



PLANNING STATEMENT

East Barn, Fairclough Hall Farm, Hall's Green, Weston, SG4 7DP

Job Ref: 25/078

Date: December 2025



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PETER GEORGE TOWN PLANNING



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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

<i>Section 1: Introduction & Background</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Section 2: Analysis of the Site and Surroundings.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Section 3: The Development Proposal</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Section 4: Relevant Planning Policy</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Section 5: Planning Analysis.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Section 6: Summary & Conclusions</i>	<i>19</i>



Section 1: Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Peter George Town Planning has been instructed by Fairclough Hall Farm, to prepare and make an application for retrospective planning permission for the change of use of an existing barn from use as a business meeting room, work stations, toilets and café to use as offices (Use Class E (g) (i).
- 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.

Background

- 1.3 Planning permission was originally sought for a detached building to house meeting rooms, workspaces, toilets and a café. Planning permission was subsequently granted for the building in October 2018, albeit the consent was subject to a planning condition which restricted the use of the building to use as meeting rooms, café and workstations.
- 1.4 However, in light of the pandemic and the related economic context, having constructed the building, it no longer made any commercial sense of the building to be occupied as a café. Accordingly, in summer 2020, the



applicant sought planning permission for the change of use of the building to offices for a temporary period of three years. This permission was granted by the Council in August 2020 and subsequently implemented by the applicant.

- 1.5 Soon after, significant the Government made significant changes to the use classes order which resulted in a new Class E category which amalgamated several use classes covering commercial, service and business uses. Our client made enquiries to the Council at this time enquiring whether there would now be interchangeability between business and service uses in this specific case.
- 1.6 The Area Planning Officer at the time confirmed in writing his view that there would indeed be interchangeability between business and service uses such that would allow the use of the new building for either the originally approved use or a B1 use without planning permission.
- 1.7 Notwithstanding, the Council appear to be taking the view that, following the expiry of the temporary consent, the use should have reverted back to that set out under the terms of the original consent unless an application to continue the use was forthcoming.



1.8 With that all said, this application therefore seeks to regularise the change of use of the building to offices which commenced in Spring 2021, and which has been occurring on a continuous basis since. However, and whilst it is considered that a justified planning policy case exists for the proposed change of use, we believe that officers should give some consideration to the slightly messy context within which the change of use has occurred, including of course, the earlier advice provided by the Council which indicated that a change of use would not require planning permission.

Planning History

Ref.	Proposal	Decision
20/01242/FP	Change of use of existing business meeting room, work stations, toilets and a café to offices (B1) for a temporary period of three years.	Granted 04/08/2020
20/00229/NMA	Increase in size of building to allow internal adjustment (as Non-Material Amendment of Planning Permission 18/02397/FP granted 18.10.2018).	Granted 11/02/2020
18/02397/FP	Erection of single storey detached building to provide business meeting room, work stations, toilets and a café, following demolition of existing stables.	Granted 18/10/2018



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 number of farmsteads and dwellings including Fairclough Hall Farm, Irongate Farm, Rising Sun PH and a number of residential dwellings.

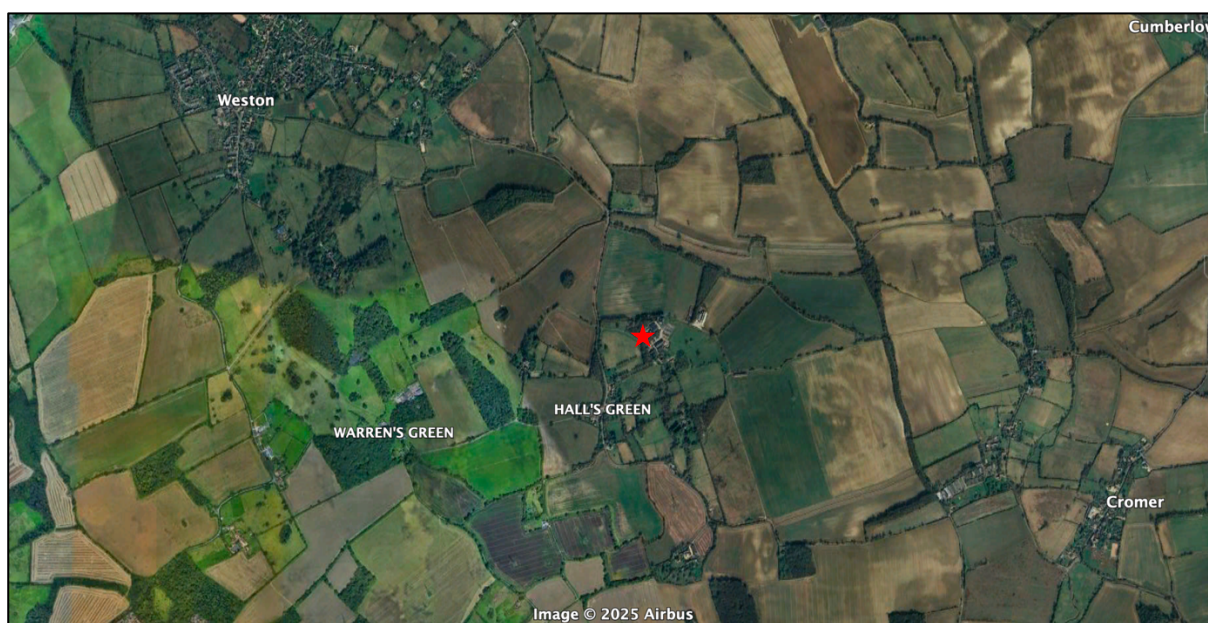


Figure 1 - Location in Context

- 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 The building in question was constructed in accordance with a planning consent from 2018 (ref. 18/02397/FP) subsequently amended by way of a non-material amendment from 2020 (re. 20/00229/NMA). The building was constructed on the site of existing stables and agricultural buildings which were demolished as part of the proposals.
- 2.6 The original planning permission initially envisaged that the proposed building would accommodate meeting rooms, workspaces, toilets and a café. However, having constructed the building, the global pandemic and



the associated economic and social impacts of same resulted in this not being a tenable approach. Planning permission was subsequently granted in August 2020 for the change of use of the building to use as offices for a temporary period of three years.

- 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:

“Retrospective change of use of existing building to offices (Class E (g) (i).”

3.2 The existing building was constructed in 2019-2020 in accordance with planning permission ref. 18/02397/FP (amended 20/00229/NMA). It was first occupied as offices in March 2021 and has been continuously occupied on this basis since.

3.3 The building contains an open-plan office area, meeting room, staff room, toilets and store. The building has a mezzanine level occupying approximately one third of the footprint of the building.

3.4 A small amount of parking is located immediately adjacent to the building. Otherwise, the unit is served by the communal parking area situated to the south-east.



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 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 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 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 Framework advises that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless compliant with a list of exceptions set out in the remainder of the paragraph.
- 5.5 One relevant exception is paragraph 154 (h) (iv) which sets out that the re-use of buildings should not be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt subject to the building being of a permanent and substantial construction. Exceptions set out under limb (h) of paragraph 154 should further preserve openness and not conflict with the Green Belt purposes.
- 5.6 The building in question was constructed in 2019-2020 in accordance with the original planning consent (and the associated NMA). It is constructed from a steel frame with weatherboarding above a brick plinth and it has dark grey insulated profiled sheeting for the roof. By any measure, the building is clearly of a permanent and substantial construction.
- 5.7 In relation to the impact of the proposed change of use on the openness of the Green Belt, no alterations or extensions are proposed to the building itself whilst an office use would be broadly commensurate with the use of the building as meeting rooms, workspaces and a café. Accordingly, the



proposed change of use would preserve openness. Likewise, the proposed change of use would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

- 5.8 Consequently, it is considered that the proposed change of use of the building would accord with paragraph 154 (h) (iv) and would thus not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Summary

- 5.9 The circumstances surrounding the grant of the original planning consent are noted, including the fact that the approval was based on a very special circumstances case. However, this does not change the basic facts of the case which are that the proposals involve the re-use of an existing building which is of permanent and substantial construction. Moreover, the proposed change of use would not otherwise be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt nor conflict with its purposes.

- 5.10 Accordingly, the proposed change of use would be acceptable in principle in accordance with Paragraph 154 of the Framework and LP Policy SP5.



Other Matters

Location

- 5.11 Halls Green is hamlet situated approximately 2km to the south-east of Weston. The building is situated at Fairclough Hall Farm which is an established rural business park already containing a range of small and medium sized businesses of various types. Accordingly, the office use is complimentary to other uses located within the farm complex.
- 5.12 In terms of its compatibility from a land-use perspective, one should moreover take account of a range of factors including that a) the building that is proposed to be utilised has already been lawfully constructed and its re-use would be acceptable in principle as discussed above, b) the wider site has an established character and use for business and other commercial uses or a similar nature, and c) the office use has occurred without incident since March 2021 in connection with the earlier temporary consent. Further, the change of use has associated economic benefits associated with the employment of local people.
- 5.13 Moreover, the proposed permanent use of the building as offices should be considered in the context of the nature of the original 2018 consent which



could be reverted to in the event that an objection was sustained against the office use.

- 5.14 Accordingly, it is considered that a proposed office use would be suitable in this location.

Impact on Living Conditions

- 5.15 The nearest residential properties are situated to the south of the site, and to the south of the main part of the farmyard. Given the prevailing context which is largely provided by existing commercial uses, and the nature of an office use, it is not considered to give rise to any harmful impacts to the living conditions of any neighbouring residential properties.

Highways Matters

- 5.16 The highways authority did not object to either the original planning application or the subsequent three-year temporary planning permission. The planning officer moreover did not raise any concerns relating to the highway's implications of the proposed use in respect to either application.
- 5.17 However, even were an objection forthcoming, as noted above, it would be appropriate to consider that the office use has been occurring since March



2021 without incident from a highway's standpoint. Indeed, it is likely that offices would involve a much lower level of trip generation than and ultimately have a far reduced impact in terms of impact on the highway.

5.18 The wider site contains an existing car park which is proposed to be utilised in connection with the use. This was found to be acceptable in respect to the earlier applications and there is no basis to consider that this arrangement is unsuitable moving forwards.

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



Section 6: Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 This statement supports an application for retrospective planning permission for the change of use of East Barn at Fairclough Hall Farm, Halls Green, Weston, SG4 7DR.
- 6.2 As discussed, the proposed change of use involves the re-use of an existing building in the Green Belt. However, the building in question is of a permanent and substantial construction and its conversion would not be harmful to the openness or purposes of the Green Belt. Accordingly, it would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 Other matters material to the consideration of this application have been considered and discussed in the foregoing and it is considered that the proposed change of use would be suitable and would be fully compliant with relevant national and local planning policy.
- 6.4 In light of the above, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.