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CDB/1305

August 2025

Shangri-La Farm, Todds Green, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. SG1 2JE

Retrospective application for planning permission

Construction of hardstanding to provide parking and turning space for vehicles and equipment in connection with established and/or permitted farming, estate management and diversified uses on immediately adjoining and nearby land

Planning statement

1. Context

- 1.1** This statement is to be read with and as part of our application for planning permission for the development described above.
- 1.2** This application is made against the background of a compliance investigation made by your council (23/00317/1ENF – Simon Curling) into “engineering operations to construct parking area” at Shangri-La Farm and follows the course of action proposed in your letter dated 27th June 2025 and addressed to the applicant

2. The application site

- 2.1** The application site is edged red on the plan accompanying our application.
- 2.2** Its area is approximately 2738 square metres.
- 2.3** It is oblong in form, with its longer axis oriented roughly east-west and its east end rather longer than its west end.
- 2.4** It has a slight fall from south to north.
- 2.5** Adjoining land owned and occupied by the applicant is edged blue on the plan accompanying this application.

3. Former use

- 3.1** The application site was the northern and lowest edge of an enclosure of permanent grassland. This edge had become worn out and poached by long-term continuous grazing. The applicant’s grandfather installed an under-drainage system here, probably well over 60 years ago, but this has through the passage of time become blocked and ineffective. The result is frequent waterlogging in winter.

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3.2 With the exception of the application site, the whole of this enclosure will be maintained as permanent grassland.

4. Proposed use

4.1 The proposed use is as described in the application form and in the heading of this planning statement.

4.2 It consists of several elements, all of them required for the successful continuation of the applicant's long-established business.

4.3 The applicant owns and/or actively manages an area of around 250 acres of arable land, grassland, woodland and buildings adjoining or close to the application site. The hardstanding will provide durable parking and storage space for vehicles, implements and materials essential for that purpose. Clearly the area and the proportion of the whole hardstanding occupied by this element will vary seasonally.

4.4 Immediately to the north of the application site is a substantial group of former agricultural buildings now containing a variety of established and/or permitted commercial uses, introduced over several decades in response to an industry-wide understood need for farm diversification. It is inevitable that parking space for staff and visitors among and around these buildings progressively falls short of current and future standards and practical requirements. The proposed hardstanding will help offset this shortfall.

4.5 In essence this group of buildings is served by a single private north-south spine road. This leads to vehicles manoeuvring and reversing in congested surroundings, with poor visibility and sometimes in conflict with oncoming traffic. These awkward and potentially dangerous situations will be reduced when vehicles are able to enter the hardstanding directly from the south end of the spine road, turn on the hardstanding and re-enter the spine road, facing forwards at all times. Safety for vehicles and pedestrians in this area will be significantly improved.

5. Construction

5.1 Construction of the hardstanding will involve –

Excavate, remove and stack approx. 200mm topsoil nearby for on-estate re-use

Expose, clear and repair under-drainage system

Lay geo-textile (Terram)

Spread, level and compact home-crushed concrete to match adjoining levels

Blind surface with road planings

5.2 Discharge of surface water from the under-drainage system will be restored to the existing nearby woodland pond.

5.3 A new fence of wooden posts, rails and wire will be erected along the south boundary of the application site with a grass verge retained immediately inside (north of) it. The existing security fence and screening hedge will be retained along the north boundary of the application site.

5.4 A new hedge of mixed indigenous species will be planted and maintained along the south boundary of the application site, within the retained grass verge.

6. Impact

6.1 Visual impact No material visual impact is expected from the proposed development. On its east and west sides the application site is flanked by established woodland and/or hedges and these continue well to its south. The grassland on its south side rises to a summit around 600 metres away; there is no built development on that alignment between the application site and the summit nor indeed beyond the summit. Behind the screening hedge and security fencing on its north side the application site adjoins the applicant's own former farm buildings, occupying an area which extends over 250 metres further north.

6.2 Noise impact Bearing in mind the planned predominance of intrinsically quiet storage and parking uses, the natural screening of the application site and the topography and use of land adjoining and nearby, no material noise impact is expected.

6.3 Ecological impact Bearing in mind its existing surroundings and the poor condition of the grassland it replaces, no material negative ecological impact is expected from construction and use of the hardstanding. The proposed new hedge and verge along the south boundary of the application site (see 5.4), as well as adding visual and acoustic screening, will function as a green wildlife corridor linking established tree belts, hedges and woodland to its east and west and further afield. A positive ecological impact is expected from this feature and from the improved transmission of surface water to the existing woodland pond (see 5.2).

6.4 The position and screening of the application site in relation to adjoining and nearby land and development are illustrated by six titled photographs (attached).

7. Access

7.1 Pedestrian and vehicular access to the application site will be at its north-east corner, from the south end of the private spine road serving the former farm buildings to its north.

7.2 No new entrance is proposed to the nearby public highway (Stevenage Road) nor any alterations to the existing entrances there. The proposed hardstanding will not generate any additional vehicle movements from and to the public highway. Rather, it will make arrangements and space for moving and parking vehicles and equipment safer and more generous for current occupiers of and visitors to the former farm buildings to its north.

7.3 A public footpath (Wymondley FP 21) crosses the application site roughly from south-east to north-west. It will not be obstructed, confined or re-routed in any way by the proposed development. Pedestrians will benefit from the replacement of often muddy and waterlogged ground by a well-drained, even and comfortable walking surface. Without the proposed development, the entire route of the public footpath across the application site is through a field where walkers may feel themselves at risk from grazing livestock. With the proposed development, this perceived risk is removed from 90% of the same route. Intermediate waymarks will be installed on the line of the path across the hardstanding. Informative notices will be erected in appropriate positions for pedestrians and drivers.

8. Planning policy

8.1 We believe significant support for the proposed development is found in published planning policy.

8.2 National Planning Policy Framework (revised version published 12/12/24, amended 07/02/25)

8.2.1 Section 2 deals with delivering sustainable development and re-states the presumption in its favour. The proposed development is covered by Paragraph 11 c) to d) and Paragraph 12 and so must benefit from the presumption.

8.2.2 Section 6 deals with building a strong competitive economy. Under the heading “supporting a prosperous rural economy” Paragraph 88 a) and b) explains the “importance of enabling growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas and development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.” The beneficiaries of the proposed development are exactly such businesses.

8.2.3 Section 13 deals with protecting Green Belt land. Paragraph 143 explains that the Green Belt serves five purposes. These are listed as a) to e). The proposed development does not conflict with any of them. Whilst the application site is strictly within an area of “safeguarded land” removed from the Green Belt, it is reasonable to assume these purposes remain relevant insofar as they do not run counter to the purpose of safeguarding (see 8.4.1).

8.3 North Herts Local Plan – full review and update 2025-2045

8.3.1 General areas of focus for this reviewed version have been set out but no specific objectives or policies have emerged yet.

8.4 North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 08/11/2022)

8.4.1 Policy SP8 e) iii confirms that the safeguarded land within which the application site is located has been removed from the Green Belt “to meet longer term development need.”. There is no reason to suppose the proposed development may obstruct or prevent the meeting of this longer-term need, any more than it is obstructed or prevented by the area of former farm buildings immediately north of the application site and within the same safeguarded block of land.

8.4.2 Policy CGB1 e) confirms that permission should be granted for “modest proposals for rural economic development and diversification”. Whilst strictly this policy applies to the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, it is reasonable to apply it to the application site in the present circumstances, again provided the longer-term need justifying this land’s safeguarded status can still be met in due course.

8.4.3 Section 4 Communities – 18. Communities – Wymondley (Page 270) Explanatory wording confirms that the council will seek to protect the employment function of the area of small businesses along Stevenage Road. We suggest it would be unreasonable not to take the same approach to the employment function of the area of former farm buildings adjoining the application site at Todds Green, within the same parish and destined to benefit directly from the proposed development.

8.5 Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031

8.5.1 Heading 14 Supporting Local Business and Employment The council’s stated aim here is “to encourage rural economic growth and employment, through support of business expansion and

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development which is appropriate and in keeping with the Parish's intrinsic character and environment." The proposed development is consistent with this aim.

8.5.2 Policy SLBE1 Business Development states that "any business development within Wymondley Parish should be appropriate in terms of location, scale and type; in keeping with the character and environment of our parish." The proposed development is consistent with this policy.

9. Permitted development and established use

9.1 For the sake of certainty and speed and to avoid the need to gather and collate documentary evidence, the applicant seeks planning permission, although some elements of what is proposed may be shown to be permitted development or established use.

9.2 We believe that construction of this hardstanding and its use for parking vehicles and machinery and storing equipment and materials all used in the course of the applicant's farming and estate management activities are permitted development. These uses will occupy a substantial proportion of the whole hardstanding.

9.3 We believe that construction of hardstanding at the east end of the larger hardstanding now proposed is operational development which may now be immune from enforcement. Its use for storage of containers, equipment and machinery may also be an established use. These are obscured by overhanging trees in the Google Earth images kindly shared with us by your council, including the image captured in September 2021. In fact, they were in situ at that date and for a considerable period of time before that.

9.4 Your council has also suggested that the same September 2021 image shows no hardstanding at the east end of the larger hardstanding now proposed. We believe on the contrary that this image shows a substantial area of hardstanding here and a roadway linking its north-west corner to a gateway into the area of former farm buildings immediately to the north of the application site.

9.5 We believe substantial and key elements of what is now included in this application may be properly deliverable without planning permission (see 9.2. 9.3 and 9.4). The proportion of development proposed above and beyond those elements is relatively small. This balance should be taken into account in assessing the possible impact of the development, including those elements, as now proposed.

10. Additional information

10.1 We shall welcome an opportunity to amplify or explain any of the points made in this statement and to supply additional information wherever this may help you evaluate our application.


C.D. Bayles
for Bayles Chartered Surveyors

14 August 2025

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