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PLANNING STATEMENT

Including Design, Access, and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Client: **THE TRUSTEES OF S. MELLAND DECEASED.**

Location: **BEEHCROFT, FLAGG, DERBYSHIRE, SK17 9QE.**

PROPOSAL: **RESUBMISSION OF WITHDRAWN RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION
(HPK/2026/0084) FOR A NEW ACCESS ONTO THE MAIN ROAD (A515) AND
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TRACK OFF THE EXISTING TRACK TO THE EXISTING
BUNGALOW.**

Date: **August 2026.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This application is a resubmission of a retrospective permission for a new access onto the main road (A515) and a proposed new track leading off the existing track to the existing bungalow. The new access is substantially complete, consisting of the access point onto the road and a new driveway linking to an existing driveway going to the occupied caravan. In addition, the application seeks permission for the construction of a new stoned drive from the approximate midway point on the existing driveway going northeast towards the bungalow. See the Proposal drawing.
- 1.2. The application has been resubmitted because of a change to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) rules on the 6th of August 2026, exempting sites of less than 0.2 hectare in size from the requirement to provide Biodiversity Net Gain unless they negatively impact on-site priority habitat (source: GOV UK). There is no priority habitat on the site, and therefore there is now no need for this application to provide Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 1.3. The following drawings are submitted with the application: Location Plan, Existing Site Plan, Proposed Site Plan, Highways Sheet 1 showing the visibility splays, Site Detail showing the new access across the highway land from the road, Existing and Proposed Site Elevations, Gate Detail, and Fence and Hardstanding Detail. Other documents are the Biodiversity Gain Statement Rev A, map showing nearby Lowland Fen Priority Habitat, the Beechcroft Tree Report/Arboricultural Impact Assessment Rev A, the Heritage Impact Assessment, and this Planning Statement.

Background

- 1.4. The site – Beechcroft - is situated on the main road between Buxton and Ashbourne – the A515. Until approximately two or three years ago, the application site was part of Great Low Farm. However, the two sites are now completely separate, Great Low Farm, including the outbuildings, having been sold to new owners and fenced off from the application site.
- 1.5. Before the sale, access to the application site and the caravan was through the Great Low farmyard. This access is now closed, leaving no access to the application site. Hence, the planning application.
- 1.6. The planning application site, now named ‘Beechcroft’ after the vacant bungalow there, is currently a mostly unused permanent caravan site with only a few caravans, only one of which is occupied. The caravan site is located to the east of Great Low Farm, and the bungalow is situated to the north.

- 1.7. The application site is owned by the Trustees of S. Melland, deceased. The landholding, which the son farms, is 40 acres (16.2 hectares) in total – see red line on the submitted *Retained Land and Buildings Map*.
- 1.8. The site occupant/farmer, Mr A Melland, lives with his elderly mother, a lady in her eighties, in the caravan, and he also suffers from serious medical problems. In the last three years, he has needed an ambulance three times. Direct access to the site is therefore essential, as well as for normal day-to-day living and work purposes.
- 1.9. The Farm buildings are on the west side of Great Low Farm. To reach them, he needs to drive out of the application site, turn right, drive past Great Low Farm, and turn right into the farm buildings.
- 1.10. Work on constructing the access on the first part of the track began in May 2025 and stopped on 2nd June 2025. Work has not started on the proposed new track leading to the bungalow.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is situated in open countryside and fronts onto the main road, the A515. Great Low Farmhouse, to the west of the application site, is a Grade 2 listed building. The site has an existing use as a permanent caravan site.
- 2.2 There is an approximately 3.6 metre (4 yards) deep highway grass verge between the road carriageway and the front of the site. There is a row of mature deciduous trees along the front (the south-south-west) of the site and along the eastern and northern boundaries. There is an 800mm high stone wall along the entire road frontage apart from a 5.3 metre gap where the new access has been built.
- 2.3 In the past, the site was occupied by a lot more caravans and mobile homes. A Google aerial photo, dated 2007, shows at least 10 or 12 caravans on the site. The site contains several concrete bases for the caravans, with the rest of it covered by ruderal vegetation.
- 2.4 The site is in Flood Risk Zone 1. It is not on Coal Measures.
- 2.5 There is a Lowland Fen Priority Habitat site in the southwestern corner of the field immediately to the east (*Source: Magic Map*). See the map on the next page. This priority habitat would not be affected. It is about 70m to the west of the proposed access, and it is not connected to it in any way.

Figure 1 – Lowland Fen Priority Habitat (LFPH)



3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The work constructing the access on the first part of the track began in May 2025 and stopped on 2nd June 2025. Work has not started on the proposed new track leading to the bungalow.
- 3.2 The new access consists of the access onto the road and a total of approximately 130 square metres of new stoned drive linking to the existing driveway leading to the residential caravan. The stone wall has been breached, and the access has been built over the verge through the gap in the wall.
- 3.3 No work has started on the proposed track going from the existing drive towards the bungalow. The layout of the access and the proposed drive, together with the appropriate construction details, are shown on the submitted Proposal Site Plan. The new access consists of the access onto the road and a total of approximately 130 square metres of new stoned drive linking to the existing driveway leading towards the residential caravan. No work has started on the proposed track going from the existing drive towards the bungalow. The layout of the access and the proposed drive, together with the appropriate construction details, are shown on the submitted Proposal Site Plan.
- 3.4 There was an existing concrete base for a caravan in the area where the new access has been built. The construction of the new access involved the removal of the concrete base, the footprint of which was 72 square metres. The gross amount of new

hardstanding, forming the access/new drive, is about 130 square metres. The net area of the new development is about 58 square metres.

3.5 The area of the proposed track linking to the bungalow is approximately 164 square metres.

3.6 The total gross footprint of development on the site would be 294 square metres.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1. Pertinent applications: -

4.1.1. HPK/0002/8375 – “Residential development (one farm bungalow)”. Approved 7th December 1989.

4.1.2. HPK/0003/4510 – “Infill of disused quarry and return to pasture land”. Approved 7th July 1995.

4.2. Aerial photographs on Google Earth show permanent caravans and mobile homes on the site in 2006. From a visit to the site in 2013, I know that there were over 10 caravans on the site. Planning permission for “28 Pitch Caravan Site And Conversion Of Farm Building To Shower/toilet And Laundry Block To Service The Site” was granted in May 1995, when the application site was part of a much larger Great Low Farm landholding, including Great Low Farmhouse and outbuildings.

5. PLANNING POLICIES

5.1. Relevant Local Plan policies:

- **Policy EQ2 - Landscape Character.**

"The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the Plan Area for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to the economic, environmental and social well-being of the Plan Area....."

To summarise, this will be achieved by:

- *Requiring that development has particular regard to maintaining the aesthetic and biodiversity qualities of natural and man-made features within the landscape.....*
- *Requiring that development proposals are informed by and are sympathetic to the distinctive landscape character areas... and taking, where appropriate, landscape mitigation measures.*

- *Requiring that development proposals protect and/or enhance the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the landscape and landscape setting of the Peak District National Park.*
- *Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape*
- **Policy EQ3 - Rural Development.**
“Outside of the settlement boundaries and sites allocated for development as defined on the Policies Map, including the green belt, the Council will seek to ensure that new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape’s intrinsic character and distinctiveness, including the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment and the setting of the Peak District National Park whilst also facilitating sustainable rural community needs, tourism, and economic development”
- **Policy E1 – New Employment Development.**
Fifth bullet point: -
“Supporting business development within the countryside that accords with Local Plan Policy EQ3-Rural Development”.
- **Policy EQ7 – Built and Historic Environment.**
“The Council will conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment in accordance with sub area strategies S5, S6 and S7.

Particular protection will be given to designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings including:

Listed Buildings.

This will be achieved by:

Requiring all works that could impact on a heritage asset or its setting or sites with the potential to include assets, to be informed by a level of historical, architectural and archaeological evidence proportionate to their significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of a proposal....”

6. OTHER MATTERS

Biodiversity net gain

- 6.1. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat surveys identifies the development area to be mainly the habitat type as C3 Tall Ruderal with B6 poor semi-improved grasslands to the side of the area where the track is proposed. There are parts of an existing hard-standing track, all of which have become overgrown with the ruderal vegetation growing through stone. Such areas provide minimal value habitat for invertebrates and small mammals.
- 6.2. There is a tree-lined boundary to the south, east and north of the site; however, this lies outside the development boundary, so there will be no impact on this area caused by the proposed development. There are several mature trees close to the new entrance point; however, these will be retained, and a full assessment has been completed in a separate Tree Report.
- 6.5. Areas of ruderal vegetation, like this site, which are simply a collection of weeds on bare ground with no signs of varying stages of succession, are not a priority habitat and are, therefore, exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 6.6. As the application site is less than 0.2 hectares and there are no effects on any priority habitats, the development is exempt from BNG uplifts. Development is exempt where it is carried out on a site with an area no larger than 0.2 hectares, and it does not impact an on-site priority habitat (*Source: National Planning Practice Guidance*). Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) priority habitats in England correspond to the official Habitats of Principal Importance derived from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 6.7. Areas of ruderal vegetation on previously developed land, which meets the definition of previously developed land in the NPPF and has an open mosaic structure (combining bare ground, varying stages of succession, and ephemeral/ruderal flora) rather than just being a patch of common weeds, can be a valuable wildlife asset. These feature a shifting, nutrient-poor mix of bare ground, early pioneer plants, flower-rich patches, and scrub. These sites are called Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land (OMH) and are classified as a high-distinctiveness habitat.
- 6.8. Whilst this site meets the NPPF definition of previously developed land because of the presence of the concrete bases for the caravans previously on the site and

existing tracks connecting the caravan pitches, this site is not OMH because there are no signs of succession and a mix of different habitats.

- 6.9. The vegetation on the majority (91%) of the application site, apart from the access across the highway verge (9%), is ruderal, consisting of bare ground, concrete pads, and common weeds such as Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*), Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), Dock (*Rumex*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Clover (*Trifolium spp.*) and Ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*). There are no other stages of succession. There is no open mosaic (combining bare ground, varying stages of succession, and ephemeral/ruderal flora), just common weeds. The ground flora beneath the trees consists of similar common weeds.
- 6.10. The only trees adjacent to the development area are those by the roadside. There are two mature Sycamore trees in the south west corner, a single mature Ash tree on the opposite side of the track, and three Horse Chestnuts along the west boundary, although these are on the other side of the boundary wall and fencing. It should be noted that no trees on site benefit from any protection measures, be that a TPO, SSSI, Ancient Woodland or other conservation efforts. Regardless, they do provide a positive impact on the rural surroundings and will be adequately protected as part of the full works.
- 6.11. It should be noted that Japanese Knotweed was identified on the site, mainly concentrated near the new access point by the southern boundary. Established mounds were present, but it was also evident that the spoil piles either side of the newly formed driveway contained newly sprouted shoots, likely growing from roots that had been excavated during the earthworks. This should be addressed by a suitable contractor, and no earth should be removed or spread around the site before it has been eradicated. The areas around the proposed driveway, which is to be formed further into the site, had no evidence of knotweed growing nearby.

Proposed tree planting

- 6.12. Whilst BNG is not required, the applicant still proposes to enhance the landscape by planting 8no. Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) saplings, 150- 175 cm tall, nursery standards at 14m centres within an adjacent field, to the east of the agricultural buildings. A new post and rail fence would be erected 4m from the roadside boundary, with trees planted 2m back from the fence to protect from grazing cows. Tree tubes or rabbit guards are to be fixed around each planted tree.

Trees

- 6.13. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment Rev A (Tree Report) identifies that some disturbance to the root system of the trees will have already taken place and cannot be reversed. The use of the track will be relatively light, in terms of the amount of traffic using it, given that it serves only a single dwelling and a static caravan, so prolonged effects on the root system are unlikely.
- 6.14. Since no additional works are planned near the trees, further protection measures are minimal due to prior construction. The new access road impacts the root protection zone (RPZ) of a nearby Sycamore; any root disturbance has already occurred and is unlikely to worsen due to low traffic. Most of the track covers pre-existing hardstanding. As explained above, the excavation spoil piles within other trees' RPZs should be carefully removed—especially if contaminated with Japanese Knotweed—with full legal compliance. The tree canopies above the track are high enough that no additional pruning or barriers are needed.
- 6.15. Tree canopy areas, RPZs and their locations are shown on the separately submitted site plans of PL02F, as well as the area of new planting, which is to consist of 8no. Hornbeam trees to be planted in the adjacent field.

Heritage Impact Assessment

- 6.16. Please see the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment, which assesses the impact of the development on the nearby Grade 2 listed building, Greatlow Farm.

7. THE CASE IN SUPPORT

- 7.1. The following matters are discussed in this section: -
- o The need for access.
 - o Planning policy.
 - o Highway safety.
 - o Trees.
 - o Impact on the setting of the Listed Building.

The need for access

- 7.2. This is explained in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of this statement. In simple terms, access is needed for the farm business, normal day-to-day purposes, and emergency medical access.

Planning policy.

7.3. Policy EQ2 (Landscape Character) seeks to protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the Borough. This requires that development should maintain and not harm natural features such as trees; it should respect and not harm the local landscape character.

7.4. The proposed tree planting would enhance the landscape and biodiversity.

Highway safety.

7.5. Adequate visibility splays can be achieved.

Trees

7.6. Whilst some disturbance to tree roots has occurred, this is not considered to be significant, and the low level of use and nature of the traffic using the track is unlikely to cause any significant harm. The now removed concrete base would have probably caused the roots on the three trees at the entrance to grow deeper, possibly reducing any damage caused by the excavation works and the construction of the track.

Impact on the setting of the Listed Building

7.7. The submitted Historic Impact Assessment concludes that the retrospective and proposed development do not harm the setting or character of the Listed Building.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1. The proposal accords with Development Plan Policies, causes no significant damage to the trees, and has no adverse impact on either the setting of the nearby Grade 2 Listed Building.
