices for nursery and construction of car parking area'.

H/29834

- 3.12. Planning permission was granted on 30 August 1990 (and implemented) for the 'Erection of Office and Barn and retention of hard standing and change of use from agriculture to mixed use as agriculture, nursery and landscape gardener's office, stores, barn & workshop.'

H/35578

- 3.13. Planning permission was granted on 26 August 1992 for the 'Erection of office building, amendment to previous permission H/29834'.

- 3.14. Condition 3 restricted the use of the office space:

The office hereby approved shall be used only for the purposes of an agricultural or landscape gardener's business and for no other purposes including any other purpose in Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987

3.15. The existing office building was erected pursuant to this consent.

100346/FUL/20

- 3.16. Planning permission was granted on 15 March 2021 on adjacent land for the *'Demolition of two existing buildings and the erection of seven residential dwellings (C3), access, parking and landscaping, including a detention basin (SuDS).'*
- 3.17. This application site did not include the existing office within it and, once built out, the residential development would sterilise any opportunity for the existing office building to be used for agricultural or landscape gardener's business. The barns and storage areas adjacent to the office will be removed to make way for the residential development.

4. The Proposal

4.1. Planning permission is sought for the:

'Change of use of existing restricted office building to allow unrestricted office use (Class E (g)(i)) with associated works for adjacent parking and for works to create an overflow car park on existing yard area with new gated access from Sawpit Street and associated landscaping'

- 4.2. The proposed site layout plan enclosed within **Appendix 3** shows the relationship of the existing office building and proposed overflow car park area with the adjoining land being developed for residential development consented through 100346/FUL/20.
- 4.3. No external alterations are planned for the existing office building. A turning head is available to allow for vehicular and refuse vehicle access.
- 4.4. In total, eight spaces are proposed adjacent to the office including two spaces for accessible users and an additional nine car parking spaces will be provided in the proposed overflow car parking area.
- 4.5. The car parking adjacent to the existing office building will be constructed of new permeable block paving and the overflow car park will replace the existing hard standing with a porous cellular paving system with gravel infill. This overflow parking area has been incorporated following concerns raised about the impact of on-street parking through pre-application discussions with Dunham Massey and Warburton Parish Councils.
- 4.6. Vehicle access to this overflow car park would be through a new gated access point off Sawpit Street, which will incorporate the required visibility splays as recently approved through the construction environmental management plan (CEMP)¹, for the adjacent residential development, which proposes to use this access for construction of the residential development.
- 4.7. The proposed gate would be constructed of timber and have a height of 1.50 metres, supported on posts that reach 1.70 metres in height.
- 4.8. Pedestrian access to the office from the overflow car park will be through a new permeable mulch and peg boarded footpath, which will be introduced within the

¹ Details submitted for Condition 6 (CEMP) pursuant to planning permission 100346/FUL/20 were discharged on 20 October 2021 (application ref: 105485/CND/21)

existing gap between the boundary hedge and mature vegetation. The introduction of this path will require some of low-level vegetation to be cleared with no trees removed to accommodate either the footpath or the overflow car park.

- 4.9. The existing office already benefits from cycle storage on its northern elevation, with bin storage located adjacent on the same elevation.
- 4.10. The proposed initial occupant of the office will be Edgefold Homes, a local housebuilder with a growing portfolio of high-quality developments in the vicinity.
- 4.11. The location of this office is ideal for Edgefold Homes adjacent to one of their development sites and benefits from ready access to other sites across the region. The office will accommodate up to eight employees.

5. Relevant Planning Policy

- 5.1. Section 38 (6) of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan in this case comprises the Trafford Core Strategy (2012) and the Revised Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006).

Development plan policy

Trafford Unitary Development Plan (2006)

- 5.2. The Unitary Development Plan Policies have largely been superseded by the Core Strategy and, from a review of Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy, there are no policies from the 2006 Plan that remain current and relevant to the determination of this application.

Trafford Core Strategy (2012)

- 5.3. Strategic Objective SO3 (meet employment need) states that development needs to:

'...establish the right conditions to sustain employment sites for new and diverse investment to enable Trafford to remain competitive and contribute to the growth of the economy of the sub-region and to attract and retain employment opportunities.'

- 5.4. Policy W2 relates to Trafford's town centre and retail policy. Part 12 of this policy (W2.12) relates to out-of-centre development, where there will be a presumption against the development of town-centre uses in out-of-centre locations, except where it can be demonstrated that they satisfy the tests in government guidance.
- 5.5. Policy L4 (Sustainable Transport and Accessibility) identifies that the council will prioritise the location of development within the most sustainable areas accessible by a choice of modes of transport. The council seeks to work with developers to promote active travel through walking and cycling (L4.2). The council will not support development that would have a significant adverse impact on the highway network.
- 5.6. Policy R2 (Natural Environment) notes that to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment of the Borough, developers will be required to demonstrate how their proposals will protect and enhance the

landscape character, biodiversity, geodiversity and conservation value of its natural urban and countryside assets having regard not only to its immediate location but its surroundings; and protect the natural environment throughout the construction process.

- 5.7. Policy R4 (Green Belt, Countryside and Other Protected Open Land) stipulates that the Council will continue to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

SPD3: Parking Standards and Design

- 5.8. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) outlines the Trafford Council's parking standards.

Other material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

- 5.9. A key purpose of the NPPF is to help achieve sustainable development. Paragraph 8 sets out that sustainable development has three overarching and interdependent objectives; economic, social and environmental. The economic objective is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The social objective is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The environmental objective is to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.
- 5.10. Paragraph 11 sets out that local authorities should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which, for decision taking means 'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.'
- 5.11. Section 6 of the NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity (paragraph 81) and a prosperous rural economy is supported through paragraph 84, which sets out that planning policies and decisions should enable '*the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas*', including through the conversion of existing buildings and through the diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
- 5.12. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF confirms that the sequential approach should not be applied for small scale rural offices.
- 5.13. Paragraph 111 notes that:

'...development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.'

5.14. Paragraph 119 states that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the needs for homes and other uses.

5.15. Paragraph 120 states that:

'Planning policies and decisions should [...] c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs'

5.16. Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved unless there are very special circumstances.

5.17. Paragraph 150 outlines there are other developments that are not inappropriate, provided they preserve the openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include:

- the reuse of permanent buildings (Paragraph 150(d))
- material changes in use of the land (Paragraph 150 (e))

5.18. Paragraph 174 requires planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Places for Everyone

5.19. Since Stockport withdrew, the nine remaining boroughs of Greater Manchester have agreed to prepare a joint development plan document to replace the GMSF called Places for Everyone (PfE).

5.20. The first draft PfE document underwent its first and final consultation between 9 August and 3 October 2021, with the next stage expected to be submission to the Secretary of State. The application site is not contained within a strategic allocation.

5.21. Strategic Objective 3 of the PfE seeks to create a *'thriving and productive economy in all parts of Greater Manchester'*, ensuring there is enough land to meet employment needs, prioritising the use of brownfield land and ensuring there is a diverse range of employment sites.

- 5.22. Policy JP-Strat 9 notes that for 'southern areas' (including Trafford), the economic competitiveness will be protected and enhanced, with a strong emphasis on prioritising the re-use of brownfield land.
- 5.23. Policy JP-J1 (Supporting Long-Economic Growth) seeks to create a thriving, inclusive and productive economy across the nine boroughs, with an emphasis on maintaining a very high level of economic diversity across the nine boroughs, amongst other measures.
- 5.24. While the PfE is not adopted, resulting in their limited weight of the policies, the document is supportive of economic growth across all nine boroughs and supportive of the re-use of brownfield land.

6. Key Planning Considerations

6.1. The key planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on openness of Green Belt
- Highways
- Biodiversity and Landscape

Principle of development

6.2. As an existing vacant office building, the proposal will make effective use of previously developed (brownfield) land in line with Section 11 of the NPPF which seeks to promote such proposals.

6.3. The change of use of this building to unrestricted office use would provide an opportunity for Edgefold Homes, a local house building business to establish a new registered office and for the space to assist with the construction of their adjacent residential development scheme.

6.4. This would support local jobs for this developer with a growing portfolio of projects in the region, in accordance with Strategic Objective 3 of the Trafford Core Strategy and Section 6 of the NPPF.

6.5. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF confirms that the sequential approach should not be applied for small scale rural offices and the reuse of the existing building by Edgefold Homes will help meet the needs of a local business through bringing this vacant office space back into use.

6.6. It was agreed through pre-application discussions with the planning department that no sequential test would be required.

6.7. The unrestricted use of this small building for office use will have no impact on the viability or vitality of the nearby town centres and, because it is located adjacent to the Trans Pennine Trail, the building benefits from a good east/west green transport link to Warrington, Altrincham and beyond.

6.8. As a small rural office, the scheme requires no sequential test in line with Paragraph 89 of the NPPF and the unrestricted occupation of this existing building complies with Policy W2.12 of the Trafford Core Strategy.

Impact on openness of Green Belt

- 6.9. The re-use of the office building for unrestricted use would not require any external alterations and therefore have no additional impact on openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.10. The existing wooded area to the north would be retained, with only minor undergrowth vegetation clearance required for the path between the office building and overflow car park.
- 6.11. The path would be constructed of mulch and peg boards, which would have a soft appearance and would be screened by the surrounding hedges and trees.
- 6.12. The car parking adjacent to the office will replace existing hard standing that has been used for car parking for the last 20 years with new block paving. The significant existing yard space will be reduced to incorporate the approved housing development and through the re-purposing of the existing office and would have no greater impact on openness of the Green Belt than the previous use.
- 6.13. The proposed overflow car park will also be constructed of porous materials with a gravel infill, replacing an area of existing hard standing that has also been used for parking vehicles and open storage associated with the previous use and so will not have any greater impact on openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.14. The overflow car park will also be screened by additional hedging, proposed as a part of this application to minimise any visual impact of the proposal. The introduction of hedging to screen any vehicles parked in the overflow car park will be an improvement over the previous use, which benefited from no such screening. The gate's appearance is typical of rural settings and ensures permeability with its surroundings.
- 6.15. The reuse of the existing office building and reuse of an existing hard standing area to provide a porous overflow car park does not comprise 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 150 (d) and (e) of the NPPF. The reuse of the existing building will preserve openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposals therefore accord with Policy R4 of the Trafford Core Strategy and with Paragraph 150 of the NPPF.

Highways

- 6.16. The unrestricted office will be accessed off Barns Lane and the access arrangements have been included within the red line of this application as already approved by the Council pursuant to consent reference 100346/FUL/20. This access will be shared with the adjacent residential development.
- 6.17. A second access point is required for the proposed overflow car parking area from Sawpit Street. This access point has already been assessed acceptable for use as part of the approved CEMP for the adjacent residential development². It has been assessed by the applicant's transport consultant to ensure appropriate visibility splays will be incorporated for highway safety.
- 6.18. The incorporation of a turning head permits refuse vehicle to access the office. The proposed site plan in **Appendix 3** shows that a refuse vehicle has been tracked.
- 6.19. On-street parking was raised as a local concern through pre-application discussions with both Dunham Massey and Warburton Parish Councils. The applicant has listened to these concerns and included the proposed overflow car park to remove any risk of on-street parking caused by potential visitors to the office.
- 6.20. Cycle racks are already provided, and the office is circa 250 metres from the Trans Pennine Trail, which provides dedicated foot and cycle access to nearby Altrincham and Lymm, which are both within 15-20 minutes from the site by bicycle.
- 6.21. The proposals can be accessed by means other than the private car and would not result in a significant adverse impact on the safe and efficient operation of the highway network. The proposals are therefore supported by Policy L4 of the Trafford Core Strategy and Paragraph 111 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity and landscape

- 6.22. In accordance with Policy R2 of the Trafford Core Strategy, the application is supported by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (prepared by Rachel Hacking Ecology) and a Tree Survey (prepared by Amenity Tree Care).
- 6.23. The survey area incorporates both the application site and the adjacent area that now has planning permission for residential development (100346/FUL/20).

² See condition discharge letter for application ref: 105485/CND/21

6.24. The survey makes several recommendations:

- the requirement for a nesting bird survey should work take place to the mixed woodland and hedgerows between March and August.
- habitat enhancement through tree and shrub planting and soft landscaping

6.25. New native hedging is to be incorporated around the car park and towards the northern edge of the site towards Sawpit Street. This will enhance the immediate landscape and provide additional biodiversity opportunities.

6.26. The proposal seeks to retain existing landscaping and the proposed footpath linking the overflow car park to the office will require no removal of existing trees and the overflow car park itself will replace existing hard standing with porous materials.

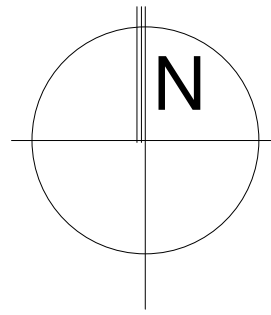
6.27. Overall, the proposals are in accordance with Policy R2 of the Trafford Core Strategy and Paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed development will permit the immediate occupation of an office building that has been vacant since 2018.
- 7.2. The residential development, adjacent to the application site, removes two barns and the large open storage area that were integral to the former office use of the application site, which is restricted to that associated with a landscape gardener's business. This sterilises future opportunities for the vacant office building to be re-used without overcoming this restriction through a change of use application.
- 7.3. The proposed overflow car park off Sawpit Street has been included in response to local concerns about on-street parking.
- 7.4. The unrestricted office will be occupied by Edgefold Homes, an SME house builder and the developer of the adjacent residential units, providing them with a new registered office and headquarters at a location which will showcase their homes and help with their plans for growth. This would support delivery of local jobs for this developer which has a growing portfolio of projects in the region.
- 7.5. As a small rural office and an existing building, it has been accepted through pre-application discussions that no sequential test is required in accordance with Paragraph 89 of the NPPF.
- 7.6. The proposal is not 'inappropriate development' and will have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. There are no external alterations to the existing office building and the proposed overflow car park would replace existing hard standing with a porous material and introduce new hedgerows to screen vehicles, improving the visual impact compared to its previous use for parking and open storage.
- 7.7. The works to install the footpath and overflow car park will be mindful of the existing trees and the recommendations set out in the accompanying Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, with new hedging proposed to provide further screening and provide additional biodiversity opportunities. The resultant parking arrangements and new access from Sawpit Street would not lead to unacceptable highway safety impacts.
- 7.8. The proposals accord with the Trafford Development Plan and the NPPF and there are no material considerations that weigh against the proposals. We would be grateful if the development could be approved without delay.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



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Key

- Application site boundary
- Land in same ownership

C	19.10.21	KS	Road name added	PJ
B	12.10.21	KS	Minor amendments	PJ
A	27.07.21	AK	Minor Revisions	PJ

REV.	DATE	DRN.	CHKD.
------	------	------	-------

PROJECT				
Office Change of Use and Associated Parking - Barns Lane				
CLIENT				
Barns Lane Holdings Ltd				
DRAWING				
Site Location Plan				
SCALE	SHEET SIZE	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE
1:1250	@ A3	AK	PJ	26.07.21

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 E: office@bowker-sadler.co.uk
 W: www.bowker-sadler.co.uk

Location Plan.
 1 : 1250



JOB No	DRAWING No	REVISION
21-016	1003	C
STATUS		
Planning		

Appendix 2: Site Photos



The south-western facing elevation of the existing office building is the further of the two red brick buildings in shot



View into former Hultons site with south-western facing elevation of office building located to the right of photograph

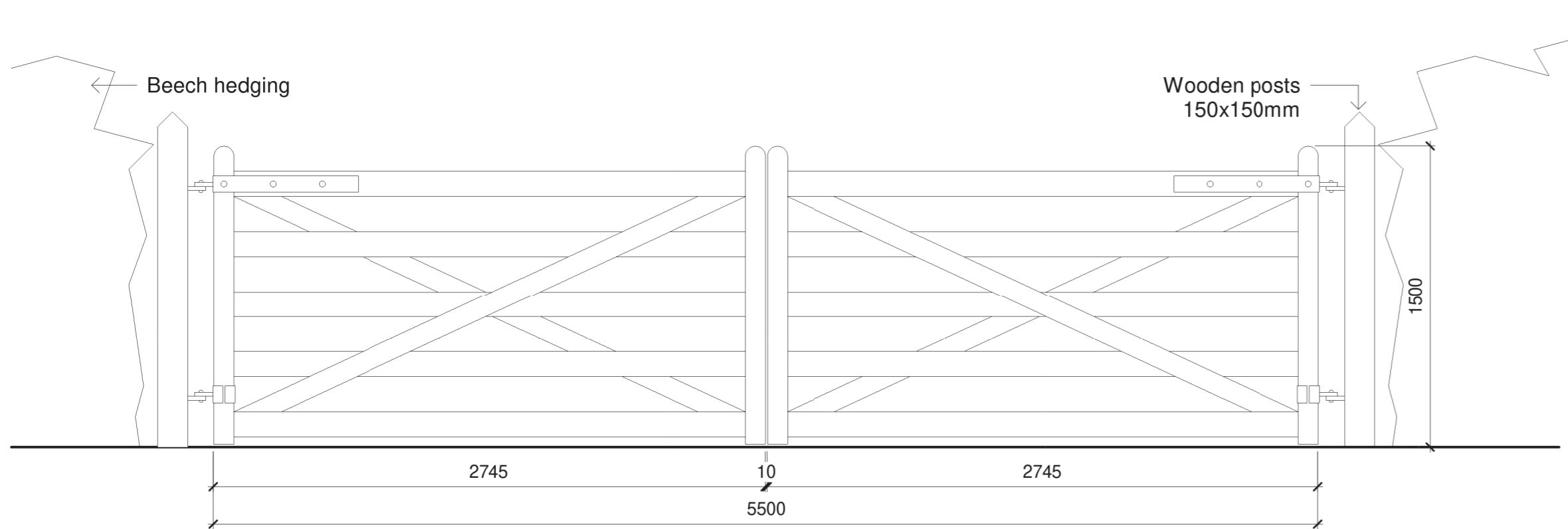


Material stored on site where the proposed car parking is proposed. View looking towards former barn to be demolished to make way for residential units



Additional view of material stored and its relationship with the open fields to the north of the site

Appendix 3: Proposed Site Layout



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Proposed Timber Gates to Visitor/Overflow Car Park
 1 : 25

- Key**
- Application Site Boundary 2068 m² / 0.2068 ha
 - Land in the Same Ownership
 - Shrub Pruning
 - Proposed new hedges to supplement existing
 - No dig 1m wide mulch and peg boarded footpath
 - Block pavior parking areas and footpaths to match approved scheme 100346/FUL/20
 - Existing flags retained and extended to include cycle and bin storage areas
 - Macadam crossing area from Sawpit Street to new gate
 - Permeable cellular paving system



Access positioned to ensure forward visibility to a vehicle waiting to turn right into the car park

Visibility Splay 2.4m x 50m

Visibility Splay 2.4m x 50m

New native hedging to be planted outside visibility splay to supplement and match existing

New 1m wide no dig mulch and peg boarded footpath from car park to office

Shrubs pruned back to accommodate visibility splay.

Visibility Splay 2.4m x 45m

Shrubs pruned back to accommodate visibility splay.

Visibility Splay 2.4m x 43m

B	18.10.21	KS	Minor amendments and gate specification	PJ
A	12.10.21	KS	Minor amendments	PJ

REV. | DATE | DRN. | | CHKD.

PROJECT
Office Change of Use and Associated Parking - Barns Lane

CLIENT
Barns Lane Holdings Ltd

DRAWING
Proposed Site Plan

SCALE	SHEET SIZE	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE
As indicated	@ A1	AK	PJ	20.05.21

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JOB No	DRAWING No	REVISION
21-016	1000	B
STATUS		

Proposed Site Plan - Office & Visitor/Overflow Parking
 1 : 200

