

PLANNING STATEMENT

Lolleywood Café, Fairclough Hall Farm, Hall's Green, Weston, SG4 7DP

Job Ref: 25/078

Date: March 2026



Prepared by Tom Donovan BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI on behalf of

PETER GEORGE TOWN PLANNING



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Section 1: Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Peter George Town Planning has been instructed by Matthew Hale to prepare this planning statement to accompany a planning application for the retention of the existing Lolleywood Café at Fairclough Hall Farm, Halls Green, Weston, SG4 7DP.
- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the proposals, provide an analysis against relevant national and local planning policy and ultimately make the case as to why planning permission should be granted.

Planning History

- 1.3 There is extensive planning history relating to the wider Fairclough Hall Farm complex none of which has any specific relevance to the application.



Section 2: Analysis of the Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is situated within Halls Green which is a small hamlet situated approximately 2km to the south-east of Weston. Halls Green is comprised of a small number of farmsteads and dwellings including Fairclough Hall Farm, Irongate Farm, Rising Sun PH and a small number of residential dwellings.

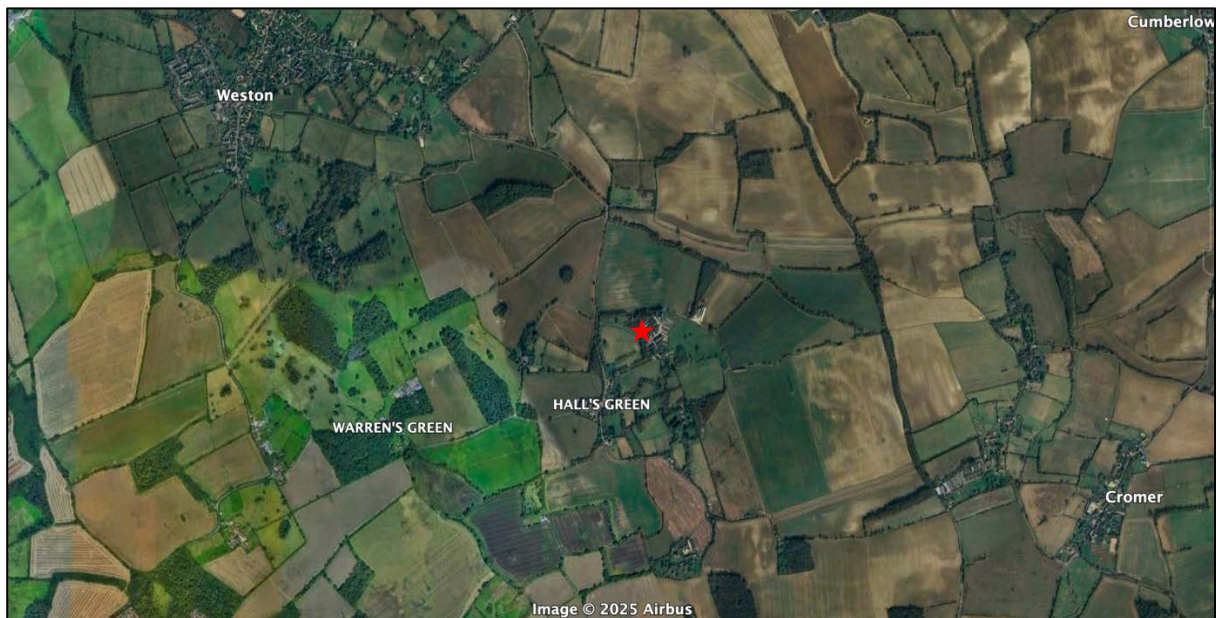


Figure 1 - Location in Context

- 2.2 Halls Green is completely washed over by Green Belt and is not a defined settlement as per the North Herts Local Plan, albeit it has a clear 'core' as per the above and contains a small number of residential and commercial properties, much of which include those within Fairclough Hall Farm.



- 2.3 Fairclough Hall Farm is located to the east side of the classified 'C' road named as 'Halls Green' on the Hertfordshire County Council Highways Gazetteer. The farmyard area comprises a grade II listed farmhouse, grade II listed barn and a number of large modern barns and buildings, many of which are in business use.
- 2.4 Vehicular access to the farm is via the existing private access drive which branches from 'Halls Green' road to the west. A significant amount of parking is provided in connection with the various businesses housed at the farm. This includes a large area of parking at the eastern side of the farmyard.
- 2.5 Lolleywood Café itself essentially began life as a trailer on a parcel of land on a clearing within the surrounding woodland near to an existing outdoor seating/smoking area used by staff employed by the various businesses at the farm. As discussed in Section 3 below, the café has evolved into a larger structure than the original trailer.
- 2.6 The site does not lie within nor is it adjacent to a conservation area. The site is not understood to fall within an archaeological area.



- 2.7 The site lies fully within Flood Zone 1 and is not at any risk of flooding from any other sources.



Section 3: The Development Proposal

3.1 The proposed development can be described as follows:

“Retention of the existing single-storey building and its continued use as a café.”

3.2 As mentioned above, the café started life as a trailer that had been positioned adjacent to an existing outdoor seating and smoking area used by staff of the various businesses located at the farm. Following its operation for an initial period, it was decided to ensconce the trailer within a lightweight structure comprised of aluminium truss work, wooden posts and beams, timber cladding and an insulated tin sheet roof.



Figure 2 - Lolleywood Cafe



- 3.3 The building is located within a clearing within the existing area of woodland located to the west/south-west of the farm and is largely hidden from public viewpoints as a consequence. A small patio area is situated to the front of the existing building providing an outdoor eating/drinking.
- 3.4 It is intended to operate the café between the hours of 0900-1800 Monday-Saturday. It has approximately 6 part-time staff member, the majority of which live locally.
- 3.5 The focus of the café is on serving the staff of the various local businesses that are present within the existing farm (this represents approximately 80% of total sales), albeit the café is of course open to the wider public and is often used by local charitable and social groups, including North Herts learning disability day service. Further information regarding the benefits of the use is discussed within section 5 of this statement and set out within the Statement of Need authored by the applicant.
- 3.6 Customers and staff are able to utilise existing parking areas within and adjacent to the existing farmyard.



Section 4: Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The Government policies on different aspects of planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework).
- 4.2 The relevant sections of the Framework are as follows:
- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
 - Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Development Plan

- 4.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise.”



4.4 The development plan context for the planning application is provided by:

- **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022)**

4.5 The following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of this application:

Strategic Policies

- Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP3: Employment
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP10: Healthy Communities
- Policy SP11: Natural Resources and Sustainability
- Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity
- Policy SP13: Historic Environment

Development Management Policies

- Policy T1: Assessment of Transport Matters
- Policy T2: Parking
- Policy D1: Sustainable Design
- Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- Policy NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure
- Policy NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites



- Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD September 2011
- Design SPD July 2011



Section 5: Planning Analysis

Principle of Development: Green Belt

Policy Background

- 5.1 Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) contains policies pertinent to development within the Green Belt. Local Plan (LP) Policy SP5 largely defers to the Framework.
- 5.2 The Framework sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; with their essential characteristics being their openness and permanence.
- 5.3 The five purposes of the Green Belt are set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework as being: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.



Whether Inappropriate

- 5.4 Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, unless compliant with a series of stated exceptions, development in the Green Belt should be regarded as being inappropriate in the Green Belt. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that, the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt on ‘grey belt’ land should also not be regarded as inappropriate development subject to compliance with a specific set of criteria.
- 5.5 ‘Grey belt’ is defined in the glossary to the Framework as follows:
- “For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”***
- 5.6 The question is therefore whether the site **strongly contributes** to purposes A, B or D of the Green Belt purposes. An assessment of this in respect to each component is set out below.



Contribution to Purpose A

- 5.7 The Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that purpose a relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas confirming that **villages should not be considered large built-up areas**. Halls Green is a hamlet mainly comprised of residential properties with a small number of farms and agricultural businesses. The site thus makes **no contribution** in checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area.

Contribution to Purpose B

- 5.8 The site makes no contribution to preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another. Accordingly, in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance, the site thus makes **no contribution to purpose B**.

Contribution to Purpose D

- 5.9 The recently updated PPG clarifies that purpose D is intended to relate solely to the preservation of the setting of historic towns, not villages. Accordingly, given that the site does not relate to a historic town, it makes **no contribution to purpose D** of the Green Belt purposes.

'Grey Belt' Summary



- 5.10 For the reasons discussed above, it is considered that the site meets the definition of ‘grey belt’ as it does not contribute strongly to functions a, b or d of the Green Belt purposes.

Compliance with Paragraph 155

- 5.11 It is now necessary to consider Paragraph 155 of the Framework which states that:

“The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.”

- 5.12 The applicant’s response to each of the above is set out below:



a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

5.13 In terms of the first part of this criterion, the application site meets the definition of grey belt land for the reasons discussed above.

5.14 Regarding the second part of this criterion, the PPG provides guidance regarding the consideration of the impact of releasing or developing grey belt sites on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area to be assessed. This states that:

“In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.”

5.15 The site comprises a relatively small parcel of land at the edge of but within the existing business area/farm. It has a reasonably high degree of self-containment due to its positioning as part of the farmyard. It is further segregated from the wider countryside by the existing woodland to the west and surrounding the café.



- 5.16 The site is moreover a very small component part of the District's Green Belt which covers approximately 47% of its entire administrative area. Accordingly, its development would have little impact on the ability remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan from serving its functions as intended.
- 5.17 Consequently, if developed as proposed, the impact on the strategic Green Belt within the district would be negligible. In those terms, the proposed would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan and would not affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.
- 5.18 The proposed development would thus be compliant with limb (a) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

- 5.19 Halls Green falls within the parish of Weston. Weston contains a small number of local facilities and services and, like many rural villages, has seen some of these close in recent years. Accordingly, whilst there are some



public houses (The Cricketers in Weston, and The Rising Sun in Halls Green), which provide a fundamentally different service to a café, there are few facilities of this nature in the parish or wider locality.

- 5.20 Accordingly, the café provides a local daytime social/meeting place for residents of the parish and furthermore to the employees of the various businesses located within the Fairclough Hall Farm business park. Given the absence of similar facilities on the site or elsewhere within the parish, the café provides an important and regularly used facility to support the existing operations of the business park and neighbouring residents.
- 5.21 Moreover, the café has been in operation since September 2022 turning over between approximately £8-10K per month. As such, it is clear that there is a need for the premises on the basis of the continued success of the business over a period in excess of three years.
- 5.22 It is thus considered that there is a demonstrable unmet need for a café in this location in accordance with the requirements of limb (b) of Paragraph 155.



c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework;

- 5.23 Paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF seek to ensure that development promotes sustainable transport, provides safe and suitable access for all users, and properly considers the environmental and practical impacts of travel. At the same time, the Framework makes clear that proposals should only be refused on highway grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, thereby setting a high bar for resisting development on transport grounds.
- 5.24 Further, Paragraph 88 of the Framework is supportive of the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses, and the development of accessible local services and community facilities.
- 5.25 Paragraph 89 of the Framework further notes that, planning policies should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.



- 5.26 Halls Green is a small hamlet situated approximately 2km to the south-east of Weston. Halls Green is comprised of a small number of farmsteads and dwellings including Fairclough Hall Farm (which comprises agricultural and business operations), Irongate Farm, Rising Sun PH and a number of residential dwellings.
- 5.27 Halls Green has a clear main core largely delineated by the village signpost at either end which is accompanied by 30mph speed limit signs at this point. Fairclough Farm is located a short distance to the north-east of the main part of the settlement, albeit it can be accessed from within the settlement and is thus considered to be a composite part of Halls Green. Moreover, as discussed, Fairclough Hall Farm contains a business park which accommodates approximately 20 separate businesses employing around 60-70 staff.
- 5.28 Given the nature of Halls Green, it is likely that visitors to the café would largely be reliant on the use of the private car to access the site. However, a large proportion of the use of the café is by staff employed in the business park and thus these people will already be on site and are thus not making a special journey to visit the café. Residents within Halls Green itself would be



able to walk to the site, whilst the café is also used by walkers/dog walkers and cyclists from within the wider parish.

5.29 Accordingly, whilst inevitable that some trips to the café would be by car, the site is not located in an isolated location in the countryside but is rather part of the established business park closely related to the existing settlement. As noted above, Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the Framework support the provision of new rural businesses and acknowledge that these will often be found in locations beyond existing settlements in locations not well served by public transport; the clear inference being that sustainability and accessibility should be considered differently in rural areas.

5.30 With that said, it is considered that the site is thus in a sustainable location with respect to the general aims of the Framework and with special regard given to paragraphs 110 and 115. It would thus be compliant with limb (c) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

5.31 Not applicable: Development is not major development.



Summary

- 5.32 As discussed above, it is considered that the proposed development meets the definition of grey belt land and is moreover in full accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 155 of the revised Framework. Accordingly, it would **not be inappropriate development** in the Green Belt.
- 5.33 If officers agree with the above assessment, the proposed development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and no further assessment of the impact of development on the openness and/or purposes will be required. However, if officers disagree, it is acknowledged that these matters will need to be considered.

Openness

- 5.34 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out that, assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. It indicates a non-exhaustive list of matters that may need to be taken into account including:
- The visual impact of development may be relevant, as could its volume.
 - The duration of the development and its remediability.



- The degree of activity likely to be generated.

- 5.35 The café building is located within a small clearing within an existing wooded area in a proximal location at the western edge of the farmyard and near to the access. Given that it has a trailer at its core and the non-permanent nature of its construction, it appears as a modest structure, particularly in the context of the many much more significant buildings in the farmyard.
- 5.36 Moreover, given its setting amongst the wooded area, it has little visibility from wider view points towards the site and indeed has rather a limited visual impact from within the farmyard itself. Its rear elevation may be visible to glimpse views from the adjacent field (that to the west), but it would not be visible from public viewpoints from 'Halls Green' road to the west, whilst the nearest public rights of way (Footpath Weston 016 and Bridleway Weston 036) are a reasonable distance to the south and north respectively and it is not visible from these receptors.
- 5.37 Overall, the existing café building is considered to cause only very limited harm to the visual and spatial aspects of the openness of the Green Belt.



5.38 In terms of activity, the wider site is already in employment use with a number of businesses permanent tenants of the farm. There is moreover an agricultural operation that continues to operate from the land. Accordingly, there is a fairly steady operation involving a reasonable amount of activity in terms of comings and goings.

5.39 The café operates on a fairly limited basis between the hours of 1030-1430 Monday-Saturday (albeit it is proposed to extend the hours slightly to 0900-1800 Mon-Sat), which makes sense given that approximately 80% of its trade comes from staff of the existing businesses at the site. Accordingly, the majority of the customers are already on site and have not made a special trip. Any additional custom beyond that from existing staff is considered to be negligible in terms of activity at the site.

5.40 Accordingly, it is not considered that the existing café has a negligible impact on openness with respect to the degree of activity generated.

Green Belt Purposes

5.41 The five purposes of the Green Belt are set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework. They are a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to



assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Contribution to Purpose A

- 5.42 This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas which the PPG confirms does not include villages. Accordingly, given the location of the site at the edge of a developed site within a small hamlet, it is not considered to make any contribution to purpose A.

Contribution to Purpose B

- 5.43 This purpose seeks to prevent the coalescence of towns. Accordingly, given the location of the site, it is considered to make no contribution to purpose B.

Contribution to Purpose C

- 5.44 This purpose seeks to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Unlike other Green Belt purposes, the vast majority of Green Belt land parcels are likely, to a greater or lesser extent, make some contribution to this purpose.



5.45 However, in this case, given the close proximity of the site to the existing developed farmyard and the degree to which it is set amongst the existing woodland, there is little sense of the building in question encroaching into the surrounding countryside. Accordingly, it is not considered that the building represents encroachment into the countryside and thus has negligible impact on this purpose.

Contribution to Purpose D

5.46 This purpose relates to the preservation of the setting and special character of historic towns. The PPG confirms that this does not include villages and thus the site/development makes no contribution to this purpose.

Contribution to Purpose E

5.47 This purpose has no relevance to the consideration of this application.

Green Belt Summary

5.48 As discussed, the applicant's case is that the proposed development would involve the development of grey belt land and that the proposed development would be compliant with Paragraph 155 of the Framework. On this basis, it would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.



5.49 However, if officers disagree, the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and very special circumstances would need to be demonstrated in order for the application to succeed: a matter returned to below.

5.50 With respect to the impact on the openness of the Green Belt, it is considered that the development would have a negligible impact on the openness of the Green Belt, largely as a result of the small scale of the building in question and its limited wider visual impacts.

5.51 In terms of the Green Belt purposes, it is considered that, other than purpose (c) to which it would have a negligible impact, the existing development would not conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area & Impact on Designated Heritage Assets

Policy Background

5.52 LP Policies SP9 and D1 seek to ensure that new development is well designed, physically acceptable and appropriate in the context of the surrounding area/landscape. These policies are consistent with Section 12 of



the Framework insofar that they seek to ensure the same objectives are met.

5.53 The statutory duty under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) sets out, with regard to applications for planning permission affecting a listed building or its setting, regard should be had to the desirability of preserving the setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

5.54 Policies SP13 and HE1 are in general accordance with Section 16 of the Framework, with all being consistent with the overarching legislative objectives set out above.

Design

5.55 The existing building is a modest structure with a simple design. Indeed, it doesn't have any foundations but has rather been carefully constructed around the original café trailer. The use of timber cladding to the walls gives the building an appearance that gives it a woodland cabin-like character and which seems appropriate within the context of the surrounding wooded area. In design terms, it is considered to be unobjectionable.



- 5.56 In terms of its wider impacts, and as discussed above, the existing café building is located within a clearing within an area of woodland at the edge of the farmyard. It has little wider prominence given its modest nature as well as the significant tree cover that it benefits from. Moreover, whilst located near to the entrance to the farm, it is very effectively screened so that its presence is not obvious; even to those entering the site.
- 5.57 Nearby listed buildings include the grade II listed Fairclough Hall Farmhouse and the grade II listed East Barn. The East Barn is located at the eastern side of the farmyard and would not be impacted by the development.
- 5.58 In respect to the Farmhouse, this is located closer by; albeit there are large barns between the café and the listed farmhouse. However, given the manner in which the farmyard has been developed over recent years, the setting of the farmhouse has been subject to a large degree of change. Accordingly, given the modest nature of the café structure, its distance from the farmhouse and the nature of other existing development within its setting, it is not considered that it would be harmful to the setting or significance of the listed building.



Summary

5.59 Overall, it is considered that the café building has an acceptable design suitable for its context, and that it would cause any harm to the setting or historic significance of nearby listed buildings. Consequently, it is considered that the proposed development would accord with the statutory provisions of Section 66 of the Act, LP Policies SP9, SP13, D1 and HE1 and Sections 12 and 16 of the Framework.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

5.60 The nearest residential properties are situated to the south of the site, and to the south of the main part of the farmyard. The café operates on a limited basis, and the nature of its use is such that it is not considered to give rise to any harmful impacts to the living conditions of any neighbouring residential properties.

Highways Matters

General Considerations

5.61 No alterations are proposed to the existing access arrangements which are considered suitable for vehicular access to and from the site. Indeed, the site access is in a position whereby there is good visibility in both directions



from the mouth of the access. It is not considered that there should be any technical highways objections.

- 5.62 In terms of trip generation, approximately 80% of the customers is comprised of staff of the various businesses located at the farm (approximately 20). Accordingly, given the limited additional customer numbers coming from further afield, it is considered that any additional trips associated solely with the café would be negligible in the overall context of trips to and from the site.

Parking

- 5.63 As with many farmyard conversions such as this, the farm has existing formal and informal areas for parking scattered throughout the site. This includes an area of parking immediately adjacent to the access drive on entry to the south, a larger area of parking at the eastern edge of the farmyard and other smaller areas of parking elsewhere.
- 5.64 Accordingly, it is considered that the site benefits from sufficient parking provision to serve the use, particularly when one takes account of the fact that approximately 80% of the clientele are already on site.



Very Special Circumstances

- 5.65 As set out in paragraph 153 of the Framework, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances (VSC). VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 5.66 In considering whether VSC exist, it is the responsibility of the decision maker to consider the extent of the harm to the Green Belt, and the extent of any other harm, and weigh this against the benefits of development. The Courts have held that there is no legal requirement for one extraordinary circumstance, but that multiple ordinary considerations could combine to provide the VSC required to justify an approval in a given case.
- 5.67 Lolleywood Café is situated within the wider Fairclough Hall Farm site which essentially forms a small business park containing a range of primarily office-based and other small-scale business/industrial operations. The existing business park currently accommodates approximately 60/70 staff across approximately 20 businesses.



- 5.68 The café thus supports the existing business park by providing an easily accessible facility for existing staff on the site thus reducing any requirement to travel at lunchtimes to nearby towns such as Baldock, Stevenage or Letchworth. Its presence moreover enhances the viability of the business park by indirectly supporting the growth and expansion of existing businesses. It would therefore have social, economic and environmental benefits in this respect.
- 5.69 The café further serves other members of the local community including dog walkers, cyclists, and other local charitable and social groups (including North Herts learning disability day service) from within the parish and slightly further afield. Given that there are no other café facilities either within Halls Green itself and few in the wider locality, the café provides a facility not already present in the parish and thus provides a more local option; again, reducing the need to travel and providing additional facilities which support an existing rural community.
- 5.70 In this context, the café would be consistent with Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the Framework which provides support for the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, the development and



diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural business, and the development of new services and community facilities.

- 5.71 There is thus a national policy component here that would provide support for the retention of the existing café in conjunction with the other noted social and economic benefits arising from its continued use.

Summary

- 5.72 As discussed in the foregoing, we acknowledge that the development proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, it is considered that the development would have a negligible impact on the openness of the Green Belt, largely as a result of the small scale of the building in question and its limited wider visual impacts and that, other than purpose c, to which it would have a negligible impact, the existing development would not conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes.
- 5.73 Given the low level of harm that has been identified, it follows that the benefits need not be of extraordinary provenance. Indeed, as identified in the case law, a package of ‘ordinary’ benefits can be taken together to form the VSC required to justify a planning permission.



5.74 With that said, national policy is clearly supportive of development which supports the expansion and/or diversification of existing rural businesses including, where appropriate, the development of new services and facilities. Given that the café supports the ongoing use and viability of the existing business park at Fairclough Hall Farm, provides a more sustainable option for staff members on site, and provide a much needed facility to support residents of the parish, it is considered that the retention of the café would have a range of social, economic and environmental benefits that would outweigh the small amount of harm that has been identified.

Other Matters

5.75 There are no other matters relevant to a determination on the application.



Section 6: Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 This statement supports an application for planning permission for the retention of the existing Lolleywood Café at Fairclough Hall Farm, Halls Green.
- 6.2 As discussed in the foregoing, the applicant's case is that the proposed development would involve the development of grey belt land and that the proposed development would be compliant with Paragraph 155 of the Framework. On this basis, it would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 However, if officers disagree, the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and very special circumstances would need to be demonstrated in order for the application to succeed. With that said, it is considered that the retention of the existing café brings with it a number of social, economic and environmental benefits, including its continued use by local community and social groups, and staff on the adjacent employment site.
- 6.4 Weighed against the very limited amount of harm to the openness and purposes of the Green Belt and the absence of any other harm, it is



considered that the social economic and environmental benefits set out in this statement would clearly outweigh the harm that has been identified so as to provide the very special circumstances necessary to support the application.

6.5 Other matters material to the consideration of this application have been considered and discussed in the foregoing and it is considered that the proposed development would represent a suitable form of development for the site and would be fully compliant with relevant national and local planning policy.

6.6 In light of the above, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.