# SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

## GREYLEES LIMITED

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR INSTALLATION OF AGRICULTURAL BIOMASS BOILER HEATING SYSTEM WITHIN AGRICULTRUAL BUILDING AT BOILING WELLS FARM, GRANTHAM ROAD, GREYLEES, SLEAFORD**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document comprises a planning statement produced in support of an application seeking installation of an agricultural biomass boiler heating system within an existing agricultural storage building at Boiling Wells Farm, Grantham Road, Greylees, Sleaford NG34 8QX (Easting: 504335, Northing: 345407) The following serves to appraise the development scheme in light of its spatial, operational, economic and strategic context. Reference should be made to the submitted site location, layout, elevation and floor plan drawing F-3167-01B.

## 2.0 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

2.1 The application site encompasses an existing steel portal framed agricultural building that is presently used to store hay and farm equipment. It is located within the confines of the established Boiling Wells Farm complex. This occupies an area of approximately 2.45 hectares and includes five modern steel portal framed barns (to the north and east) and a small block of woodland (to the west). It should be noted that an agricultural storage building is in the process of being constructed (in accordance with prior approval 22/1769/PNAGR) within the northern confines of the farm complex approximately 30 metres from the application site. This is not evident within the pre-dated aerial photograph included below.

Aerial photograph depicting application site (red) in relation to surrounding farm complex.

2.2 Land in residential and equestrian use is located to the south of the farm complex/proposed site. The most proximate dwelling comprises the applicant's farmhouse. A separate detached dwelling with outbuildings and paddock (not under applicant ownership or part of the farm holding) is located to the immediate southeast of this, 60 metres from the application site. The site comprises part of the applicant's wider 97 hectare (240 acre) farm holding.

2.3 Farm tracks run a course adjacent to the site/building's eastern and western boundaries. These will provide access to the proposed biomass boiler system. The trackways, which are constructed of crushed stone, in turn connect with the farm's primary access. This comprises a 1.5 kilometre long private carriageway surfaced with compacted aggregate

that extends a little over 1 kilometre to the south and west of the application site in order to connect with the A153 Grantham Road via a heavy duty industrial specification junction with right turn lane. The carriageway also progresses through the farm northwards from the application site in order to provide access to the applicants' broiler poultry farm complex and surrounding field systems.

2.4 With the exception of the aforementioned applicant's farmhouse and adjacent dwelling, all land neighbouring the proposed site is in agricultural use and part of the applicants' wider farm holding. It can be noted that a section of public footpath (SRau/3/1) is located approximately 50 metres to the North of the site. The development will have no impact upon this public right of way, and it will not be readily visible therefrom due to the presence of existing screening buildings and woodland. A second public footpath (SRau/8/1) also runs a course along the aforementioned private carriageway/farm access approximately 120 metres to the west of the site. Again, the proposed development will be predominantly screened from view of this receptor. The periphery of Quarrington (Sleaford), comprising the closest settlement, is located approximately 0.9 kilometres to the east of the proposed site. The villages of Greylees and South Rauceby are situated circa 1 kilometre to the south and west respectively.

2.5 The entirety of the application site's immediate surroundings are flat, being devoid of any notable topographical features. The Environment Agency flood hazard map depicts the proposed site within Flood Zone 1, which indicates a low risk of fluvial flooding (the outlying River Slea and land drains being the greatest potential source of flood risk). However, land in Flood Zone 2 'medium risk' is situated 40 metres to the west of the building in question. There is no evidence to suggest that the site has been subject to localised flooding or drainage problems.

2.6 The application site is not situated within an area of designated wildlife importance (such as SSSI's, LWS, RAMSAR site etc) or Article 2(3) land such as a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It can however be observed that the site/farm complex is identified as being within a 'strategic green corridor', as depicted on the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Interactive Mapping System.

2.7 The application site is located within a Limestone 'Minerals Safeguarding Area', as allocated within the *Lincolnshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan* 2016. However, Policy M11, which specifically concerns the safeguarding of minerals resources, states that a minerals assessment will not be required in support of: '*Applications for alterations to existing buildings and for change of use of existing development, unless intensifying activity on site*.' In light of such, it is concluded that a Minerals Assessment is unnecessary in this case for reason that the proposal merely comprises the installation of agricultural plant within an existing agricultural building and the scheme will not entail an intensification of use. Regardless, it is evident that the proposal (which does not require any intrusive groundworks or the introduction of sensitive land uses) will have no impact upon minerals resources.

2.8 A search of Historic England's database indicates that the proposed site is not located within the setting or curtilage of a Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Historic Park/Garden or any other designated heritage asset. The Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has identified that the application site and wider farm complex is located within an area host to a post medieval quarry and limekiln. HER

entry MLI89490 describes this as: '*Post medieval quarry and associated lime kiln, Bully Wells Farm, South Rauceby, as depicted on the Ordnance Survey County Series map of 1905. At Boiling Wells limestone was found, softer than Ancaster stone and normally unsuitable for building material, but widely used, after the agricultural revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, as a fertiliser. The limestone quarried at Boiling Wells also had another use: it could be converted into quick lime. Charles Kirk, who ran a very large building firm in Sleaford, had a lime kiln there as early as 1842 and his firm retained it until 1887, when it was sold to the Lord of the Manor, Lord Bristol, for £68. There is no surviving visible evidence for the kiln depicted on the OS County Series map of 1905.*' Nevertheless, such is considered to be of relatively low significance and the proposed development, which merely entails installation of an ancillary agricultural biomass boiler within an existing barn, will not realistically have any tangible impact upon archaeological features/resources.

2.9 The proposed scheme seeks to facilitate installation of a 500 kW (0.5 MW) wood chip fuelled biomass boiler system into an existing barn situated amidst the Boiling Wells Farm complex. This will provide renewable heating required for a small a grain dryer located within an adjacent barn. The purpose of the system is to allow:

1. Occasional drying of woodchip biomass fuel primarily used within the applicant's established broiler poultry farm complex 1.8 MW biomass boilers (the same wood chip supply will also fuel the proposed boiler system). This will enable more efficient combustion and place less stress upon integrated exhaust emissions filtration systems (lowering long term operating and maintenance costs); and

2. Enable the drying of cereal crops. The southern extent of the applicant's farm holding includes over 100 acres of land that is currently only used for hay production. It has been determined that there is merit in cultivating this land in order to produce wheat, barley and oilseed rape (dependent upon crop rotation). The arable operation will benefit from the ready availability of manure fertiliser derived from the applicant's aforementioned poultry farm. The viability of this enterprise will however rely upon higher quality cereals being produced and dried to optimum moisture content so that they can be stored and sold at a time when the market yields favourable prices. In no small part due to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, it is desirable to have the ability to dry crops on-site following harvest. The proposed ancillary biomass boiler system will facilitate this.

2.10 The applicant has sourced a suitable reconditioned biomass boiler at low cost. This is to be installed within an existing steel portal framed barn. To accommodate the biomass boiler system, the barn's open sited eastern elevation will be partially enclosed with profiled steel sheeting and fitted with a personnel door and two steel roller shutter doors to allow servicing of the boiler and access to the wood chip store room with walking floor. An internal divide will also be created, thus completely enclosing the biomass boiler and wood store. The southernmost bay will however be left open-sided for general agricultural storage purposes. Solar (photovoltaic) panels will be fitted to the roof in order to augment electrical power usage. The development will not require any external lighting.

## 3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The statutory Development Plan includes the replacement Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which was formally adopted at the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) meeting on 13 April 2023. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan was produced following a partnership between North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and City of Lincoln Council. Its provisions are therefore applicable across these three jurisdictions. It should be noted that the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023 now entirely supersedes the previous Central Lincolnshire Local Plan adopted in 2017. Significant weight is also given to the relevant provisions of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.

**Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023**

3.2 **Policy S1** can be considered a 'keynote policy' that details the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan's 'Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy'. The overarching objective of the policy is to: '*…focus on delivering sustainable growth for Central Lincolnshire that meets the needs for homes and jobs, regenerates places and communities, and supports necessary improvements to facilities, services and infrastructure*.' In order to deliver a sustainable distribution of new development across the Central Lincolnshire Area, the various settlements therein have been categorised within an eight tier hierarchy. The first tier concerns the most sustainable location for new development whilst the eighth tier is considered to be the least sustainable. The application site is technically located beyond the confines of any settlement's 'developed footprint' and is therefore classed as land within the countryside (tier 8). With specific regard to tier eight land, Policy S1 states that unless allowed by: '*…any other policy in the Local Plan (such as Policies S4, S5, S34, or S43) or a relevant policy in a neighbourhood plan, development will be regarded as being in the countryside and as such restricted to: that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services…*' As previously stated, the proposal concerns ancillary agricultural development and it should therefore be considered acceptable in a countryside location. The proposal is also considered to accord with the requirements of Policy S5, as outlined below.

3.3 **Policy S5** concerns 'Development in the Countryside' and is thus of particular relevance to the proposed scheme. With specific reference to 'agricultural, forestry, horticultural or other rural land-based development', 'Part G' states: '*Proposals which will help farms modernise and/or adapt to funding changes or climate change will be supported in principle and any such proposals will be considered against relevant design, landscape and natural environment policies in this plan.*

*Where permission is required, development proposals for buildings required for agriculture or other rural land based development purposes will be supported where:*

*a) It is demonstrated that there is a functional need for the building which cannot be met by an existing, or recently disposed of, building;*
*b) the building is of a scale that is proportionate to the proposed functional need;*
*c) the building is designed specifically to meet the functional need identified;*
*d) the site is well related to existing buildings in terms of both physical and functional location, design and does not introduce isolated structures away from existing buildings; and*

*e) significant earthworks are not required, and there will be no harm to natural drainage and will not result in pollution of soils, water or air.*'

3.4 With reference to the above criteria, it is emphasised that the proposal merely concerns alterations to an existing agricultural storage building in order to accommodate an ancillary agricultural biomass boiler heating system. External alterations will necessitate partial enclosure of the presently open-sided eastern elevation. This will not however substantially change the appearance or agricultural character of the building. Clearly, criteria a) to e) are of limited relevance to the proposal and, on this basis, the proposed ancillary agricultural development is considered to achieve accordance with the strategic direction and relevant qualifying criteria of Policy S5.

3.5 **Policy S8** details measures for 'Reducing Energy Consumption' in 'Non-Residential Buildings'. It stipulates that: '*All new non-residential development proposals must include an Energy Statement which confirms that all such non-residential development proposals:*

1. *Can generate at least the same amount of renewable electricity on-site (and preferably on-plot) as they demand over the course of a year, such demand including all energy use (regulated and unregulated), calculated using a methodology proven to accurately predict a building's actual energy performance; and*
2. *To help achieve point 1 above, target achieving a site average space heating demand of around 15-20kWh/m2/yr and a site average total energy demand of 70 kWh/m2/yr. No unit to have a total energy demand in excess of 90 kWh/m2/yr, irrespective of amount of on-site renewable energy production. (For the avoidance of doubt, 'total energy demand' means the amount of energy used as measured by the metering of that building, with no deduction for renewable energy generated on site).*'

3.6 To demonstrate compliance with the above, Policy S8 requires that the Energy Statement must include: '*…details of assured performance arrangements. As a minimum, this will require:*

*a) The submission of 'pre-built' estimates of energy performance; and*
*b) Prior to each building being occupied, the submission of updated, accurate and verified 'as built' calculations of energy performance. Such a submission should also be provided to the first occupier (including a Non-Technical Summary of such estimates);*

*Weight will be given to proposals which demonstrate a deliverable commitment to on-going monitoring of energy consumption, post occupation, which has the effect, when applicable, of notifying the occupier that their energy use appears to exceed significantly the expected performance of the building, and explaining to the occupier steps they could take to identify the potential causes of such high energy use.*'

3.7 In light of the above, it is emphasised that the purpose of the proposed scheme is to provide heating for a grain dryer located within the adjacent grain store to the east of the site. In the absence of the proposed biomass boiler, the applicant would merely use a kerosene fuelled system (which does not require planning consent). The proposed ancillary agricultural development thus allows the farm business to utilise renewable

wood chip fuel in place of fossil fuel technology. The new biomass boiler will be installed within an existing barn and limited building work will be required to facilitate the development. Under these circumstances, the supplementary publication *Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2023, Energy Efficiency Policies FAQ's* indicates that this application does not therefore need to be supported by an Energy Statement. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that the biomass boiler heating system's parasitic energy requirements will, on average, be addressed by renewable electricity produced by new roof mounted photovoltaic panels. Total energy output will significantly exceed the building's average kW/$m^2$/yr consumption, not least given that: the purpose of the development is to generate renewable energy; the building to accommodate the system does not require heating, insulation etc and will not ordinarily be occupied; and the biomass boiler system will only need to operate when cereals etc need moisture content regulation (i.e. only operating for a few weeks a year). When not operational, the roof mounted PV panels will supplement electricity usage within the wider associated farm complex. For these reasons, the development is considered to align with the strategic intention of Policy S8.

3.8 **Policy S61** relates to 'biodiversity opportunity and delivering measurable net gains'. It notes that: '*Following application of the mitigation hierarchy, all development proposals should ensure opportunities are taken to retain, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity features proportionate to their scale, through site layout, design of new buildings and proposals for existing buildings with consideration to the construction phase and ongoing site management.*' In this context, Policy S61 states that: '*Proposals for major and large scale development should seek to deliver wider environmental net gains where feasible*.'

3.9 With particular regard to ecological enhancement, Policy S61 notes: '*All development proposals, unless specifically exempted by Government, must provide clear and robust evidence for biodiversity net gains and losses in the form of a biodiversity gain plan, which should ideally be submitted with the planning application (or, if not, the submission and approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development commences will form a condition of any planning application approval), setting out:*

*a) information about the steps to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;*
*b) the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;*
*c) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat following implementation of the proposed ecological enhancements/interventions;*
*d) the ongoing management strategy for any proposals;*
*e) any registered off-site gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development; and*
*f) exceptionally any biodiversity credits purchased for the development through a recognised and deliverable offsetting scheme.*

*Demonstrating the value of the habitat (pre and post-development) with appropriate and robust evidence will be the responsibility of the applicant. Proposals which do not demonstrate that the post-development biodiversity value will exceed the pre-development value of the onsite habitat by a 10% net gain will be refused.*'

3.10 The above precedes the recent update to Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), which introduces

a nationwide legal requirement for new applicable development to provide ecological enhancement (10% BNG). In context of this application, the requirements of Schedule 7A and Policy S61 were discussed with Archer Ecology Ltd. It has been observed that the proposed scheme merely comprises the change of use (within Class *Sui Generis*) of an existing contemporary agricultural building and that the site is devoid of habit value (0 habitat units under BNG metric).

3.11 Under these circumstances, Section 4 of The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 states: '*4.—(1) The biodiversity gain planning condition does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which meets the first and second conditions.*
*(2) The first condition is that the development does not impact an onsite priority habitat.*
*(3) The second condition is that the development impacts—*
*a) less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value(1) greater than zero; and*
b) *less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat.*'

3.12 It was identified that, by virtue of the entire site having a habitat biodiversity value of 0 (it's an existing steel portal framed building), there would be no requirement to demonstrate biodiversity net gain under Schedule 7A of the T&CPA (as amended). Similarly, Section 6.1 of the draft guidance 'CLLP, 2023, Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain in Central Lincolnshire - Guidance for Applicants Seeking Planning Permission' also notes that proposals affecting less than 25m$^2$ of habitat (in this case the proposal affects 0 m$^2$ of land with a habitat value above 0) are currently exempt from needing to demonstrate a measurable biodiversity net gain. On this basis, it is concluded that the proposal does not need to address the provisions of Policy S61 and no mitigating habitat enhancing landscaping is required.

**National Planning Policy Framework 2023**

3.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was formally adopted in December 2023. This updated document now replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework adopted in September 2023 and the preceding NPPF of July 2021.

3.14 **Paragraph 88** outlines objectives for 'supporting a prosperous rural economy' and, of particular relevance to the proposed scheme, states that: '*Planning policies and decisions should enable:*

*a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;*
*b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*'

3.15 The proposed development will allow a grain dryer to be powered by a renewable heating system. Such will allow the drying of both cereal crops and wood chip biomass fuel (dependent upon the season and requirements). Though small scale and ancillary in nature, the proposal will nevertheless allow Greylees Ltd to improve the long term commercial viability and profitability of the business by reducing overheads and improving the quality of farm produce. Innovations of this nature are necessary if farm

businesses are to adapt to changing circumstances and contribute to a prosperous rural economy. The proposal is considered to achieve strong alignment with the intention of paragraph 88.

## 4.0 DEVELOPMENT APPRAISAL

### Use

4.1 The proposed development seeks installation of an agricultural biomass heating system within an existing barn located amidst the established Boiling Wells Farm complex. The development is necessary to allow a grain dryer located in an adjacent barn to utilise cost effective renewable heat energy (as opposed to a kerosene based system). The existing building will require the introduction of eastern elevation cladding and internal subdivision in order to create an enclosed weather proof 'biomass boiler room'. Both the building's existing and proposed agricultural uses fall within Class *Sui Generis*. The application site has an excellent spatial relationship with the farm complex and surrounding farmland. There is no reason to believe that the development will compromise levels of amenity afforded by neighbouring land users/occupants or give rise to any adverse environmental effects. The agricultural development is considered to be a necessary, appropriate and beneficial land use option. As demonstrated within the Planning Policy Context section of this statement, the agricultural use is considered strategically acceptable in light of the Development Plan, national planning policy and other material considerations.

### Amount

4.2 The application site encompasses an existing partially open-sided steel portal framed barn that measures approximately 9.6 metres by 18.6 metres (178.5 $m^2$) with an eaves height of 4.5 metres and ridge height of 6.0 metres. The proposed development seeks installation of a small 500 kW wood chip fuelled 'Froling TM500' biomass boiler system within the northern section of the building. To facilitate this, the barn will be converted/altered via fitting of cladding with two roller shutter doors and personnel door to the eastern elevation (central and northern bays). An internal divide will then be installed in order to create an enclosed room. This will accommodate both the biomass boiler and an adjoining wood chip fuel transfer store. It will be necessary to fit an exhaust flue to the building's rear elevation (as depicted on elevation plan F3167-01B). Photovoltaic (PV) panels will be fitted to the roof in order to meet average annual parasitic electrical energy requirements. The building's southern bay will remain open sided, thus retaining the existing general agricultural storage use.

### Layout

4.3 The layout of the proposed scheme is essentially dictated by the form and orientation of the existing agricultural storage building. It is important that the proposed scheme is located in relatively close proximity to the adjacent grain store (situated to the east) for ease of connection to the grain dryer. The biomass boiler can readily be accommodated within the northern half of the existing barn in a manner that allows the southern confines of the building to be retained for general agricultural storage. The design of the scheme allows ease of access from the existing adjoining farm track without the need for additional ancillary hardstanding.

**Scale**

4.4 Considerations of scale are multifaceted for reason that they relate both to the proportions of the building/structure proposed and the overall size of the development scheme. In addition, scale is a relative term. The perceived scale of a development is usually appraised against the baseline of existing built surroundings. In this context it can be observed that the proposed scheme essentially entails installation of an agricultural biomass boiler heating system within an existing barn. This can be facilitated without extending the footprint or raising the roof/eaves height of the building. External alterations are limited to partial enclosure of the presently open sided eastern elevation and fitting an exhaust flue to the western elevation. The scale of the existing building will not therefore perceptibly change as a result of the development.

**Landscaping**

4.5 The application site encompasses an existing building located within the established Boiling Wells Farm complex. This benefits from mature landscaping with established woodland being located to the immediate north and west. This coupled with undulating topography provides a good degree of visual screening. The development will not entail the loss of any land of habitat value (0 habitat units) and, as detailed within Section 4 of The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, mitigating landscaping delivering 10% BNG is unnecessary under these circumstances.

**Appearance**

4.6 The existing barn's northern, southern and western elevations are clad in profiled steel sheeting coloured light grey. As evident within the photograph included below, the eastern elevation is presently open-sided in order to allow ease of access for agricultural storage. The roof is clad in profiled steel sheeting coloured slate blue.

Photograph depicting barn's current open sided eastern elevation.

4.7 As depicted upon submitted elevation and floor plan drawing F3167-01B, the proposed development will necessitate the external cladding of the eastern elevation's northern and central bays with profiled steel sheeting (to match existing colour). Two steel roller shutters and a personnel door will be fitted therein. The building will also be internally subdivided, resultant in creation of an enclosed boiler room with biomass woodchip store. The barn's southern bay will however remain open-sided and retained in its existing use. Other external changes include the fitting of roof mounted PV panels and a biomass boiler exhaust flue to the western elevation. Despite these alterations, the building's simple contemporary rural architectural vernacular will remain predominantly unchanged and the development will not be readily apparent when viewed from the limited number of outlying visual receptors. The impact of the scheme upon the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside will realistically be negligible.

**Access**

4.8 The proposed scheme comprises ancillary agricultural development (biomass heating system). The boiler will ordinarily be in operation when required for the drying of cereals following harvest or occasional use for drying wood chip used in the applicants' more substantial poultry farm biomass boiler systems. Aside from occasional servicing and stocking up of biomass fuel (which will be transferred from the farm's existing store), the development will not ordinarily generate traffic requiring use of the public highway. Regardless, the site will benefit from existing farm tracks that run a course adjacent to the site/building's eastern and western boundaries. The trackways, which are constructed of crushed stone, in turn connect with the farm's primary access. This comprises a 1.5 kilometre long private carriageway surfaced with compacted aggregate that extends a little over 1 kilometre to the south and west of the application site in order to connect with the A153 Grantham Road via a heavy duty industrial specification junction with right turn lane. The proposed scheme will not have any tangible impact upon the safety or capacity of the local highway network.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

5.1 The proposed scheme seeks adaptation of an existing agricultural building in order to accommodate a renewable biomass boiler heating system needed to power a grain dryer located in an adjacent barn (which will dry both cereal crops and woodchip biomass fuel as necessary). The proposal negates the need to use systems that rely upon fossil fuel (kerosene) and such will both improve the versatility and long term profitability of the farm business. Alterations to the existing building are minimal and the development will thus integrate seamlessly within the setting of the site's rural surroundings. The scheme will not give rise to any adverse environmental impacts. The proposal is considered to align with the principles of sustainable development and it will cause no demonstrable harm. The granting of planning permission would strongly accord with the provisions of the Development Plan and national planning policy.