

Fairclough Hall Farm

Halls Green - Weston - Hitchin - Herts - SG4 7DP



North Herts Planning Dept,
PO Box 10613,
Nottingham
NG6 6DW

15/09/2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Statement of need, Lolleywood Café, Fairclough Hall Farm

Fairclough Hall Farm is an active arable farm which is facing increasing pressure on its finances due to reduced commodity prices, ever increasing input prices, the withdrawal of direct government subsidies and the general downturn in the economy.

It (with past encouragement from the regional and EU government) has invested in converting a range of buildings into high quality commercial office space. These could have been converted into less expensive workshop/industrial conversions, but the owners were very conscious of the local environment, concerns about HGVs and it was noted that this type of office development creates less disturbance.

The covid pandemic and subsequent poor performance of the economy has also made conditions far more challenging and a café is a way of making the site more attractive to potential tenants.

Since starting these conversions at Fairclough Hall Farm nearly 25 years ago, a successful and diverse community of businesses in a pleasant working environment has been created.

Some very successful local, regional and even international businesses have based themselves here over the years. These have given decent employment opportunities to many local people, and the owners are pleased with how many people from the local area have worked in many of these businesses.

Having employees on site does increase the need for catering services, so that people do not have the need to leave site throughout the day. Over the past 15 years the owners have tried getting third party operators to run deliveries or small concessions from catering trailers but have struggled to find the person with the right dedication, to achieve the critical mass needed for profitability, so decided the only way to do it was run it themselves.

Also, several of the more progressive businesses on site have needed to ensure on site catering so that they can achieve accreditation (such a B Corp), which looks into staff welfare practices. These businesses (along with all of the others on site) have encouraged the owners to provide such a service, highlighting the need for a café or similar.

The on-site catering provision at Fairclough Hall Farm has grown organically over a number of years, which is the reason why it would like to regularise the planning status of the building.

The operations started with a delivery service in the 2000's, moved into various trailer operated services in the 2010's and after the pandemic, the owners took control of the trailer operations and made a semi-permanent base where it is now. It is mainly run by the owners to cater for the needs of people on site, which account for about 80% of the trade. It has also become known to a few local community groups who make monthly visits and is now regularly used by the North Herts learning disability day service, for its quiet, unassuming location appeals to their clients – and they are most welcome.

The slow growth of the café has highlighted that there is a need for the café and the owners would like to ensure that it can carry on providing its much-needed services to the businesses on site, at the same time as spreading their reliance on the ever varying commodity price for their farm output.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Hale