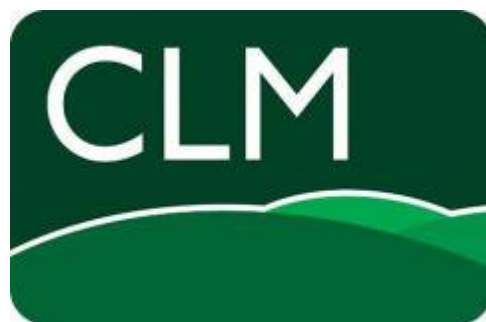


# Planning, Design, Access and Agricultural Justification Statement

## Burford Farm, Sundridge

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This statement forms part of an application for the construction of a new steel portal framed storage building and the extension of an existing storage at Burford Farm, Sundridge. This statement describes the site, the proposed buildings and the materials to be used.

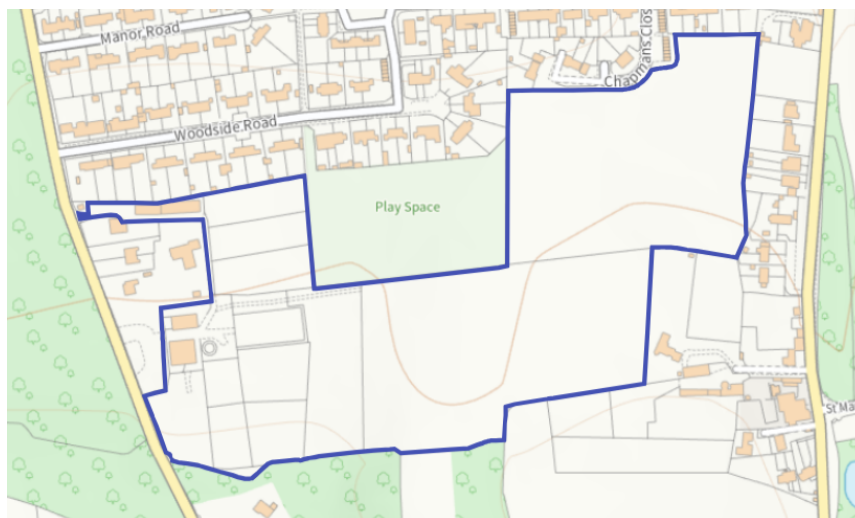
The application comprises:

1. The Application Form
2. Planning, Design, Access and Agricultural Justification Statement
3. Site Plan (JM/BF/SP/01) at scale 1:1000
4. Location Plan (JM/BF/LP/01) at scale 1:2500
5. Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
6. Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations

The salient fact is that the proposal benefits from permitted development rights outlined in Part 6A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) however for sake of completeness, the proposal's consistency with other local and national planning policies is also discussed.

## 2. THE SITE

Burford Farm is located in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) approximately 0.25 miles south of Sundridge, 0.5 miles east of Brasted and 2 miles north of Ide Hill. The farm is bounded by New Road to the west, agricultural land with woodland to the south and built development to the north and east. The farm itself extends to approximately 18 acres (7.3 hectares) of which approximately 17 acres (6.9 hectares) is set to grass, either permanent or as a temporary grass lay on arable land. The holding also includes a range of agricultural buildings, equestrian buildings and dwellings.



**Plan 1 – The extent of Burford Farm, Sundridge**

The proposed siting for the new agricultural building is in the pasture field with reference TQ4813 5497 which is located to the east of the existing sand school and served by a natural track to the north. The proposed building extension is to an existing building located to the west of the sand school. The locations of the development are shown on the attached plan JM/BF/SP/01.

### **3. THE SITUATION AND NEED**

Burford Farm is family owned and predominantly managed by the applicant who lives on site. The applicant operates as a farming contractor and forage supplier producing, on average, approximately 15,000 bales of hay, straw and haylage each year. These can broadly be broken down into the following:

- a) 8,000 small hay & straw bales
- b) 2,000 big square hay bales
- c) 3,500 big square straw bales
- d) 1,500 haylage bales

The business has been operating for in excess of ten years and whilst a proportion of the above forage is produced from the land at Burford Farm, the vast majority of forage produced by the applicant, is made over third party land across the south east. Whilst the above list is an indication, the exact number of bales produced per annum fluctuates with availability of land and the climatic conditions of a particular year and as such, the production regularly exceeds 15,000 bales.

Following BREXIT, and the UK's decision to move away from farm subsidies under the European Union's Central Agricultural Policy, many agricultural businesses in the United Kingdom are faced with an uncertain financial future. In addition to this, unstable geo-political relationships have caused extreme market volatility meaning that additional pressure is being put on already struggling businesses. These factors, amongst others, mean that employing a contractor to undertake various elements of work could be an increasingly attractive option for a number of farming businesses. By including contract farming in some form within their business, farmers could potentially look to release working capital in the form of redundant, expensive machinery and business owners are also provided with clarity over outgoings associated with a particular enterprise. Because of the aforementioned reasons, the contracting business operated by the applicant is continuing to grow and with this growth comes increased pressures for storage.

The storage needs of the agricultural business for harvested produce have, for the most part, been met through yard space and 31,000 sqft of covered storage space which is rented both locally and further afield. Meanwhile the buildings at Burford Farm represent the 'home farm' providing workshop space and storage space for agricultural machinery and stores.

Whilst historically, the arrangement of externally rented storage space in conjunction with a central 'hub' at Burford Farm constituted a good option for the extant agricultural contracting business, the circumstances have changed as the applicant is now losing circa 18,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of storage space at Turvins Farm. This storage space at Turvins Farm, some 3 miles north east of Burford Farm, provided storage for agricultural produce and for larger items of farm machinery. A loss of this storage space, with the business remaining to operate at this high level, means that there is now a requirement for either additional covered storage to be found elsewhere or provided on site. If storage cannot be found, either the farmed area should be dramatically reduced or produce and machinery would need to be stored outside.

It is widely acknowledged that the storage of machinery and equipment outside, which is uncovered and exposed to all weather conditions results in an increased level of machinery depreciation and ultimately a reduced lifespan. Similarly, the produced forage must be kept properly covered to reduce spoilage of the product. Hay, for example, has a dry matter content of approximately 85% and so is extremely susceptible to water ingress. If water does enter the hay, which is often due to incorrect storage, then nutrients are leached from the produced and instances of decay and mould growth are elevated. Straw, is a bi-product of arable cropping and is commonly purchased for use as animal bedding due to its absorbent qualities. If improperly stored and the straw becomes wet before it is used on-site, the absorbent qualities are reduced and the straw becomes more easily saturated. This not only means that the bedding cannot adequately serve its main purpose and will need to be changed more regularly, but this results in a less desirable product and subsequently a lesser price is paid.

The economic turnover of this agricultural contracting business depends principally on three factors, the first being – the skill and experience of the employees completing the work, the second is – the reliability and longevity of the machinery used in the day-to-day operation of the business and finally – the quality and quantity of forage produced which is to be maintained until the point of sale.

The personal skill of the workforce is not for consideration in this statement however if either or the final two factors are affected e.g. the machinery is broken or the produce is spoilt, the turnover and therefore the business in general will also be impacted. It is therefore imperative that proper storage for both machinery and produce is available for the success of this contracting business. It would be considered extremely counterproductive if storage space was not forthcoming to reduce the farmed area and therefore intentionally reduce production.

Until recently, the main access to Burford Farm was limited to a surfaced access to the north west of the holding however, this has changed since the granting of planning application reference 23/01967/FUL for the construction of a new

agricultural way. This has now resulted in improved access to the holding for all agricultural machinery and vehicles which signifies an important step in increasing business efficacy. Following this, a logical next phase in the business development at Burford Farm is the provision of additional storage space for forage and machinery which will adequately meet the deficit left by the loss of storage at Turvins Farm.

The development proposed in this application would provide circa 8,500 ft<sup>2</sup> of storage space and we understand that the applicant is currently seeking to source the remaining storage elsewhere. If storage cannot be found or provided on site, or the farmed area would need to be reduced dramatically – a change which would be detrimental to the business.

#### **4. THE DEVELOPMENT**

We have considered the agricultural need set out above which is clear. Due to the reduction in rented storage space there is a need to provide suitable, storage for a growing agricultural contracting business at Burford Farm. The current farming enterprise is facing an 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> storage deficit therefore, through the provision of both a new building and the extension of an existing building, the deficit can be easily met.

The development has been designed for the purposes of agriculture and will remain within the limits outlined in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). For ease, the two elements of this proposal have been separated and as such, the development will comprise:

##### *New Agricultural Building*

A kingspan steel portal framed storage building enclosed in-part on three sides by concrete panels and part Yorkshire boarding under a fibre-cement roof; the building is open on the one remaining side. These materials are widely used in agriculture, provide an adequate level of weather protection and are similar to those used in the existing buildings on site.

The building will provide for circa 660m<sup>2</sup> (7,111 ft<sup>2</sup>) of usable floor space comprising six, 6 metre long bays each measuring just over 18 metres in length. The concrete panelling will rise to 2 metres and the Yorkshire boarding will extend a further 4.7 metres meaning that the building will stand at 6.7 metres tall to the eaves and circa 9.8 metres to the ridge. Access will be via the eastern elevation which will remain open fronted. The proposed building can be found on drawing reference '04'.

##### *Extension to Existing Agricultural Building*

The existing building extends to three bays, comprising two elements that are connected by a single steel portal frame. One bay of the building is a workshop area which is enclosed on two sides by part concrete blockwork and part Yorkshire boarding with a roller shutter door; the second element is an open

fronted storage building which is enclosed on two sides by metal profile sheet. The existing building is shown on drawing reference '02'.

The extension will be a mere extrapolation of existing materials and an extra bay will be added to either end of the building and so when viewed laterally the building will look identical. The development will include an additional bay to the eastern elevation of part concrete blockwork part Yorkshire boarding with a roller shutter door, and an additional bay will also extend from the western elevation which will be open fronted and enclosed on two sides by metal profile sheeting. The proposed extension will provide for approximately 128 m<sup>2</sup> (1,380 ft<sup>2</sup>) and is shown on drawing reference '03'.

## **5. SITING DESIGN AND APPEARANCE**

In assessing the impacts of the proposed development, the siting, design and appearance of the proposal should be considered; each of these will be considered for both the new building and building extension.

### *New Agricultural Building*

The new building will be immediately adjacent to existing development on the site and is currently served by a natural track. This location is a simple extension of the existing yard area and so presents a logical location for a new building on the holding without posing an increased visual impact to the surrounding area. The proposed location benefits from natural falls in the land and given the extensive residential development to the north, coupled with the existing built development at Burford Farm, it is submitted that the visual impacts of the proposal will be negligible.

As can be seen on the accompanying drawing reference '04', the design and appearance of the building have been selected only for the use as an agricultural building and for no other means. We therefore consider the materials used and the appearance of the building to be concordant with other agricultural buildings both at Burford Farm and throughout the south-east.

### *Extension to Existing Agricultural Building*

As an extension to an existing agricultural building which is used by a growing agricultural contracting firm, it is proposed that by definition, the siting of this extension does not warrant any tangible harm in the planning context and so should be approved. Similarly, identical materials are being used and other than the addition of two bays essentially elongating the building, the design and appearance remains unchanged.

## **6. THE GPDO**

It is considered that the proposal is permitted under Schedule 2, Part 6 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). In this instance we have set out the criteria and the extent to which the development complies with that below:

Permitted development is expressed as (A) 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 for any excavations or engineering operations,

which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

Paragraph 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;

*The development is proposed on a parcel greater than 1 hectare in area.*

- 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;

*Development under class Q or S of part 3 (changes of use) has not been carried out within a period of 10 years.*

- c). it would consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling;

*The development would not include the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling.*

- d). it would involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes;

*The development consists of buildings with agricultural appearance on an agricultural unit for the storage of forage and machinery and for no other use.*

- 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; or



- (ii) (ii) any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A, would exceed 1,000 square metres, calculated as described in paragraph D.1(2)(a) of this Part;

*The development does not exceed 1000sqm and therefore meets this criteria.*

- 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;

*The development would be greater than 3km from the nearest aerodrome.*

- 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;

*No part of the building will exceed 12 metres. .*

- h). any part of the development would be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road;

*The development is in excess of 25 metres from the nearest 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 buildings will be used for the storage.*

- j). it would involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2(4) land which are connected with fish farming;

*The development does not propose any fish farming.*

- 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
  - ii) is or would be within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building.

*The buildings will not be used any purposes set out within criteria (k).*

## **7. PLANNING POLICY**

It is proposed that the development benefits from permitted development rights outlined above therefore, following the ruling in *Murrell v Secretary of State*

[2010] EWCA Civ 1367, the principle of development has already been confirmed and is not in question. Nevertheless, for sake of completeness we have considered if and how the proposal concords with all relevant local and national planning policy; we have outlined these below.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with a development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of this planning application, the development plan comprises policies from the Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (adopted 2015) collectively forming the Council's Local Development Framework.

In addition to the development plan set out above, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) (the NPPF) sets out the Governments requirements/policies for England and this must be treated as a material consideration.

The following section therefore highlights the aspects of both local and National planning policies relevant to the application and the degree of weight that can be applied to them.

## **The NPPF**

### ***Achieving the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.***

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level and in broad terms this can be summarised as meeting current needs without compromising those that might come in the future.

In the case of the development, it is to support an established agricultural business, a sector that has been in existence for a significant period of history and it therefore stands that it will continue to be in the future. Considering the development as a whole it would meet the needs of the business and it is submitted that it is unlikely to impact any needs in the future.

Paragraph 10 explains that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 explains that for the purposes of decision-making means, inter-alia, approving development proposals which accord with an up-to-date plan and where there are no relevant development plan policies, or said policies are out of date, granting permission unless the policies in the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing the development or the impacts significantly outweigh the benefits.

While there are local policies to consider which are outlined below, development for agriculture is supported by the NPPF by virtue of Paragraph

149 and so clearly benefits from presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 38 explains that planning authorities should approach decision making in a positive and creative way. In the case of the proposed development it is a simple function design that is largely based on the function needs of the rural business and otherwise a typical form of development.

#### *The Green Belt and AONB*

Paragraph 137 explains that the Green Belt is of great importance and serves to prevent urban sprawl. In the case of the development it is within the Green Belt but is to serve an entirely rural enterprise that is one of the primary contributors to maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.

While Paragraph 147 however, explains that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should be avoided, however in the case of the proposed development we do not consider that the harm will outweigh the benefits.

The position above is supported by Paragraph 149 which advises that new buildings should be resisted except in limited circumstances which includes, inter alia, agricultural developments. It therefore follows that agricultural developments are in principle, acceptable.

In addition, Paragraph 146 explains that certain other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the wider purposes of including land within its designation. This includes, inter alia, engineering operations and local transport infrastructure. In the case of the proposed development, it is clearly an engineering operation to support agricultural transport needs which is an accepted form of development in the Green Belt and in light of the negligible impact on the openness, it should be supported.

With regards to applications within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Paragraph 176 applies weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape, subsequently applying the highest level of protection to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Taking this into consideration it is accepted that the scale and extent of any development should be limited and it is submitted that the bulk, mass and volume of the development is now not so great as to cause harm to the setting of the AONB, particularly given the change in construction design. Furthermore, we submit that the needs of the agricultural business which the track will serve and which makes a substantial contribution to the character of the AONB outweighs any perceived harm thus tilting the planning balance in favour of the development.

## **Local Planning Policy**

As outlined above, the Council's Local Development Framework provides strategic planning principles and wider view as to the form/distribution of development of the district on which decisions are taken.

### *The Core Strategy*

Policy LO1 encourages development to be focused within existing settlements which clearly cannot be achieved in this case. Policy LO8 is therefore relevant and this provides support for the maintenance and diversification of the rural economy provided the development is not in conflict with policies that protect the Green Belt. In this instance, the impact to the Green Belt is considered to be negligible and therefore greater weight can be applied to the policy which seeks to support rural businesses which is what will be delivered.

Policy SP1 meanwhile requires developments to be designed to a high quality and take account of the local character area. We submit that there are limited design features that can be taken into account in respect of agricultural tracks but in principle do not consider that the development would be in conflict with this policy.

### *The Allocations and Development Management Plan*

Policy SC1 advises that the Council will take a positive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development working with applicants to find solutions.

Policy EN1 is similar to Policy SP1 in so far as it requires developments to achieve high quality designs which we believe has been achieved through a well thought through structural design.

Policy EN2 seeks to protect amenity and safeguard residential occupiers from excessive noise and vibration which is exactly what would be achieved if permission was forthcoming. The development would enable larger agricultural machinery to be diverted away from the residential dwellings resulting in a safer setting and a greater level of enjoyment for future occupiers.

Policy EN5 mirrors the position of the NPPF, applying a high level of protection to the AONB. It permits developments where the scale, materials and design would conserve and enhance the character of the landscape which we consider would be delivered by the new design construction resulting in the retention of the wider agricultural enterprise at Burford Farm and the locality.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

During an uncertain period for the agricultural industry following widespread change and market volatility, the farm contracting business at Burford Farm is growing. Due to the loss of some vital rented storage space at a nearby farm, there is now a requirement to meet the storage deficit, this has been made

possible due to the recent grant of permission to improve the farm access at Burford Far.

We consider the proposal is necessary for the purposes of agriculture which is an essential contributor to the landscape and the rural economy. Furthermore, we believe the development accords with both National and Local planning policies/material considerations and we respectfully request that permission is granted.