



JUDITH DOUGLAS TOWN PLANNING LIMITED

The Rann Woodland, off Saccary Lane, Mellor, Blackburn  
BB1 9DL.

Retention of storage containers, vehicle parking and turning area, reduction in the width of the track to an average width 2.9m, proposed cladding and roofing over of storage containers and the construction of a welfare unit.

Planning Statement

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JDTPL0427

Judith Douglas BSc (Hons), Dip TP, MRTPI



8 Southfield Drive West Bradford, Clitheroe, Lancashire,  
BB7 4TU

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd on behalf of the applicants for the retention of storage containers, vehicle parking and turning areas, resurfacing of a track, proposed completion of cladding and roofing over of storage containers and construction of a welfare unit.

1.2 The application should be read in conjunction with:

Location Plan 6625-02

Pre-existing site plan 6625-01

Existing Site Plan 6625-E01B

Proposed Site Plan 6625-P01A

1.3 This Statement will describe the site and surroundings, the proposed development and assesses its merits against the relevant up-to-date policies of the development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and all other relevant material considerations.

## **2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

2.1 The Rann Woodland is situated to the west of Saccary Lane. On the east of Saccary Lane is the dwelling Throstle Croft. Vehicle access to The Rann Woodland is approximately 20m from Saccary Lane along a private track. Saccary Lane is a classified C road. The private track continues around the northern boundary of the woodland and serves several properties a Birely Fold. The track is also a public footpath. The application site extends to about 2.225 hectares/ 5.5 acres. The land to the south of the site (uphill) is open fields. Overhead power lines cross the site necessitating a gap in the tree planting.

2.2 The site is outside a settlement boundary and within an area of open in the adopted Housing and Economic Development, Development Plan Document (HEDDPD). The site forms part of a larger woodland to the west of Saccary Lane which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The application site is W2 on the Tree Preservation Order.

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### **3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 The applicants Ms Cottam and Mr Howarth bought the woodland in November 2021. They intend to keep the woodland as it is and enjoy watching it mature. The woodland requires maintenance and the applicants have sought advice from the Forestry Commission through their arboriculture advisor and have agreed maintenance tasks which are required to keep the woodland healthy. The types of tasks that are involved will be pruning of dead, diseased or damage wood. Coppicing hazel, leaf collecting, grass cutting around trees, limiting ivy and bramble growth, removing weeds, watering including ring sprays around trees, improving soil areas around tree to promote growth, deer and squirrel control. They also wish to promote the growth of wildflowers and intend to keep bees.
- 3.2 Unfortunately the ash trees within the woodland are affected by ash die-back. They have been advised that the removal of the infect trees and their replacement with native trees such as oak, hawthorn and silver birch would be good practice and would benefit the woodland.
- 3.3 The applicants do not live close to the site. To carry out maintenance work they will need tools, equipment and materials including, pruning saws, loppers, shears, ladders, wheelbarrows, shovels, spades, knapsacks, weedkiller, petrol, strimmer, chainsaw, rakes, tone bags, lawnmowers, rotavator, water containers, hosepipes, hoes, mattock, secateurs other hand tools.
- 3.4 The application seeks planning permission for the levelling ground, the placing of shipping containers for use as storage, a covered area, the construction of a welfare unit in connection with the maintenance and tending of the woodland. The reduction in width of the access track which has been widened without planning permission, and the creation of a vehicle parking and turning area.
- 3.5 To provide storage for equipment, two shipping containers have been placed on the land. A level area of ground has been made in order to accommodate the shipping containers, and space to place a proposed welfare unit together with an area to park and turn vehicles. It is proposed to retain the area of levelled ground. The combined shipping containers and covered area has a total footprint of 9.6m by 6.5m and a very gently sloping roof which is 2.954m at the front and 2.733m at the rear. The shipping containers are constructed out of steel and are to be clad in timber. The roof is proposed in metal profile sheeting. As the containers are only used to store equipment required to maintain the land and woodland no change of use of the land has occurred. In order to improve the appearance of the containers the applicants have begun to clad the exterior of the containers with wood, this has not

affected the structure of the containers. The roof is proposed over the shipping containers to provide a covered outdoor working area and to provide the ability to collect rainwater in containers.

- 3.6 The proposed welfare unit measures 6m by 4m. It will be finished in timber Yorkshire boarding and have a metal profiled sheet roof.
- 3.7 Existing trees on the levelled area have been transplanted elsewhere on the land with the exception of ash trees which were showing signs of ash die-back. These have been removed.
- 3.8 The applicants scraped off the overspill of soil and material collected over time which has fallen on to the surface of the access track. The scraping off revealed a base layer of stone filled with hardcore. This was the pre-existing 2m wide path/ track which ran through woodland. The applicant pruned the trees at the side of the track have added MOT/plannings onto the existing road/path surface to make it driveable whilst the shipping containers were delivered. The intention is, and permission is sought to reduce the width of the track to 2.9m and let the trees to regrow towards it. Beyond the shipping containers the track will be returned to its 2m width. The surface of the track and hardstanding is crushed stone to remain permeable.

#### 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 Below are applications recorded on the Council’s website.

Application	Address	Development	Decision
3/2005/0803	The Rann Community Woodland Saccary Lane Mellor Lancashire	Creation of a stoned path suitable for disabled visitors and a car park area within the woodland area.	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS Date : 24/11/2005

- 4.2 The planting of the woodland was grant aided in 2003/4 through an England Woodland Grant Scheme to create and maintain a Community Woodland. The grant aid required public access through the woodland for 10 years. This requirement for public access has now ceased. The application site was purchased by the applicants on the 21 November 2021.
- 4.3 At the time the applicants bought the site and prior to the recent unauthorised development, there site comprised the woodland, a car park adjacent to the site entrance and a track

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through the site. Information provided by the previous owner of the site Mr Finlay Hodge indicates the construction of the track and car park had received funding from the Forestry Commission. See appendix 1. The documents in the appendix indicate that the track was constructed 2m wide and includes a 9-inch culvert pipe under the path and the car park measured approximately 12m by 15m.

## **5.0 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers to the development plan as a whole and requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the relevant parts of the development plan comprise the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

5.2 The following policies from the Core Strategy are the main policies relevant to the proposal.

Key Statement EN2: Landscape

Policy DMG1: General Considerations

Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands

Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) ('the Framework') sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It requires local planning authorities to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means, as paragraph 11c explains, that development which accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

5.4 In determining planning applications, paragraph 38 of the Framework expects local planning authorities to approach decisions in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

## 6 EVALUATION

- 6.1 The main issue to consider in this application is the potential impact of the development on the rural landscape.
- 6.2 The storage units are required for to store equipment for maintenance of the woodland which extends to some 2.2h. The storage units need to be robust to deter theft. The owners of the woodland do not live nearby, and it would be impractical and inefficient to store equipment off site to be brought at each visit. The units are very well screened by the surrounding woodland and not readily visible from outside of the site. The cladding of the containers will enhance their appearance. Creating a roof over and between the containers provides a means to collect rainwater and creates a covered dry area to work in.
- 6.2 The welfare unit will provide a rest area, a place to eat and drink, a place to change clothes, storage for first aid and somewhere to shelter in poor weather. The applicants' arboricultural advisor has indicated that the applicants are required to provide welfare facilities on the site particularly if they employ a tree surgeon or contractors to help with work at the site. See appendix 2. Email from Mr D Cammack.
- 6.3 The location of the storage units, welfare unit parking and turning area has been carefully considered. It is located centrally within the site so that it is easily accessible to all areas. It is well screened from views to protect the visual quality of the surrounding landscape and to discourage opportunistic theft.
- 6.4 It is clear from the planning history that a car park and a track 2m wide was created after the woodland was planted and before the applicants owned the site. As the woodland has matured and continues to growth the size of the trees has increased. It will be beneficial to have vehicle access to a central location in the woodland to assist with maintenance which requires the use of heavy equipment and the removal of timber. The proposal is to create a track which is 2.9m to allow vehicles to have access to the centre of the site and is wide enough to accommodate a fire appliance in the event of an emergency. At 2.9m the proposed track is 0.9m wider than the pre-existing track. A turning area is also needed.

### Impact on landscape.

- 6.5 As the widened track, parking, turning area and the proposed buildings are in the centre of the woodland they are very well-screen from the surrounding area. A public footpath runs to

the north of the site along the access to Birely Fold. The development is not visible from the footpath due to the intervening trees. See Photograph. The photograph was taken in June 2022 when the trees were in full leaf. There is approximately 25m of dense maturing woodland between the path and the proposed buildings so that even in winter the buildings are very well screened. In addition to this the buildings are mostly clad in wood and are modest in height so that they blend into the landscape.



View looking south-east toward the woodland from the public footpath 3-25-FP 4. Footpath 2-25-FP5 runs between the fence line adjacent to the woodland edge.

- 6.6 Only lower portion of the track is visible from the public footpath as it passes site entrance, none of the buildings will be visible from this point. The impact of the of the widening of the track from 2m to 2.9m will have minimal impact on the rural character of the landscape due to the high level of screening. The proposal will have negligible impact on the visual quality of the landscape and is compliant with Key Statement EN2:Landscape and DME2:Landscape and Townscape Protection.
- 6.7 The applicants own the woodland and wish to keep the woodland in a healthy condition and to encourage biodiversity. The proposed development will assist the applicants in their endeavours which accords with the aims of Policy DME1:Protecting Trees and Woodlands

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which seeks to *“ensure that woodland management safe-guards the structural integrity and visual amenity value of woodland, enhances biodiversity and provides environmental health benefits for the residents of the Borough. The Council encourages successional tree planting to ensure tree cover is maintained into the future.”* The proposal will help to facilitate the proper management of the woodland which can be appreciated by the public using the public footpath to the north of the site and from the wider landscape.

- 6.8 The proposal indicates an area of proposed tree planting between the welfare unit and the storage buildings. Should the Council consider it beneficial, the applicants would be open to reducing the former car parking area adjacent to the site access and planting this area with trees. The car park was created when the site had public access which has now ceased. Overall, the proposal will have a beneficial impact on the woodland and biodiversity through the facilitation proper woodland management in line with the aims of policy DME1.
- 6.9 The location of the storage and welfare area is a significant distance from the nearest residential properties. The activities associated with the buildings are unlikely to have any impact on the surrounding neighbouring properties. The proposal accords with the requirements of policy DMG1.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany an application for full planning permission for retention of storage containers, vehicle parking and turning areas, reduction in the width of the track to an average width 2.9m, proposed cladding and roofing over of storage containers and the construction of a welfare unit. The development is needed to assist the maintenance and management of the woodland. It has been demonstrated that the widening of the track from its original width of 2.0m to 2.9m will have no adverse impact on the visual quality landscape. Similarly, the proposed retention of the storage containers which are proposed to be clad in wood and the welfare unit also clad in wood are very well screened by the woodland surrounding them and will have no impact on the visual quality of the landscape. The development fully accords with Key Statement EN2: Landscape, Policy DMG1: General Considerations, Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands and Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection.
- 7.2 The development will assist the owners to keep the woodland in a healthy condition ensuring the continued visual amenity of the woodland and its biodiversity. This has a benefit to the wider public who can appreciate the woodland when viewed from the nearby public footpaths



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to the north of the site and from the wider landscape generally. This supports the aims of Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands

Appendix 1. Information relating to the pre-existing track through the site and the car park.

Appendix 2. Supporting email from D Cammack