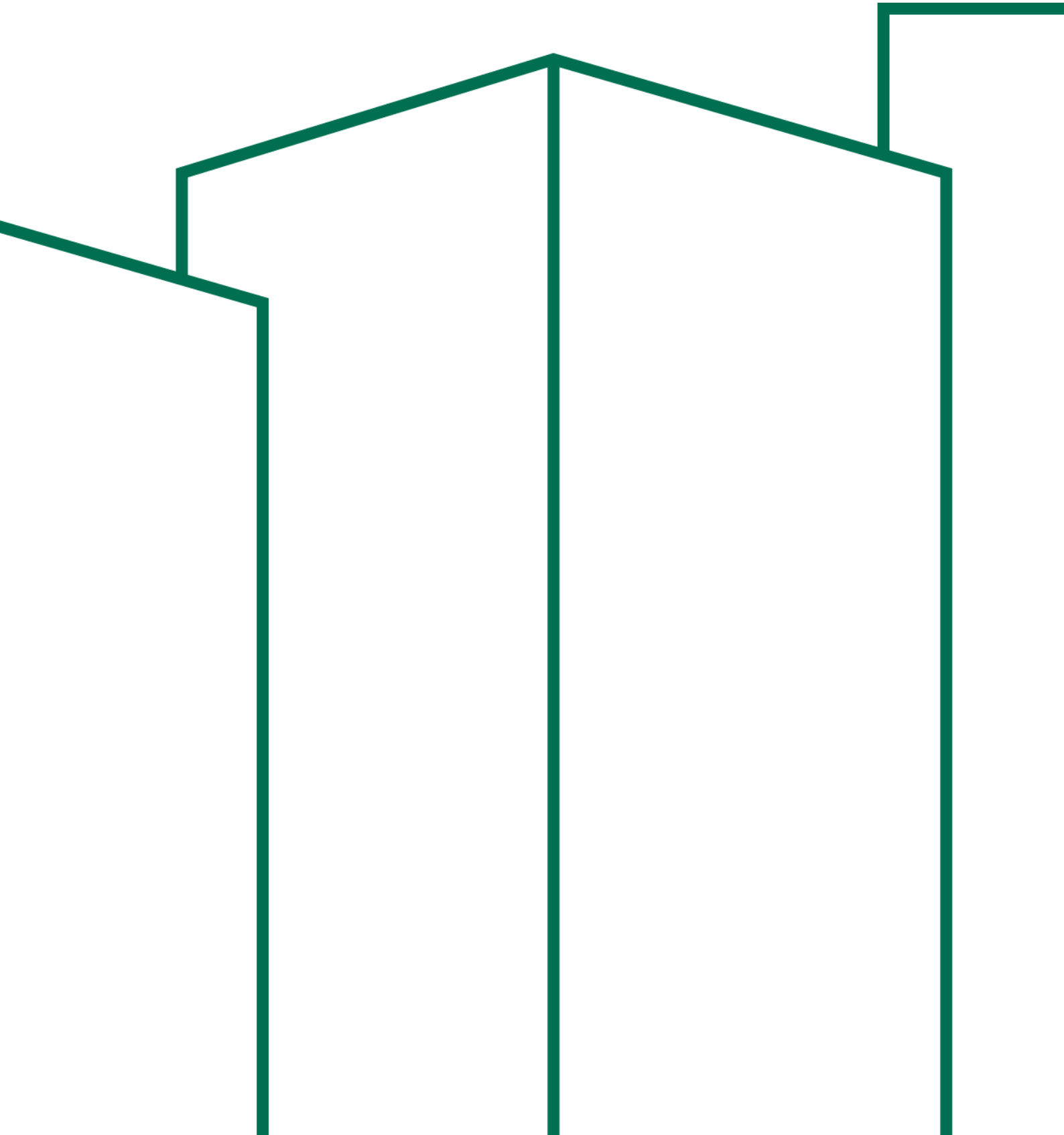




PLANNING STATEMENT

Building B
Sheepwash Farm
Whittington
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9JN



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application submitted to Lichfield District Council. The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the erection of a flue to serve a biomass boiler with a 995kw output at Sheepwash Farm, Whittington, Lichfield.
- 1.2 The biomass boiler and flue are used to provide heat to the agricultural sheds on Sheepwash Farm. The boiler is powered by straw harvested from the farm and occasionally woodchip.
- 1.3 The flue this application seeks planning permission for serves the biomass boiler located in the agricultural barn marked “Building B” on the site layout plan drawing no. 16-041-22-02 submitted in the application documents.

The Application Site and its Surroundings

- 1.4 The applicants J F & B M Gray are a family agricultural enterprise. They are a significant operation, farming some 934 hectares; Sheepwash Farm provides wheat for Warburtons bread, potatoes for KP Snacks that make McCoy’s Crisps and vegetable oil and rapeseed oil. J F & B M Gray seek to engage the community in its farming enterprise and are renowned for the farm visits it operates at the site.
- 1.5 Sheepwash Farm is a well-established steading located within Whittington. The farm sits on the northern side of Fisherwick Road, immediately to the southwest of the West Coast Mainline. The application site is not located in the Green Belt.

Proposed Development

- 1.6 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a flue to serve a biomass boiler with a 995kw output. The boiler is powered by straw sourced from across the farm and occasionally woodchip. Both have been installed with the biomass boiler and flue commissioned in 2021. The application is therefore made retrospectively and seeks to regularise the development.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework)

- 2.1 Paragraph 8 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Three **"overarching objectives"** to achieving sustainable development in a planning context are set out in paragraph 8; economic, social and environmental.
- 2.2 At the heart of the Framework is a **"presumption in favour of sustainable development"**.
- 2.3 Paragraph 47 of the Framework states that, **"Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing."**
- 2.4 Section 14 deals with meeting the challenge of climate change with paragraph 152 stating that,

"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the

conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”

2.5 Paragraph 158 states that, when determining applications for renewable and low carbon development, Local Planning Authorities should:

“a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.” (CT Planning emphasis)

The Development Plan

2.6 The Development Plan includes the Lichfield Local Plan Strategy 2008 – 2029 that was adopted in February 2015 and the Local Plan Allocations Document 2008-2029 that was adopted on 16 July 2019.

2.7 The following policies of the Local Plan Strategy (LPS) are considered relevant to the determination of this current planning application and will be discussed in greater depth, where relevant, in this Statement:

- Core Policy 1 – The Spatial Strategy
- Core Policy 2 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Core Policy 3 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- Core Policy 10 – Healthy and Safe Lifestyles
- Policy SC2 – Renewable Energy
- Policy BE1 – High Quality Development

2.8 The site is located in the Whittington and Fisherwick Neighbourhood Area. The Whittington and Fisherwick Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ on 17 April 2018.

2.9 The following Strategic Aim of the Whittington and Fisherwick Neighbourhood Plan is considered relevant to the determination of this current planning application and will be discussed in greater depth, where relevant, in this Statement:

- SA3B – To protect and enhance the natural built and historic environment, improve bio-diversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigates climate change.

3.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Planning applications are determined in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that they are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Framework is a material consideration of substantial weight.
- 3.2 Policy SC2 of the LPS states that **“provision should be made for renewable energy generation within Lichfield District to maximise environmental and economic benefits whilst minimising any adverse local impacts.”**. The policy reads on to identify that the Council **“should strive”** to meet a minimum of 10% of its energy demand through renewable energy sources by 2020, including through biomass.
- 3.3 Policy SC2 reads on to specifically support development that utilises bio-energy, particularly where the biomass boiler uses locally derived resources. It also states that the use of biomass for small business and domestic heating will be encouraged. It is the case here that the biomass boiler is fired using straw sourced from the farm and occasionally woodchip.
- 3.4 The thrust of Policy SC2 of the LPS is underpinned by the Framework and its positive approach to renewable energy as set out above.
- 3.5 The biomass boiler itself, being located within the existing agricultural building and having no effect on the external appearance of the building, is not development (Section 55(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act) and consequently planning permission is not required.

- 3.6 The flue however, serving as it does a boiler with an output in excess of 45kw, does require planning permission.
- 3.7 The flue is not prominent from within the farm or the surrounding area. Whilst the flue is visible from the yard, it is not discordant in the context of the existing setting and does not appear overly dominant or indeed noticeable from Fisherwick Road.
- 3.8 The heat generated from the biomass boiler, itself powered from a local sustainable source of straw harvested from across the farm and occasionally woodchip, provides heat to the agricultural barns at Sheepwash Farm. This has allowed the farm to make a significant reduction in the energy consumed on site since the sheds were previously heated by electricity. This has reduced costs and made a meaningful local contribution to reduce the farm's carbon footprint.
- 3.9 Having regard to the positive policy approach within the LPS and the Framework, along with the sensitive location of the flue and its limited impact on views from the wider area, it is considered that the development is acceptable and should be approved without delay.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The biomass boiler does not require planning permission because it does not affect the external appearance of the building and does not represent development. Whilst the flue is visible from the yard, it is not discordant in the context of the existing setting and does not appear overly dominant or indeed noticeable from Fisherwick Road.
- 4.2 No harm to amenity or the wider character and appearance of the countryside is caused.
- 4.3 The straw that powers the biomass boiler is sourced locally from the farm and provides heat to the buildings. The system is therefore precisely the form of sustainable development the Lichfield Local Plan Strategy and Framework seek to support.
- 4.4 In light of the above, planning permission should be granted without delay.

LH/CMF/5943B

9 February 2022



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Building B
Sheepwash Farm
Whittington Lichfield
Staffordshire WS14 9JN

Our Reference: LH/CMF/5943B

Date: 9 February 2022

CT Planning Limited

Three Spires House, Station Road,
Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6HX
Tel: 01543 418779
Email: apps@ctplanning.co.uk

