

PLANNING JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT



Placement of storage containers at
Rear of Eastwoods Service Station, Ashby Road,
Stapleton, LE9 8JE.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This **Planning Justification Statement** accompanies and supports an application proposing placement of storage containers to the rear of Eastwoods Service Station, Ashby Road, Stapleton.
- 1.2. The existing use of the site and associated warehouse structures is already for storage, serving the wider cluster of businesses in the immediate area. As the site is used as an ancillary storage area for primarily industrial units, the site is considered a B2 Use.
- 1.3. The development proposes 214 self-storage units, providing employment opportunities and improved landscaping.
- 1.4. This **Planning Justification Statement** will consider the characteristics of the site and its context. It will outline the proposals in detail and assess the application against the relevant planning policies.

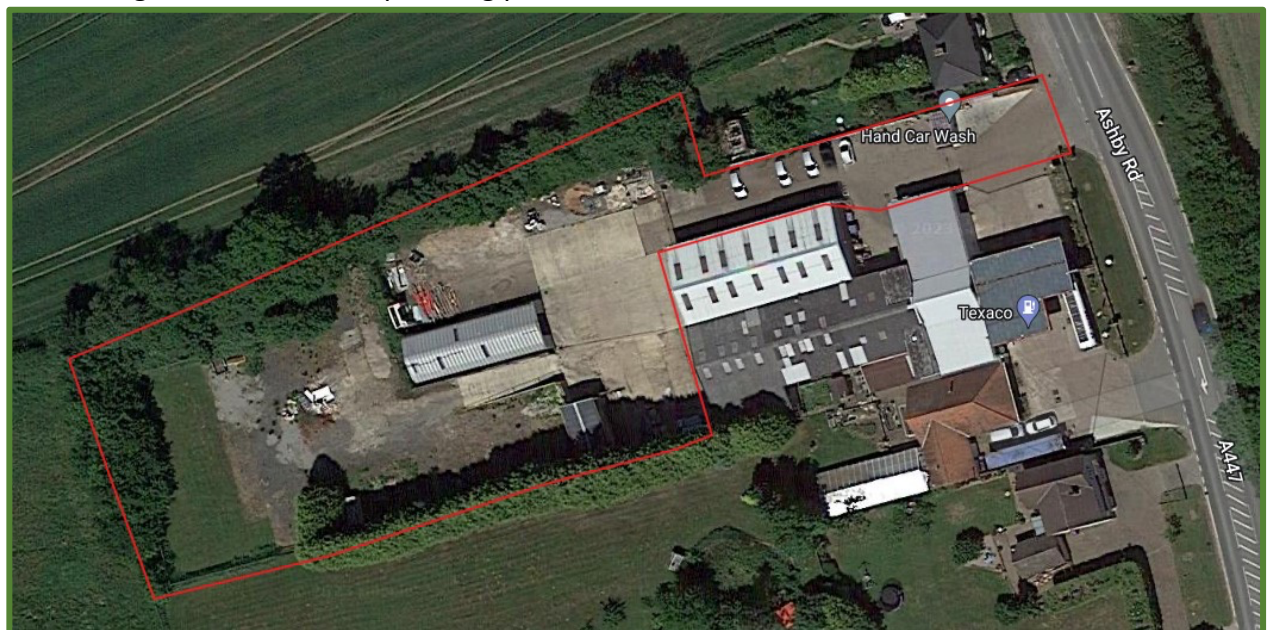


Fig. 1 Aerial view of the site (outlined in red), which is accessed directly via Ashby Rd (A447) through the existing forecourt service station turning.

2. SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1. The site measures approximately 0.4ha and comprises of an open-air storage, logistics and parking area for cars, vans and HGV's associated with the business. There are several existing steel-framed storage units within the site which serve the adjacent primarily B2 uses. Due to the ancillary nature of use, the site is considered B2.



Fig.2 An existing storage unit and parking



Fig.3 Further storage units and articulated cargo trailers on the lower area.



Fig.4 A concrete ramp leads to the upper area. Note the tall tree-line and warehousing which amply screens existing large cargo trailers up to: L 16.5m X H 4.9 m X W 2.5m.

- 2.2. The built cluster of land around the site comprises warehouses, car wash, petrol station and 3 residential dwellings. The site itself is located to the rear of these units and is completely screened from public view on Ashby Road, in both north and south directions.



Fig. 5 Location plan.



Fig. 6a Evergreen hedgerow and leylandii screen from the south approach, Ashby Rd.



Fig. 6b Mature tree-line and hedge rows screen from the north approach, Ashby Rd.



Fig. 7a Trees already screen residences.



Fig. 7b Reverse angle.

- 2.3 The site is also well screened from the north, east, and south due to extensive tree planting on three boundaries. No public highways or footpaths exist to the rear of the site (west).
- 2.4 The site is accessed via Ashby Road (A447), where there is a 50mph speed limit. This leads to a forecourt shared among businesses in the built cluster. A private 50m vehicular access way, measuring no less than 6.5m wide leads directly into the site.
- 2.5 Heading along the site (west), the land level rises by approximately 3m. The greatest topographical change is defined by a 15m upward concrete ramp suitable for HGV vehicles. Tree screening generally reflects the site's levels.



Fig.8 A tree-line screens the site at the rear (west).



Fig.9 A substantial evergreen leylandii tree-line to the east provides a year-round, total screen for the neighbouring residential property as well as the A447 southern approach.

- 2.6 This site is located within an area of Countryside, however this area of Ashby Road (approx. 700m) is characterised by roadside employment and retail uses, including two large Garden Centres.



Fig.9 Other neighboring commercial industries sited along Ashby Road.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. Harborough District Council's planning application search facility reveals 3 previous planning applications within the proposal site within the last 25 years, these are detailed below.
- 3.2. 10/00678/ADV | 1NO. INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED POLE MOUNTED DISPLAY UNIT | Eastwoods Service Station Ashby Road Stapleton | Refused Nov 2010 | Refused at Appeal May 2011.
- 3.3. 20/00165/FUL | Refurbishment of existing service station including the partial change of use of the car repairs garage (B2 use class) to petrol filling station (sui generis use class) and replacement shop front | Eastwoods Service Station Ashby Road Stapleton | Approved Apr 2020.
- 3.4. 21/00363/ADV | 1x Illuminated shopfront sign and 1x replacement sign fitted onto existing totem sign | Eastwoods Service Station Ashby Road Stapleton | Approved Jan 2022

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1. The key aspects of national planning policy and the Development Plan that are of key relevance to the consideration of the proposal are highlighted as follows.
- 4.2. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy (Adopted April 2009) In relation to the proposed development, the Core Strategy does not contain any policies which directly relate. This is largely due to the fact the many policies relate to urban or rural settlements. The development site does not fall into either of these categories.

4.3. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016)

DM1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development states that '*Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*'

DM4 Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation supports development in the countryside where '*It significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation and/or diversification of rural businesses; or* 'It does not have a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the

countryside; and ii) It does not undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements’.

DM6 Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest notes that ‘On site features should be retained, buffered and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term.’

DM10 Development and Design requires development to ‘a) *not have a significant adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of nearby residents and occupiers of adjacent buildings, including matters of lighting, air quality (including odour), noise, vibration and visual intrusion;*’, ‘*complement or enhances the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials and architectural features*’, ‘*The use and application of building materials respects the materials of existing, adjoining/neighboring buildings and the local area generally;*’ and that ‘*It incorporates a high standard of landscaping where this would add to the quality of the design and siting;*’

- 4.4. **DM17** Highways and Transportation supports proposals where they can ‘demonstrate that there is not a significant adverse impact upon highway safety’.
- 4.5. **DM20** Provision of Employment Sites states that B8 uses will be supported on previously developed land.
- 4.6. **The Borough Council’s Local Plan Parking Standard Review (Appendix D)** outlines a requirement for 1 parking space per 50sq.m on B2 sites, compared with 1 parking space per 100sq.m on B8 sites. Both use classes require and 1 HGV space per 400sq.m

National Planning Policy Framework (Adopted July 2021)

- 4.7. **Paragraph 2** of the NPPF states that ‘*Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise*’.
- 4.8. **Paragraph 8** outlines the 3 overarching objectives of the planning system. These are economic, social and environmental.
- 4.9. **Paragraph 81** supports decisions which ‘help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development’.

- 4.10. **Paragraph 84** encourages *'the development and diversification of landbased rural businesses'* through *'the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings'*.
- 4.11. **Paragraph 85** recognises that some sites must be located in rural areas away from public transport. Where this is the case developments should take opportunities to use previously developed land.
- 4.12. **Paragraph 104** encourages the consideration of transport impacts so that the *'environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account'*.
- 4.13. **Paragraph 111** states that *'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*.
- 4.14. **Paragraph 120(d)** promotes the development of under-utilised land.
- 4.15. **Paragraph 130** considers design, and requires development to be visually attractive and sympathetic to the local built character and landscape. Proposals should also add to the overall function and quality of an area.
- 4.16. **Paragraph 174 (a&d)** promotes the enhancement of landscapes and biodiversity.

5. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1. The application which this statement supports seeks the change of use of the site from B2 to B8, and the placement of 102 storage containers, double stacked to provide 214 storage units in total.
- 5.2. The site is already very well screened from public view due to existing buildings to the east, and thorough tree screening on the north, west and south boundaries. The proposal seeks to provide additional planting to ensure that the entire site is absolutely screened. The planting shall enhance the visual quality of the site and increase the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area.
- 5.3. The proposed containers measure 2,440 wide by 2,590mm high by 6,060 long. They will be finished in dark green to minimise potential for any visibility through the screening even in winter months. However, it is noted much of the screening is evergreen.
- 5.4. The site measures approximately 3.7 ha. Based on Local Plan requirements, a B2 site of this scale may accommodate 9.25 HGV parking spaces and 74 car parking spaces. Comparatively, the proposed B8 classification may accommodate 9.25 HGV parking spaces and 37 car parking spaces.
- 5.5. Given the nature of the site, it is reasonable to argue that, in reality 37 car parking spaces and 9 HGV parking spaces will not be required. The site will be used by private individuals and small-scale local businesses. Cars and vans may access the site for unloading/loading but will not be permitted to park for long periods.
- 5.6. The significantly reduced car parking requirements resulting from the proposed development provides clear evidence that the overall number of potential traffic movement will be significantly decreased.
- 5.7. With regard to HGV movements, the site will experience a small number of movements for the setup process, however HGV traffic will also decrease significantly as containers are placed.
- 5.8. The proposed site will ensure jobs for 4 to 6 employees on site 8am to 5pm.
- 5.9. Localised, down-facing, low-impact LED lighting with motion activation will prevent potential for light disturbance to neighbouring properties, regardless of existing screening.

- 5.10. Based on existing data from other easyStorage container sites, customer visits after taking residency are infrequent. After loading into their storage container, only 10% will ever visit, and with an average frequency of one visit per month. At maximum occupancy, it is predicted that customer visits will reduce to 20 per month. This makes for a significantly quieter site and reduced levels of pollution.



Fig.9 The **proposed** site will provide much needed amenity to local businesses and individuals. easyStorage is part of Sir Stelios's 'easy' family of brands and employs high standards for site fit-out, maintenance and safety.



Fig.10 The appearance of the **existing** industrial site shall be enhanced through clearing materials, surface repairs and levelling of potholes, landscaping and planting elements, as well as sections of natural wood cladding (sustainable) to containers to blend with the surrounding woodland. Old industrial floodlights to be replaced with non-intrusive eco-friendly LED lighting.

- 5.11. The site will receive additional screening in the form of 8 x English Holly Bush, 8 x English Yew Bush, 16 x Evergreen Catoneaster Hedge and 16 x Darwin's Barberry Hedge. This will complete screening absolutely to the north east corner in particular.
- 5.12. The existing row of leylandii trees along the south western boarder will be extended along the perimeter of the neighboring garden.

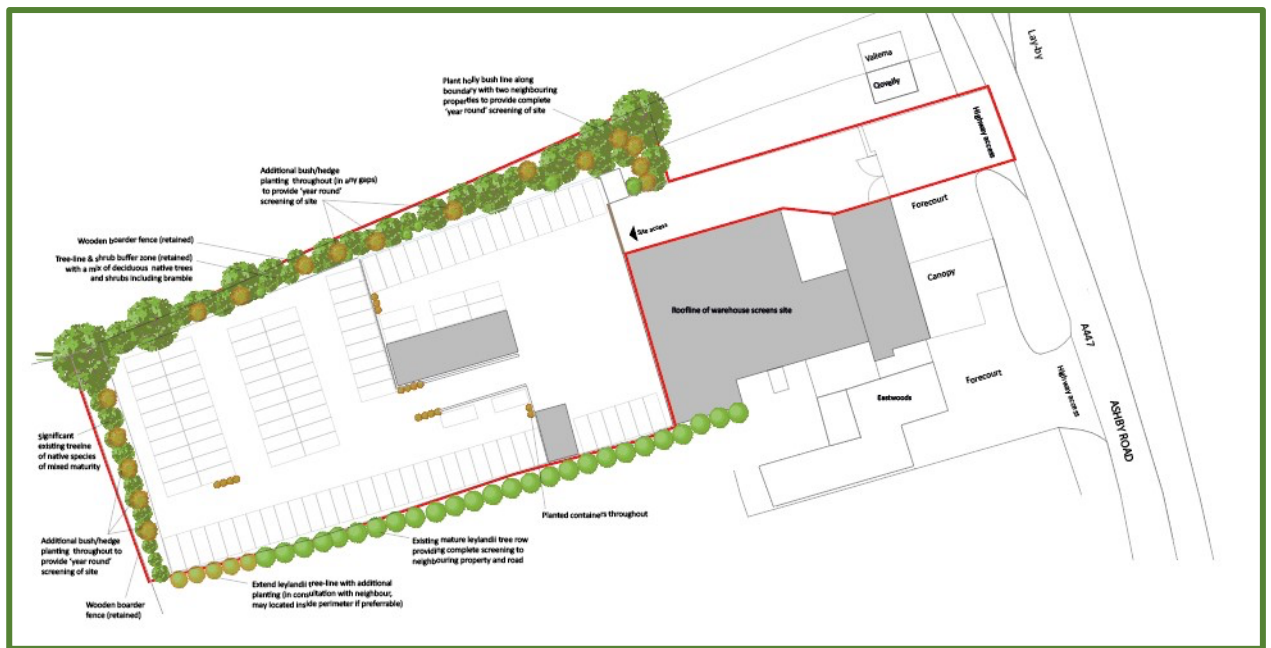


Fig.11 Additional planting: Green- extension to row of leylandii tree-line. Brown – planting of 10 x English Holly Bush, 10 x English Yew Bush, 15 x Evergreen Catoneaster Hedge and 15 x Darwin's Barberry Hedge.



Fig.11a Sustainable wood cladding sections provide 'natural' harmony.



Fig.11b Existing industrial storage and logistics illustrating current impact of diverse profiles, colours and layout etc.

6. ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Principle of Development

- 6.1. The proposed development seeks to utilise an existing brownfield site to provide containerised storage. The proposal would directly contribute to employment in the Borough, and would provide a service for local individuals and businesses, helping to stimulate economic growth and diversify rural business as required by Policy DM4. It also facilitates local businesses as they adapt to growth of online marketing, by providing a safe and secure amenity to hold stock for onward despatch.
- 6.2. The proposed use of this site is considered an effective use of land, and is directly supported by Policy DM20.
- 6.3. In regard to the principle of development, this development accords with policies DM4, DM20 and NPPF paragraphs 8, 81, 84, 85 and 120(d).

Landscape and Biodiversity

- 6.4 The development site is currently screened very effectively. The proposal includes further planting to address any potential gaps (in winter) within the existing screening as detailed in the Landscape Plan. The proposed planting includes English Yew, English Holly, Evergreen Catoneaster and Darwin's Barberry.
- 6.5 The species have been chosen to provide biodiversity benefit as well as evergreen screening from the public realm. All are native plants. These species have been selected as they shall provide pollen and nectar for insects during the warmer months and berries for birds in winter. The inclusion of Berberis provides added security to the site preventing the need for any additional fencing.
- 6.6 The proposed development will provide clear benefits in regards to both the visual landscape and biodiversity of the area. The proposal accords with policies DM4, DM6, DM10 and NPPF paragraphs 8 and 174.

Scale, Layout and Design

- 6.7 At present, the site is a large brownfield area characterised by untidy and sporadic units, vehicles and HGV trailers (including double decker trailers circa 4.8m in height) as well as uneven potholed surfaces. The proposal will not significantly change the nature of the buildings and objects on site, however it will result in a uniform and structured layout, in which active consideration to the layout and proper maintenance to the site will be provided. The negative implications of the visual

intensification of the site will be offset by the landscape and design proposals, which give active consideration to character of the area.

- 6.8 The proposed containers are designed with a colour scheme intended to maximise blending with the natural landscape. Although it is reasonably expected that the existing and proposed landscaping be extremely effective in screening the site, green containers are proposed to maximise the site's ability to blend in with the natural environment. Some sections of the containers will have side cladding of sustainably resourced / recycled timber providing improved natural harmony with existing woodland.
- 6.9 Low-impact, down-facing, LED lighting will minimize potential for light disturbance, a significant improvement on existing industrial floodlighting.
- 6.10 In this regard, the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on the on the character of the countryside, as required by Policy DM4 and DM10. As required NPPF paragraph 130, the proposal is sympathetic to the local built character and landscape, and adds to the overall function and quality of an area.

Access and Parking

- 6.11 The proposed change of use will result in 50% reduction in required car parking space, in accordance with the Councils Parking Standard Review. It is considered that this translates directly to a reduction in potential vehicle movements.
- 6.12 The physical proposal and specific intended use as containerised storage will provide a clear practical reduction in potential vehicle movements, when compared against the proposed use. Provision below required parking standards is also appropriate, as no customers will need to, nor be permitted to park, and will be restricted to loading.
- 6.13 Critically, the proposal will result in a major reduction in HGV movements beyond the short term. At present, HGV's make up a high proportion of vehicle movements on site, as evidenced in images throughout this Statement. The proposal will require HGV use during the construction of the site. However, beyond this point HGV access will reduce to minimal levels as the 'static' and 'silent' storage containers are placed. Customers comprise of individuals and small business owners using cars and vans.
- 6.14 The access arrangements will remain unchanged, and this is considered acceptable given the reduction in potential traffic movements, particularly HGVs.
- 6.15 Layout is in ordered rows with aisles providing drive-up access, room to pass and adequate turning space.

6.16 A new sign is proposed which is within a reasonable scale as well as being set back from the road, above an existing wall, and well below neighbouring rooflines. Board size circa 2.5m wide x 1.2m high.



Fig.11c Ample existing access into site.

6.17 In terms of parking and access, the proposal is deemed to be wholly acceptable. It is considered that the proposal will reduce potential traffic movements, thus will not create a significant issue to highway safety, rather it is likely to improve highway safety and traffic movements. As such it is in accordance with policy DM17 and NPPF paragraph 111.



Fig.12a Ample existing access into site.



Fig.12a Entrance via Ashby Road.

Residential Amenity

6.18 Regard has been given to the 3 residential dwellings within the built cluster around the site.

6.19 Owing to the established overall reduction in potential vehicular movements in and around the site, in particular Diesel articulated HGVs, it may be reasonably concluded that potential for associated disturbance, including noise, odour, fumes and vibration to nearby dwellings will be substantially reduced.

6.20 No significant overbearings are foreseen. Containers will be located over well away from nearby dwellings, and the site is specifically designed so that containers will not surpass existing trees. The application meets the requirements of Policy DM10.

- 6.21 Low-impact, down-facing, LED lighting with motion activation prevents light disturbance and is an improvement over the existing industrial floodlighting.

7. PLANNING BALANCE

- 7.1 This Planning Justification Statement summarises the proposed development for containerised storage, encompassing a change of use of the land from B2 to B8.
- 7.2 At present the site is an under-utilised brownfield area. The proposal will make effective use of the land, providing employment, a service to local individuals and businesses, and helping to diversify rural business. These benefits will add growth to the economy. In this regard, the proposal meets policies DM4, DM20 and NPPF paragraphs 8, 81, 84, 85 and 120(d). Its principle can be considered entirely acceptable.
- 7.3 The overall visual appearance of the site, and its impact on the character of the area will not be diminished. The site's visual intensification is appropriate within the immediate cluster of employment use buildings and land. Any negative impact of its intensification on the character of the countryside is offset through the generally tidying and homogenising of the site and the enhanced landscape screening. With regard to visual landscaping and design, the development accords with policies DM4, DM10 and NPPF paragraphs 130 and 174.
- 7.4 The landscape enhancement also gives consideration to and enhances the biodiversity of the site, as encouraged by policy DM6 and NPPF Paragraphs 8 and 174.
- 7.5 In terms of parking, access and highway impacts, the underlying factor of the proposal is that overall potential traffic movements will be reduced, and, post construction HGV movements will be negligible. This has the effect on improving highway safety from the access by reducing potential movements, and severely reducing higher risk HGV movements. As such it is in accordance with policy DM17 and NPPF paragraph 111.
- 7.6 The overall impact on residential amenity, compared with the existing use is considered to be reduced, primarily to the reduction in traffic movements. Significant distance between dwelling and the operation limits impacts of overbearing to a negligible level. Thus policy DM10 is adhered with.

- 7.7 It is concluded that the proposed development will not result in any significant detrimental impacts in respect of the aforementioned factors. On balance, the positive economic benefits of the proposal will outweigh any harm caused to the character of the area. The social benefits of the use for individuals, and the environmental enhancements of the proposed planting should also weigh in favour of the development. This Planning Statement has demonstrated the acceptability of the proposal, and this application should be approved without delay.

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