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**LAND AT WOODFOLD PARK
MELLOR**

PLANNING STATEMENT

in support of a planning application for

**THE ERECTION OF A STUD FARM AND ASSOCIATED
FACILITIES AT WOODFOLD PARK, MELLOR**

on behalf of

REILLY DEVELOPMENTS LTD

prepared by

CA PLANNING

town planning + environmental consultants

**7 EAST CLIFF
PRESTON
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March 2006

Ref. C/2409

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1 This report accompanies a planning application by Reilly Developments Ltd for the erection of stables in respect of a proposed stud farm and manager's accommodation at Woodfold Park, Mellor. The application constitutes a resubmission of application ref. CS/MN/3/0711/P which was withdrawn in October 2005. The amendments to the withdrawn scheme are that the orientation of the development has been moved 180° to the north and the removal of the stable lads accommodation and its replacement with overnight visitor accommodation. The scheme therefore only contains one dwelling which is the same as the current approval on the site.

1.2 Development Overview

- 1.2.1 The site at Woodfold Park has planning consent for the repair, refurbishment and conversion of Woodfold Hall to residential apartments and dwellings, together with the restoration of the former wings to the Hall and the erection of dwellings on the site of the former stable block. Associated with this development is the restoration and conversion of the former Orangery to a single dwelling, the conversion of the Deer House to a dwelling, the conversion and extension of Woodfold Park Farm to dwellings and the erection of dwellings in the walled garden.
- 1.2.2 These elements of the planning permission have all been implemented and are largely complete. However, the restoration and conversion of the hall is still on going.
- 1.2.3 As part of the existing consent, planning permission was also granted for the erection of a race horse training facility and associated gallops together with manager's accommodation. Although at the time of the application there was considerable interest in this facility, it has since not proved possible to secure an operator for the race horse complex. This has left a degree of uncertainty over the future use of the area of the site which was to be the location of the race horse facility and the future maintenance of the area proposed as gallops.
- 1.2.4 Accordingly, this application is being made to seek planning permission for an alternative development on the site of the proposed race horse complex. The stud farm will be on a similar footprint and be of a similar scale, but, most noticeably will not require the provision of gallops or race course fencing within the park.

1.3 Site Location and Description

- 1.3.1 The site in general is located in open countryside approximately 3 km to the north west of Blackburn and 2 km south west of Mellor. It lies to the south of the A677 Preston Blackburn road within the Woodfold Park complex of some 75ha. The area

has, until recently, largely been in agricultural use, but also includes extensive areas of woodland. This woodland, and the fact that there are no public footpaths that cross the site, mean that public views into the site, including that of the location of the proposed stud farm, are very limited.

- 1.3.2 The application site itself consist of only a small part of the overall Woodfold Park complex. It consists of grassland, running down to the south and is flanked by mature trees.
- 1.3.3 Within the vicinity of the application site are a number of buildings and other structures. Of these the most significant is Woodfold Hall which is a Grade II listed building and is currently being converted to apartments, whilst the Orangery now a single dwelling house, is also Grade II. Other buildings within the park include Woodfold Park Farm now converted to dwellings, the Huntsmans' Cottages, Deer House [now a single dwelling] and the site of the former walled garden where new dwellings have also been constructed.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section provides a detailed description of the development that is proposed and the principles of the management plan that will be adopted once planning permission is granted. The section also includes a summary of the economic contribution of the stud farm to the local rural economy.

2.2 Stud Farm

- 2.2.1 The stud farm will be located in the north east corner of Woodfold Park, on the site which is part of the implemented planning permission for the Park as a whole. This part of the planning permission was for 78 race horse stables, associated facilities and a dwelling house. However, the scale of the stud farm will be significantly reduced from the race horse stables as it will only have 16 stables and associated facilities which will include overnight accommodation, staff facilities, workshop and a vet/foaling stable. The dwelling house previously approved will remain, but the opportunity has been taken to design a dwelling more in keeping with the character of the park.
- 2.2.2 Externally the proposals are also significantly less than the previous approved scheme. Whereas the previous scheme had a hydro pool and covered horse walker, these facilities are not required for the stud farm, although a paddock area and lunging ring will be provided immediately adjacent to the stud farm

- 2.2.3 Adjacent to the stud will be a hay barn in a location just to the north of the hay barn approved for the previous scheme.
- 2.2.4 No works will be required outside the application site and there will be no need to lay out formal gallops or race course fencing.
- 2.2.5 The footprint of the proposed development is substantially less than the approved race horse stables as shown on Drg. No. 6566-P01/B accompanying the application.

2.3 Management Plan and Public Access

- 2.3.1 A Management Plan for the Woodfold Park complex has already been approved in order to ensure the long term maintenance of the important ecological and historical features of the site.
- 2.3.2 The responsibility for maintaining part of the grounds was to fall upon the operator of the horse race stables, particularly as the proposed development no longer requires the gallops and fencing to be provided. At present there is therefore a gap in the future management of the park.
- 2.3.3 Accordingly, this application will allow any necessary amendments to the management plan to be made to ensure that the final element of the future maintenance of the grounds is put into place.

2.4 Operation of the Stud Farm

- 2.4.1 The race horse stables will provide 16 stables, which it is predicted will generally be fully occupied by resident stallions and visiting mares. In order to ensure for the care and maintenance of these animals, there will be 5 full time equivalent stable staff, and the Stud Farm Owner who will live on site.

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section examines the national, regional and local planning context for the proposed development at Woodfold Park, Mellor.

3.2 Relevant Plans and Policies

- 3.2.1 The statutory development plan consists of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Lancashire Structure Plan and the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

3.3 Designations

- 3.3.1 The application site lies within the statutory Green Belt and Woodfold Park which is included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The park, but not the application site, contains three grade II listed buildings, namely Woodfold Hall and the Orangery, and the balustrated bridge over Arley Brook. To the east of the majority of the park, but south of the application site, lies the Woodfold and Jeffrey Wood Biological Heritage Site.

3.4 Regional Spatial Strategy

- 3.4.1 Regional Planning Guidance for the North West constitutes the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 3.4.2 The adopted guidance [March 2003] supports the diversification of the rural economy [Policy RU2] whilst maintaining the character and quality of the north west's natural, built and historic environment [Policy ER1].
- 3.4.3 The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy commences public consultation in March 2006.
- 3.4.4 Policy RDF3 seeks to strengthen and diversify the rural economy.

3.5 Lancashire Structure Plan

- 3.5.1 The Lancashire Structure Plan was adopted in March 2005.
- 3.5.2 Policy 1 of the structure plan sets out general locational principles for development and supports the principle of rural regeneration.
- 3.5.3 Policy 20 identifies the key Lancashire landscapes and sets out the basis for the assessment of applications in relation to them.
- 3.5.4 Policy 21 seeks to protect Lancashire's landscapes from inappropriate development.

3.6 Ribble Valley Local Plan

- 3.6.1 The Ribble Valley Local Plan was adopted in June 1998.
- 3.6.2 The key policies of the Local Plan relate to design, Green Belt, landscape, historic heritage, housing and horse related development. The key strands that emerge from the Local Plan policies are:

- All development proposals should be of a high standard of building design and landscape quality [Policy G1];
- Development within the Green Belt will be strictly controlled in accordance with national policy [Policy ENV4];
- Important landscape features will be protected [Policy ENV13];
- Developments that affect historic parks and gardens will be strictly controlled [Policy ENV21];
- Residential development in the countryside will be strictly controlled [Policy H2];

4. PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 Arising from the review of the relevant planning policies relating to this site, it is considered the following are the key planning issues in relation to the proposed developments:-

1. Impact upon the Green Belt
2. Impact upon the Historic Environment

4.2 Each of these issues is considered in turn.

5. IMPACT UPON THE GREEN BELT

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The whole of the site lies within the Green Belt. PPG2 states that the most important attribute of the Green Belt is its openness. Accordingly, the scheme must be considered in relation to the impact upon the Green Belt taking into account the existing consent on the site.

5.3 New Build

5.3.1 It is accepted that the proposal, must be regarded as inappropriate development. By definition planning policy therefore indicates that it is harmful to the Green Belt.

5.3.4 In respect of the proposed horse racing stables, these will be erected in a horseshoe arrangement to limit the extent of development and of a design that respects the historic character of the site. In view of the overall extent of the site it is considered that the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt will not be significant.

5.3.5 Turning now to the five purposes of designating land as Green Belt, these are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration.

5.3.6 It is considered that the proposal would not result in the unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area. The site is clearly separate from both Mellor and Blackburn and would not encourage the spread of development in the future.

5.3.7 The proposal would not result in the coalescence of settlements. The site is not within any narrow wedge of open land but rather located within a significant break between Mellor and Blackburn.

5.3.8 The proposal would not physically encroach into any existing area of open countryside. The only extensive new build consists of horse racing stables which are an appropriate rural use and will not appear as an encroachment of urban development.

5.3.9 Due to the nature and location of the site, the proposal will not directly assist in urban regeneration. However, as a stud farm, it would not be suitable or feasible for it to be developed in an urban area.

5.3.10 The proposal constitutes a much reduced form of development on a site which already has planning permission for 78 race horse stables. Its development will therefore reduce the impact upon the openness of the green belt whilst significantly contributing to the overall character and amenity of the historic park and garden. This constitutes the very special circumstances that allow the development to take place in the green belt.

6.0 IMPACT UPON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 It is considered that the proposed stud farm will be located at a sufficient distance from the listed buildings so that it will not have a material impact upon their particular setting. However, it is located within Woodfold Park and will be assessed in this context.

6.1.2 Woodfold Park was entered onto the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in December 1995

6.1.3 The notable points that arise from the listing are that the total park, which was laid out in the 1790s to accompany Woodfold Hall, extends to some 175 ha. Much of it is

bounded by the remains of a high stone wall with agricultural land beyond. There are gated entrances to the park from the north and north east, and a third entrance from Pleasington Road in the south. Within the park there are substantial strips of woodland, whilst the landform generally falls away towards the south. A sunken driveway leads from the north east entrance to Woodfold Hall.

- 6.1.4 The listing makes clear that in terms of the overall park area, very little was utilised as gardens or pleasure grounds. The land immediately to the front of the Hall was levelled to form a rectangular platform, supported by drystone walls, which are no longer visible. To the north of the Hall are wooded pleasure grounds through which a track leads to the northern boundary of the site. Some 200m to the north west of the Hall lies the remains of the walled kitchen garden and boiler house which is enclosed on three sides by high brick walls, with the fourth contained by a retaining wall.

6.2 Impact upon the Park and Garden

- 6.2.1 Although designated as a Historic Park and Garden, Woodfold Park does not have the formality of other designated parks and gardens. Rather, the majority of the land was designed as an open landscape with emphasis placed upon the long distance views of the Hall. Much of the remainder formed Pleasure Grounds to the rear of the Hall.
- 6.2.2 In respect of the impact of the development proposals, the key considerations are firstly whether the proposed use of the Park is appropriate, and secondly whether the proposals will retain the important historical merit of features within the site, in particular the landform, views and existing trees.
- 6.2.3 The stud farm will constitute a new building within the historic park. In order to ensure that the impact of the development upon the park is reduced to a minimum, the stud farm is proposed to be located in the north east corner of the park away from the Hall and most of the other buildings within the park. This is the same location as the already approved racehorse stables and has been accepted by the local planning authority as an appropriate site for the development to take place within the Park. The stud farm will also not impinge upon any of the views into or out of the Hall which is the focal point for the park. As with the stables, neither the extensive views to and from the east or to and from the south approaching the Hall will be effected by the erection of the stud farm and it is therefore considered that these important characteristics of the historic park will also be unaffected by the development. In this respect, during the consideration of the previous application, substantial discussions and negotiations were held with the Garden History Society who accepted that the impact upon the character and views of the park would be minimal and, most significantly, that the stables would not be visible from the former driveway to the hall. The same applies to the new proposal. The character of the park in terms of its views will therefore be retained.

- 6.2.4 Furthermore, the proposed stud farm is bordered by existing mature woodland on two sides which will be retained in its existing form. Views of the stud farm from elsewhere within the site, not just from the key views towards the Hall, and also from outside of the site will be restricted. Again, this will preserve the existing character of the park.
- 6.2.5 In comparison with the previous scheme the most significant difference is the reduction in activity that will take place. Unlike the previous scheme where racehorses would be trained on the approved gallops through the centre of the park, the horses from the stud farm will only be exercised in the paddocks which will be located around the immediate vicinity of the proposed farm. Thus there will be no activity generated from the stud farm in the remainder of the park.
- 6.2.6 The orientation of the stud farm is different from that approved for the race course stables. The entrance to the complex, including the manager's dwelling has been turned to the north to provide security and monitoring of any visitors to the complex. This will also serve to reduce views of the development from the remainder of the park.
- 6.2.7 Turning now to the design of the proposed development, including the manager's dwelling, the first point to make is that views will be limited due to the location of the stud farm in the north east corner of the site and the partial screening that is therefore afforded. Notwithstanding this, the design of the stud farm and manager's dwelling has been drawn from elements of the existing hall and the former stable block to the rear to provide a modern building that fits comfortably into its historic setting, both in materiality and scale. The window forms and detailing of the Main Hall are replicated within the proposed manager's dwelling to ensure that the development fits in well with the character of the Woodfold Park complex as a whole. However, in order to ensure that the dwelling remains clearly subservient in scale, a blend of Ashlar stone and render will be utilised to break up the massing of the house. For these reason it is considered that, as was considered the case with the approved race horse stables, the proposed stud farm will also preserve the existing character of the historic park.
- 6.2.8 Finally, the scheme no longer proposes the laying out of gallops and associated fencing through the centre of the park. Although this was accepted as part of the previous application, by withdrawing this element of the scheme the impact upon the historic park and garden will be further reduced.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application site has planning permission for 78 race horse stables. The remainder of this planning consent has been implemented.

- 7.2 The proposed stud farm proposes a much reduced scale of development when compared with the race horse stables that already have the benefit of planning permission.
- 7.3 The proposal respects the character and visual amenity of the historic park and garden.
- 7.4 **For these reasons, the Council is asked to support the proposed development and grant planning for the stud farm.**