



MAIR

LAND & PLANNING CONSULTANTS LTD

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Full planning application for the provision of a new two-storey
child daycare facility (Class E(f)) and associated works**

Barnhills Farm, Merryless Road, Thornton

June 2024

Ref.: MLP-24-J049



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Prepared by Mair Land & Planning Consultants Ltd

Prepared on behalf of Mr & Mrs Gary and Amy Knight

Project Ref.: MLP-24-J049

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Mair Land & Planning Consultants Ltd has been instructed by the applicants, Mr & Mrs Gary and Amy Knight (Markfield Day Nursery Ltd), to prepare a Planning Statement to support the submission of a full planning application for the provision of a child daycare facility (Use Class E(f)) at Barnhills Farm, Merrylees Road, Thornton.
- 1.2. The planning application is to be submitted by Corporate Architecture on behalf of the applicants.
- 1.3. This Planning Statement provides an assessment of the site and its surroundings, including adjacent land uses. It also examines national and local planning policy relevant to this application and outlines the proposed development submitted for consideration by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.
- 1.4. The proposal involves the demolition of existing outbuildings and the erection of a new two storey building to accommodate the child daycare facility with associated works, including external works comprising outdoor play areas, a recreational area, vehicle parking (staff and parent drop off/collection spaces), an animal grazing area and a further area for housing animals.
- 1.5. The site is shown on the submitted Location Plan, which has been prepared in support of the application.
- 1.6. The application is supported by a suite of technical surveys and reports along with plans for the proposed development. These documents, set out below, are submitted as part of the application for determination by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

Document Title	Prepared By
Badger Survey	JM Ecology
Flood Risk Assessment	Dice
Location Plan	Corporate Architecture
Proposed Internal Layout	Corporate Architecture
Proposed Front Visual	Corporate Architecture
Proposed Site Plan	Corporate Architecture
Proposed Site Section	Corporate Architecture

Travel Plan	SLR Consulting Ltd
Transport Statement	SLR Consulting Ltd
Swept Path Analysis	SLR Consulting Ltd

Site Appraisal & Context

1.7. With reference to Figure 1, the application site covers an area of approximately 1.46 hectares (3.16 acres) and is outlined in red on the plan below (Figure 1).



Above: Figure 1 - Location Plan

- 1.8. The application site comprises Barnhills Farm, accessed off Merrylees Road. The site is located circa 0.5 mile south from the edge of the village of Thornton, a village within Hinckley & Bosworth Borough.
- 1.9. Barnhills Farm consists of several barns and other agricultural buildings, including pig sties, calf raising areas, a cattle crush area, calving pens, a bull pen, stables, workshop and storeroom.
- 1.10. The site is located within an area where the surrounding land use is predominantly agricultural, however, within close proximity to the site there are a number of commercial properties and residential dwellings.

- 1.11. The boundaries of the site are defined by existing mature trees, hedgerows and traditional agricultural field enclosures.
- 1.12. There is an existing Public Right of Way (Footpath R77), which runs along the western boundary of the site. This will remain unaffected by the development proposals.

2. Planning History

2.1. The table below summarises recent planning permissions relevant to the application site.

Address	Proposal	Status	Application Number
Barnhills Farm	Erection of barn (resubmission of 19/00263/FUL)	Approved - 07 September 2023	22/00883FUL
Barnhills Farm	Demolition of existing barns and erection of a new barn	Approved – 20 May 2019	19/00263/FUL
Barnhills Farm	Installation of kiosk ducting and rain gauges in a fenced enclosure	Approved – 07 December 2020	00/01078/FUL

3. Planning Policy Context

- 3.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 confirms that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2. The development plan comprises the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy (Adopted December 2009) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (Adopted July 2016).
- 3.3. The Emerging Local Plan for 2020-2039 has previously been consulted on. The latest Local Development Scheme (LDS) was amended February 2024. The LDS revises the timetable for producing the Local Plan, including scheduling of the Regulation 19 Consultation January-February 2025 with adoption due January-February 2026.

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised December 2023)

- 3.4. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised on 19 December 2023 and sets out the government's policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This revised Framework replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012, revised in July 2018, updated in February 2019, revised in July 2021 and updated in September 2023.
- 3.5. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that *'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development'* and there are three objectives to sustainable development, these being economic, social and environmental.
- 3.6. Paragraph 10 confirms a *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'* at the heart of the Framework.
- 3.7. Paragraph 11 sets out how the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied:

'For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.'

3.8. Paragraph 38 states *'Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way...Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.'*

3.9. Paragraph 85 states *'Planning policies should 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.'*

3.10. Paragraph 88 addresses the rural economy and states:

'Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;

b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

3.11. Paragraph 89 continues with the theme of supporting the expansion of businesses within the rural context. It states *'Planning policies and decisions 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 links. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings..'*

3.12. The proposal, as submitted and outlined on the accompanying plans, will deliver a new purpose built facility to support the growth and expansion of an existing highly successful child daycare facility. The facility is currently located circa 3 miles from the application site, however, there is no opportunity for expansion at its current location. The application site will enable and support the expansion of the facility, complying with strict spatial guidelines and will support the day to day operations of the business. The location will also enable the creation of outdoor learning and play areas to facilitate the development and education of the children attending the child daycare. The development will be designed to be sympathetic and in keeping with its rural surroundings.

3.13. Regarding 'design, paragraph 135 states:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change...'*

3.14. The proposed development scheme, submitted for determination, will be well designed and built to complement its surroundings, ensuring the development is sympathetic to the existing rural character and surrounding environment. The external areas and outdoor/recreation spaces will integrate with the site's surroundings.

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy (Adopted December 2009)

3.15. Within the adopted Core Strategy, Thornton is identified as a *Key Rural Centre*. The Core Strategy states that these settlements will be the Council's focus for improvements to employment, services, facilities and public transport provision. The vision was for the settlements to become focal points for their surrounding rural communities.

3.16. Spatial Objective 1 confirms a desire to support '*smaller scale employment in the key rural centres to support the rural areas of the borough*' and Spatial Objective 3 outlines a desire to build strong and vibrant rural communities by ensuring these communities '*have access to a range of shops, education, community, leisure facilities and employment opportunities in the Key Rural Centres to support, enhance and improve the sustainability, vibrancy and vitality of rural areas.*'

3.17. Policy 7: Key Rural Centres states:

'To support the Key Rural Centres and ensure they can provide key services to their rural hinterland, the Council will:

- Ensure there is a range of employment opportunities within the Key Rural Centres.'*

3.18. As the site is located on land which is designated as countryside, Policy DM4 of the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD (SADMP) is of most relevance. Policy DM4 Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation states:

'To protect its intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character, the countryside will first and foremost be safeguarded from unsustainable development. Development in the countryside will be considered sustainable where:

- a) It is for outdoor sport or recreation (including ancillary buildings) and it can be demonstrated that the proposed scheme cannot be provided within or adjacent to settlement boundaries; or*
- b) The proposal involves the change of use, re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting; or*
- c) It significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation and/or diversification of rural businesses; or*
- d) It relates to the provision of stand-alone renewable energy developments in line with Policy DM2: Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development; or*
- e) It relates to the provision of accommodation for a rural worker in line with Policy DM5 – Enabling Rural Worker Accommodation.*
and
 - i) 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; and*
 - iii) It does not create or exacerbate ribbon development;*
 - iv) If within a Green Wedge, it protects its role and function in line with Core Strategy Policies 6 and 9; and*
 - v) If within the National Forest, it contributes to the delivery of the National Forest Strategy in line with Core Strategy Policy 21.*

3.19. The proposed development will comply with Policy DM4. The proposal will assist with the diversification of the rural economy and contribute to job retention and creation, and deliver economic growth within the borough, whilst delivering a much needed and required service within the local area. The increasing demand for childcare spaces over the course of the next 12 months is going to require the further expansion of these existing types of facilities. This will deliver new employment opportunities within this sector, which at this stage is anticipated to be several new employment positions within the next 12 months, to ensure the needs of current and future users of the facility are met.

- 3.20. New development on the site has been established through the approval of an application for a new barn. This application seeks to expand on this development and make best use of a site, which is currently owned by the applicant. This will enable the applicant to deliver a new child daycare centre, expanding their current service offering, without the requirement for capital investment and financial expenditure to acquire a new site.

Bagworth, Thornton and Stanton-under-Bardon Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036

- 3.21. The Neighbourhood Plan confirms support for existing businesses alongside support for new businesses and employment within the area. Policy BE2: Support for new businesses and employment states:

'In supporting additional employment opportunities, new development will be required to:

- a) Fall within the boundary of planned settlement boundary, unless it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location or there are exceptional circumstances;*
- b) Where possible, development should be sited in existing buildings or on areas of previously developed land;*
- c) Be of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment of the village itself and the neighbourhood plan area, including the countryside; and*
- d) Not involve the loss of dwellings.*

- 3.22. The proposal involves the expansion of an existing childcare facility located elsewhere in the borough. The site is suitably located to enable the creation of outdoor learning and play areas, benefiting the learning, education and development of the children, whilst ensuring the development remains sympathetic to and in keeping with its rural surroundings.

4. The Proposed Development

- 4.1. The proposed development comprises an application for full planning permission for the redevelopment of the site to provide a child daycare facility (Use Class E(f)).
- 4.2. The proposal involves the demolition of existing outbuildings on the property and the erection of a new two storey building to accommodate the child daycare facility with associated works, including external works comprising outdoor play areas, a recreational area, vehicle parking (staff and parent drop off/collection spaces), an animal grazing area and a further area for housing animals.
- 4.3. The proposed building is two storey in height, with external dimensions measuring 30.6 metres in length by 12 metres in depth, creating a total footprint of 367.2 sq. m. This is of a scale in keeping with the existing built form on the site.
- 4.4. At ground floor the proposed building will comprise three childcare rooms, a kitchen, a laundry room, a sleep room, a couple of changing rooms, a plant room and store room for deliveries. There are several doors proposed into the main corridor with further doors providing access directly into the plant room and store from the external areas. There are several windows proposed within the main rooms, which will provide natural light and ventilation. At first floor, there is a large sleep room, along with a further two childcare rooms and a staff room with toilet facilities.
- 4.5. The external areas include car parking for staff and parents, outdoor play areas for the children attending the facility, a recreational area, an animal grazing area where children attending the facility can interact with the animals and a further area for housing animals.
- 4.6. The proposed development will support the further expansion of an existing childcare facility, which is run by the applicants, in Markfield. The current premises are unsuitable for expansion and do not offer suitable outdoor areas to offer further educational opportunities beyond those provided currently.

Pre-Application Discussions

- 4.7. In preparing the planning application, Corporate Architecture, on behalf of the applicants, submitted a formal pre-application request to Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.
- 4.8. As part of the formal response, the Planning Officer acknowledges that the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies are over 5 years old and were adopted prior to the publication of the current National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 33 of the NPPF states that policies in local plans and spatial

development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least every 5 years.

- 4.9. The Planning Officer commented that *'Outside the defined settlement boundaries, the countryside is not regarded as a sustainable location for new development. Section 15 of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment.'* In response, as is set out in the Planning Policy Section within this statement, Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states *'Planning policies and decisions 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 links. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings.'* This is in direct support of proposals for the expansion of existing businesses within the rural area. It can not simply be a case of stating that the countryside is not regarded as a sustainable location for new development, as there are appropriate and accepted forms of development, which are suitable in the countryside. In this case, the NPPF acknowledges that local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be accommodated within the open countryside. In reviewing the options for further expansion, the applicants considered it appropriate to redevelop their existing site, where there are existing uses and buildings, which will assist them in managing, maintaining and expanding the current service provision. It offers the opportunity to deliver and develop a child daycare facility of exceptional quality with a purpose built building and external recreational areas, which will assist with the learning and development of those attending the facility.
- 4.10. The pre-application response states *'In summary, the development could be supported by some aspects of the NPPF. However, there are other aspects of the proposal that are not supported by the Framework. The application site does not comply with the spatial strategy of the Development Plan and is within an area of poor transport sustainability. Therefore, visitors and staff are highly likely to be dependant on private motorised transport to visit the site. As a result, the development is considered to result in significant environmental harm that does not represent sustainable development in principle. Consequently, the development is unacceptable in principle, subject to all other material planning matters being appropriately addressed.'*

5. Planning Assessment

5.1. The following sections seeks to address the key planning issues associated with the proposals. These include -

- 5.1.1. Principle of Development (Section 6)
- 5.1.2. Impact upon the character of the Area (Section 7)
- 5.1.3. Impact upon residential amenity (Section 8)
- 5.1.4. Access & Highways (Section 9)
- 5.1.5. Flood Risk (Section 10)

6. Principle of Development

6.1. It is considered that the proposed development scheme complies with national and local planning policies in respect of social and economic objectives, particularly around job retention and creation and enabling the expansion of existing businesses. Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework are relevant in this regard.

6.2. Paragraph 88 states:

‘Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- c) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;*
- d) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*

6.3. Paragraph 89 continues with this theme of supporting economic growth within the rural area. It states *‘Planning policies and decisions 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 links. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings..’*

6.4. The proposal will lead to the development of a purpose built facility, which will enable the expansion of the business to provide improved learning and educational facilities

and services for local children. This is particularly relevant in light of the recent expanded offering around childcare provision. As of April 2024, eligible working parents of 2 year olds can access 15 hours childcare support. Come September 2024, working parents of 9 month olds can access 15 hours of free childcare. By September, most working families with children aged between 9 months and 5 years old will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support. This will continue to put increasing pressure on existing providers, particularly with regards to space and the capacity of existing premises.

- 6.5. A recent study concluded that there would be a 52% increase in demand for childcare for under 2 years olds by late 2025, the equivalent of 27,800 additional full time staff. Several areas are seeing waiting lists for childcare spaces increase.
- 6.6. Statutory guidance updated 1 January 2024 *Early education and childcare (applied from 1 April 2024)* states '*Local Authorities should aim to identify and remove barriers that prevent existing providers from expanding their provision and new providers from entering the local childcare market if needed and encourage providers to take a sustainable business approach to planning...*'. This is fundamental to the determination of this proposed development. To meet the increasing demand for childcare requirements, existing and new providers are going to need to build new and expanded facilities. In most cases, this is going to rely on the release of land not usually considered for development, such as locations outside of defined limits and built up areas (as per NPPF paragraph 89). This proposal will assist in meeting a local demand whilst creating new employment opportunities in the area.
- 6.7. With regards to the existing daycare centre, there is the equivalent of 9 staff members (made up of part-time workers) plus 1 ancillary staff member. The proposed expansion and development of the facility will see the recruitment of a further 12 full time staff plus 1 or 2 ancillary staff members. In addition to these figures, the applicants and owners of the business, Mr & Mrs Knight, are also regularly on site and are not included within the 'staff numbers' set out. This expansion and growth will have significant economic and social benefits to the local area. The creation of circa 14 employment positions is not an insignificant number, and should carry significant weight in the determination of this application.
- 6.8. The proposal, as submitted, will see the redevelopment of an existing agricultural site and provision of a new purpose built building. The objective is to create a high quality building, which meets the needs of the current child daycare centre whilst enabling the future expansion of the business, to meet the increasing demand for this service.
- 6.9. The further sections will deal with the sustainability aspect of the proposal with regards to highways and travel.

7. Impact upon the character of the area

- 7.1. On behalf of the applicant, we do not consider that the proposed development scheme will impact upon the character of the area. The proposal is for the erection of a two storey dwelling on a site, which comprises a residential dwelling and a mix of existing agricultural buildings and outbuildings. The principle of built form is already established on the site and the proposal does not introduce a new form of development. In addition, the external areas will be in keeping with the rural nature of the site's surroundings.
- 7.2. There are limited views of the site from Merrylees Road, therefore, it is not considered that the proposal will result in any significant adverse impacts to the character of the area from views to the west.
- 7.3. Users of the existing footpath experience the site as it currently stands, with existing outbuildings and other associated agricultural buildings. It is considered that the erection of an attractively designed building to facilitate the child daycare centre will improve the site and have a positive impact on its surroundings.
- 7.4. There are no other public viewpoints from which the proposed building will be visible, where the impact will be significant. The site is already developed and occupied by several buildings, of various shapes and sizes.
- 7.5. The proposal will retain a sense of agricultural character via the use of materials.

8. Impact on residential amenity

- 8.1. In line with Policy DM10(a) of the SADMP, it is not considered that the proposed development scheme will significantly impact upon the privacy and amenity of nearby residents and occupiers of adjacent buildings.
- 8.2. The adjacent residential dwelling is owned by the applicants and the other nearest residential properties are located circa 210 metres to the south and 247 metres to the north west.
- 8.3. Whilst the proposed building is two storey in height, due to the positioning of windows and openings, it will not lead to issues of overlooking in respect of the existing dwelling.
- 8.4. The daycare facility will operate during normal business hours, which will reduce any impacts of noise out with these hours. Vehicle movements to the site will mainly be

limited to drop off and collection times, with other deliveries being sporadic, which will in addition reduce the impact of noise.

9. Access & Highways

- 9.1. The development scheme has been designed to reflect local highway guidance and advice from the highway consultants advising the applicants.
- 9.2. Access to the site will be taken via an existing site access to Barnhills Farm from Merylees Road. The submitted Transport Statement confirms *'The access arrangement will not be altered as a result of the proposals meaning that vehicles entering and egressing from the car park will operate in a one-way manner, however, the surfacing will be improved. A swept path analysis drawing provided at Appendix C illustrates that a vehicle can wait within the access junction, whilst another exists without resulting in any obstruction onto Merylees Road.'*
- 9.3. The proposed car parking arrangement includes the provision of 18 parking spaces. There is sufficient scope for turning and manoeuvring on site with vehicles then able to exit the site forward facing. The development will not lead to any conflict between users of the site from a highways perspective, both within and externally from the site.
- 9.4. The Transport Statement identifies a number of opportunities to travel by non-car modes from the surrounding villages and towns, where the majority of staff and children attending the site live. This is further demonstrated in the Travel Plan, particularly Figure 2.1 2km Pedestrian Catchment Plan and Figure 2.4 5km Cycle Catchment Plan. It is acknowledged that parents dropping off/picking up their children are likely to travel by car but there are alternative travel options for staff.
- 9.5. The collision record on the surrounding highway network does not reveal any significant safety concerns.
- 9.6. The Transport Statement concludes that *'the development would not result in a severe transport impact, and on this basis, there are no material reasons why the proposed day care facility should not be granted planning consent on highways or safety grounds.'*

10. Flood Risk

- 10.1. In accordance with national and local planning policy, the application has analysed the site in relation to potential sources of flooding, and a Flood Risk Assessment has been produced and submitted.
- 10.2. The Flood Risk Assessment confirms that more than half of the site falls within Flood Zone 1, approximately a third of the site is located within Flood Zone 2 and a very small portion of the site lies within Flood Zone 3.
- 10.3. The proposed building is situated partially within Flood Zone 1, with the remaining half located within Flood Zone 2.
- 10.4. The Flood Risk Assessment proposes several mitigation measures, including –
- The layout and proposed levels will be designed to ensure the proposed flood route plan simulates that of the pre-development site, directing all surface water runoff away from properties and towards the site's natural low points;
 - The surface water network will be designed to accommodate up to and including the 100 year + 40% climate change events;
 - The development should be enrolled in the Leicestershire County Council early flood warning scheme;
 - A suitable Evacuation Plan must be implemented in the event of flooding;
 - It is recommended that the existing levels of all landscaped areas within Flood Zone 2 are either lowered or retained as existing. This measure would ensure that the area's ability to store flood water is not worsened, thereby preventing increase of flood risk elsewhere.
- 10.5. The Drainage Strategy sets out that a surface water drainage network will collect runoff from the proposed building roof and external hardstanding areas and discharge this into the adjacent brook at a controlled rate of 2l/s.
- 10.6. The proposed foul water system will collect foul water flows generated by the proposed development and convey them towards a new proposed foul water treatment plant prior to discharging the treated flows to the adjacent brook via a pumped outfall.
- 10.7. The report concludes *'The vulnerability of the development from fluvial, sewers, tidal, groundwater, and artificial sources has been assessed. Following assessment, the site is deemed to be at low risk from each of these.'*

11. Conclusion

- 11.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Mair Land & Planning Consultants on behalf of the applicants, to support the submission of a planning application for a child daycare facility with associated external works.
- 11.2. It is considered that the proposal complies with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and local plan policies around the expansion of existing businesses and creation of new employment opportunities, along with other social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 11.3. There are no technical issues preventing the proposed development scheme from coming forward.
- 11.4. We consider that planning permission should be granted accordingly.

