

# Planning Support Statement

Woodfold Park Former Stud Farm and Property, Woodfold  
Park, Mellor, Lancashire, BB2 7QA

Conversion of former stud farm stables to  
form part of residential property and  
additional extensions to dwelling

Job No: 21/L/061

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning support statement is written to accompany a full planning application for the conversion of existing stud farm buildings and extensions as additions to the residential property associated with the former Woodfold Park Stud Farm, which sits within Woodfold Park near Mellor.
- 1.2. The property has been acquired by a local resident who is seeking to incorporate the former stud farm stables into their family home, together with additional extensions. The proposal increases the liveable floor area of the house, without a significant increase in the footprint of the built development through conversion of the existing single storey stable buildings and extensions above existing single storey elements of the dwelling.
- 1.3. The application site, made up of the dwelling and connected stud farm, is linked to the adjacent farmland through a recently revised planning condition and the new owner will own and manage this land and live at the property with his family. The owner has no plans to incorporate a stud, livery or any associated use within the existing stable buildings to the rear of the property and therefore seeks to incorporate these buildings into the extended family home.
- 1.4. The dwelling was newly built alongside the stud farm buildings during the 2000s, and operated as a stud farm with connected family dwelling, but the stud farm business has proven unviable and the former owner sold the property. The buildings are orientated to form a courtyard, open to the southern aspect, but as they share an access, parking and are closely connected, they cannot be separated from the dwelling and are therefore proposed to be incorporated within the family home.

- 1.5. The land and buildings are part of Woodfold Park, which is a Grade II Historic Park and Garden (No. 1001341). This designation was made in 1995, prior to the approval and construction of these buildings on the land. Details within section 2 outline the previous development consents related to the site, all of which were determined whilst within the designation of the listed park and garden.
- 1.6. This statement will consider the policies within the Development Plan which will be applicable to such a development, and set out all material planning considerations which need to be weighed in the balance when the decision-makers assess this planning application. The application is supported by relevant plans and a bat survey of the vacant stable blocks.
- 1.7. Bearing in mind the Local Planning Authority's duty under Paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is requested that the agents are contacted in the first instance if any further information is required to enable a positive determination.

## 2. Site Characteristics

2.1 The property lies to the south of the village of Mellor and around 2.5km to the west of the town of Blackburn. It lies within the Woodfold Estate, centred around Woodfold Hall and is a Registered Park and Garden (Grade II) which was established in the 1790s. The estate has been split into many different ownerships, including the Hall itself which was converted to apartments several years ago, having fallen into dereliction in the 1990s.

2.3 The stud farm and associated dwelling were granted planning consent in 2006. The principle of a new stud farm with a large dwelling was originally established in 2003 through a wide-ranging planning consent for improvements and new developments within the Woodfold Park estate (Application Ref: 3/01/0672), which included the following developments:

*Conversion of the main Woodfold Hall to apartments and dwellings*

*New dwellings on former boiler house/walled garden area*

***New race horse training facility and associated buildings and gallops (The site)***

*Conversion of Deerhouse to dwelling*

*Conversion and extensions at Woodfold Hall Farm to create 10 units and garaging.*

2.4 The approved new race horse training facility was proposed to be located on the site of this application and remained extant, with subsequent consent approved for what exists on site today in the form of the stud farm and connected dwelling. The original race horse training facility included 78 stables, manager's accommodation and associated gallops area. It was significantly larger than what exists on site today and included a fully enclosed internal courtyard surrounded by buildings on all sides. An extract from the proposed plan is shown below in Figure 1.



*Figure 1 – Extract of Original proposal for race horse training facility on site (building in white)*

- 2.5 The application for stud farm and dwelling was approved and subsequently built and operated as a stud farm for over 10 years, but has been proven to be unviable. The owner has been seeking sale of the properties and recently sought to revise a planning condition relating to the building in 2021, which was approved this year and resulted in the sale of the property to the applicant.
- 2.6 The site subject to the planning application is shown below in Figure 2. This includes the residential property and the two stud farm buildings that currently form stables. The detached dwelling is flanked by two detached double garages, one on either side of the property. All three buildings face north towards the entrance to the property, which connects with Further Lane to the west via a gated driveway. To the rear of the garages, perpendicular to the main dwelling building, are the two stud buildings, housing six stables and a tack room in each. All of the buildings above were constructed at the same time, under the same planning consent.



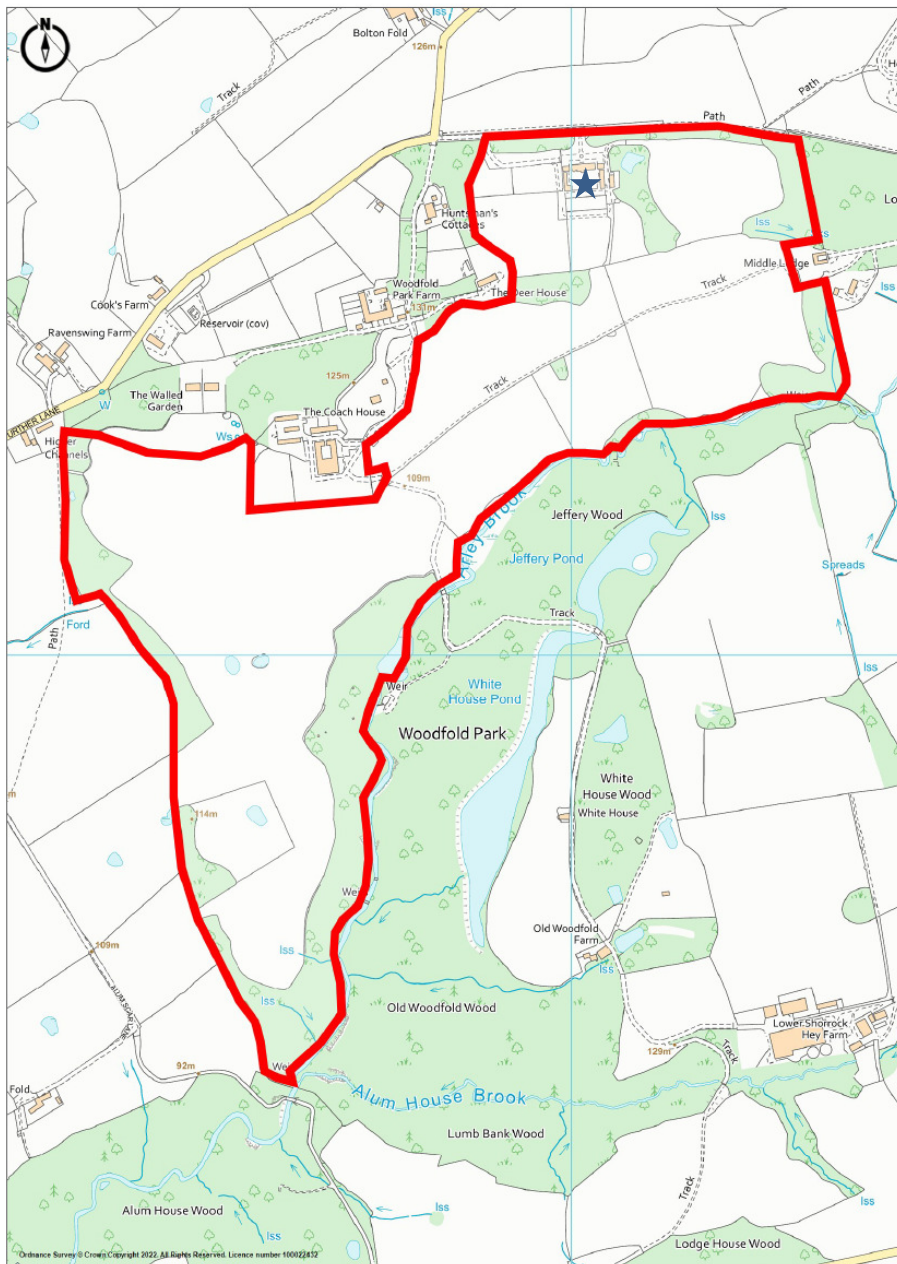
*Figure 2 – Extract from Site Plan showing property*

- 2.7 A planning application was submitted in 2021 by the former owner seeking to remove the occupancy condition associated with the properties (Ref: 3/2021/1086), and whilst this was refused, a further application was submitted and approved to instead revise the conditions into one condition that retained a link between the property and associated land around the park, with a plan of the area defined (see Figure 3 below). Although this area does not form part of the application for conversion and extensions, through association of the condition it is relevant to the considerations of the new planning application. The previous applications confirmed that the stud farm business and use of the stables was no longer viable, with evidence presented to make this case, and the condition was accordingly revised on this basis.
- 2.8 During discussions with the local planning authority regarding the previous application, reference was made to a potential purchaser of the land who wished to utilise the land for agricultural use and live in the property on site with their family. Due to the revision of this condition, this is now in place and the new owner of the property has begun utilising the land defined on the plan, and has plans for the long-term future of the land and buildings. The new owner, Mr Dalal, has plans to farm the land now



tied to the dwelling and to properly upgrade and maintain elements of the associated land into the future, helping to preserve the Woodfold Park area.

- 2.9 The applicant has no requirement to retain the stud farm buildings for an agricultural/rural enterprise, and therefore has applied to convert the buildings to form part of the dwelling. In doing so, and through management of the wider land associated with and conditioned to the dwelling, they are seeking to provide a family home by connecting the buildings to form a larger family home without significantly increasing the external developed footprint of the existing buildings. This statement will explain how this approach is consistent with planning policy and makes good use of the existing buildings, whilst also removing a recent rural enterprise addition to the Woodfold Park area.



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Plan WF01

*Figure 3 – Plan showing land conditioned with occupancy of property (asterix)*

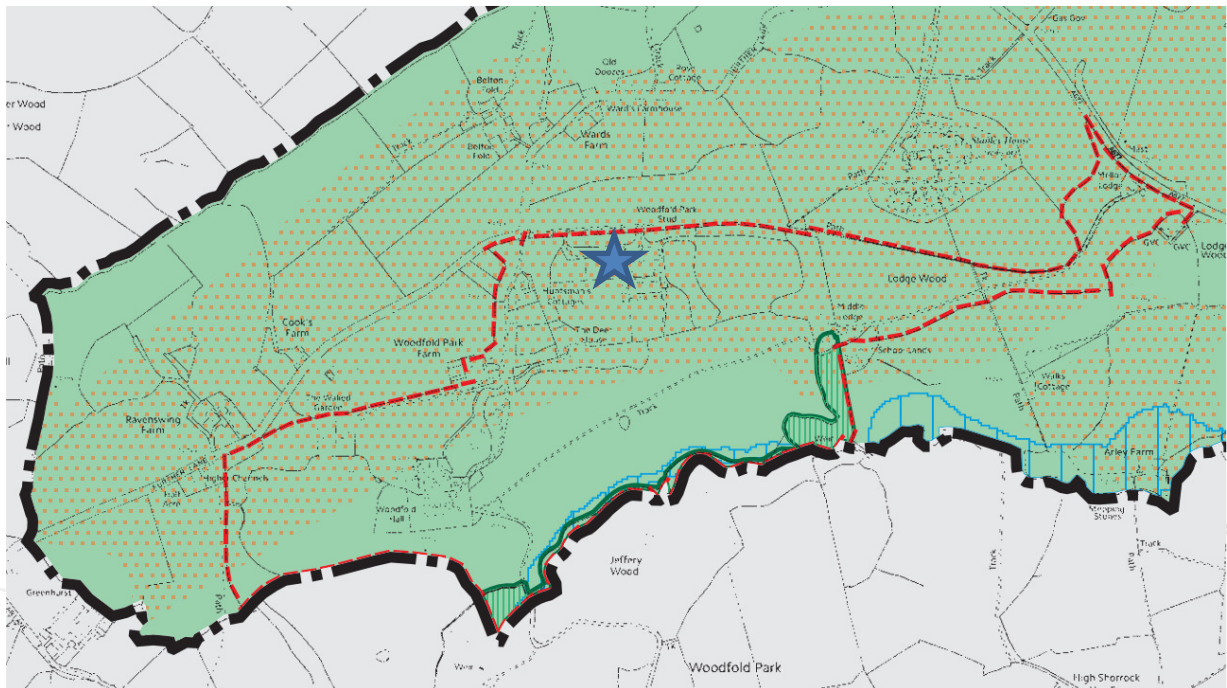
## 3. Application Proposal

- 3.1. The application seeks planning consent to convert former stud farm stable buildings to residential use. The buildings will become part of the existing family dwellinghouse, which will be extended through additions to the first floor of the original building and connecting links to the converted barn buildings and existing detached garages to the house, creating a single connected dwelling, with limited increase in the developed footprint of the building.
- 3.2. Details of the proposed changes and reasoning behind design choices are set out in the design statement prepared by Campbell Driver Partnership Architects and the drawings submitted with the application. The scheme will extend and alter the existing 5-bedroom property to a more generously proportioned 6-bedroom home.
- 3.3. As the former stable buildings to be converted are single storey and perpendicular to the main body of the house, these areas will be utilised for uses other than main bedrooms. The existing westernmost garage is proposed to be converted into a gym and linked to the main property by a glazed link, also forming an access to the converted western stable building that will include a swimming pool. The eastern stable block will be converted to provide additional living accommodation for family guests, which in time presents the opportunity for whole life living for the family within the property, providing sleeping accommodation at ground floor in elderly years.
- 3.4. First floor extensions to the main dwelling are proposed to provide better proportions to the existing design over the east and west sides of the original dwelling to from additional and better arranged bedroom accommodation for the home.

- 3.5. Visually the extensions and elevations treatment aim to re-balance the existing elevations, which are both asymmetrical and poorly proportioned. The additions of the first-floor wing extensions assist in correcting the proportions of the principal elevations, as does the replacement of the windows to provide clear glazed sash windows, free of glazing bar fenestration.
- 3.6. The garage extensions provide a sleek, low profiled roof, maintaining a step-in level of the roof to maintain the hierarchy of building mass in the elevation and clearly highlighting the additions as new, modern, subsidiaries to the principle building and maintaining separation of the existing stone mass of the house and garages.

## 4. Planning Policy

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework, as informed by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that all planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the 'development plan' consists of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the Housing and Economic Development DPD. The Proposals Map sits alongside these.
- 4.2. Ribble Valley Borough Council's Local Plan Proposals Map shows the site lying in the Green Belt.



*Figure 1 – Extract from Local Plan Proposals Map – application site annotated*

- 4.3. This also illustrates the designation of the Woodfold Park Historic Park and Garden (Policy DME4 as demarcated by the broken red line) as well as an element of mineral safeguarding area (Policy EN3).

4.4. Key Statement EN1 relates to Green Belt and simply states that the extent of the Green Belt in the Ribble Valley will be maintained to safeguard the surrounding countryside from inappropriate encroachment. In line with NPPF, it sets out the criteria against which proposals for new building will be considered. However, it does not go into sufficient detail in respect of extensions to existing buildings.

4.5. Policy DMH4 relates to the conversion of barns and other buildings to dwellings. Notably this was written before substantial changes made to national permitted development rights. The policy states that permission will be granted for conversion of buildings to dwellings where:

- it is not isolated in the landscape;
- there need be no unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on infrastructure;
- there would be no materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area or harm to nature conservation interests;
- there would be no detrimental effect on the rural economy; and
- the proposals are consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area;
- that any existing nature conservation aspects of the structure are properly surveyed.

4.6. The policy also requires that the building to be converted must be structurally sound and capable of conversion and that the building has a genuine history of use for agriculture or another rural enterprise.

4.7. Policy DMH5 relates to residential and curtilage extensions and states that proposals to extend existing dwellings must accord with Policy DMG1 and any relevant designations within which a site is located. Policy DMG1 relates to general considerations and seeks to ensure quality in design in terms of massing, materials, sustainable construction techniques and energy efficiency. It also seeks to ensure adequate access and protection of amenities as well as ensuring that any development is sympathetic to its environment and is adequately connected to infrastructure.

- 4.8. Policy DME4 seeks to ensure the protection of heritage assets, and Part 3 of the policy seeks to ensure that proposals do not cause harm to, or loss of, significance of registered parks, gardens or landscapes of special historic interest.
- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places at its heart the principle of sustainable development which consists of an economic, a social and an environmental objective. It sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development by ensuring that development proposals are approved where they accord with an up-to-date Development Plan ‘without delay’ or where the Plan is silent or policies are considered to be out of date, permission should be granted unless specific policies that protect areas or assets would lead to a clear reason for refusal or any adverse impacts of approving the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh their benefits (Paragraph 11).
- 4.7. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 sets out a list of exceptions to the principle that new buildings are inappropriate. This list includes the extension or alteration of a building providing that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- 4.8. Paragraph 150 also considers that the re-use of permanent buildings of substantial construction is not inappropriate in the green belt. Changes in permitted development rights for former agricultural buildings have been made in recent years, providing permitted development rights subject to prior notification for conversions of up to five new dwelling in some instances.



4.9. In considering proposals that affect heritage assets, local authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal before assessing its impact. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, councils should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.10. The designation description for Woodfold Park is set out below. This makes no reference to the existing buildings subject to the application as they were consented and constructed following its designation.

### **WOODFOLD PARK**

#### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Towards the end of the C18 Henry Sudell, a cotton manufacturer and financier of Blackburn, purchased several estates in the area, including Woodfold Park. This he imparked and, in 1798, called on Charles McNiven, an architect from Manchester, to build a new house. The house and park were sold in 1831 to Mr John Fowden Hindle, but he died shortly afterwards. The estate passed to various members of the Hindle family in fairly rapid succession. The Woodfold estate was sold c 1878 to Robert Daniel Thwaites, a brewer of Blackburn. On Thwaites' death in 1888 the estate descended to his only daughter, Elma Amy. Through Elma Amy Thwaites' marriage in 1888 to Robert Armstrong Yerburch, the estate became the property of the Yerburch family. It remains (1990s) in private ownership.*



## DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

*Woodfold Park, c 175ha, lies to the west of Blackburn, north of Pleasington, and c 1.75km to the east of Samlesbury Bottoms. From the northern end of the site the ground falls away steeply to the south, offering long views along the valley of the Arley Brook to south and east. Much of the park is bounded by a high stone wall, beyond which lies an agricultural landscape. Further Lane twice touches the park at its north-west corner and the southern boundary is formed by Pleasington Road.*

## ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

*The main drive leads off the A677 road at the north-east corner of the site, through the gateway at Mellor Lodge (listed grade II), the pair of lodge houses probably being of the 1790s, possibly to the design of James Wyatt. From here the drive runs westwards through a narrow strip of woodland before breaking out into the park at the gateway at Middle Lodge (listed grade II). This pair of lodges again probably dates from the 1790s and is likely to be the work of James Wyatt. From here the drive continues westwards across the park to arrive at the south front of the Hall.*

*A second imposing gateway marks the entrance to the site from the public lane to the north, the drive here leading south to Woodfold Park Farm, where it branches eastwards to run through a band of woodland to join the east drive or continues south to the Hall.*

*The access from the south is via the drive from Pleasington Lodge which stands on the Pleasington Road, the public road marking the southern boundary of the site. From here the drive leads northwards across the park, crossing the Alum House Brook as it runs east/west across the southern end of the park. The route continues past Old Woodfold Farm and the White House, then along the west side of White House Wood, which forms the eastern boundary of the site. The drive then bends sharply to the west to cross between two ponds, dog-legging back to run north up the steeply sloping ground to the Hall.*

## PRINCIPAL BUILDING

*Woodfold Hall (formerly Woodfold Park, listed grade II) stands, unoccupied and derelict (1995), at the northern end of its park, enjoying views along the valley to the south and east. Built of sandstone rubble with the main facades of ashlar, the south front is of nine bays, the centre three flanked and separated by pilasters under a tetrastyle portico. To the rear (north), two wings run back to enclose a courtyard, their inner walls now collapsed.*

## GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

*To the south of the Hall the ground is levelled to form a rectangular platform, supported by drystone walls. North of the Hall wooded pleasure grounds lead to the track which forms the walled northern boundary of the site. Within the pleasure grounds, 100m to the north-east of the Hall, stands an early to mid C19 orangery (listed grade II).*

## PARK

*The park is set within farmland from which it is separated by a 3m high stone wall, 6.5km in length. To the south of the Hall lies parkland, divided from the farmland to the west by a broken wooded belt, and contained to the east by Old Woodfold Wood which here clothes either bank of the Arley Brook. Within the northern end of the wood is a sawmill; at the southern end, the brook leaves the site under the Alum Scar Bridge (listed grade II).*

*To the east of the Hall is a broad swathe of parkland, across which runs the east drive. The land falls from the northern boundary to the stream, the Arley Brook, which runs along the valley floor, Jeffery Wood beyond enclosing the south side of this stretch of the park. The flow of the Brook is broken by a series of weirs.*

*On the east side of the park, within Jeffery Wood, is Jeffery Pond. Below and to the south of the lake is a second, more extensive body of water, White House Pond, the south drive crossing the dam between the two. White House Pond lies parallel to the south drive, the two being separated by a strip of parkland sloping down to the water's edge. On the west side of the Pond, within Old Woodfold Wood and 100m from the water's edge, stands an icehouse, probably of c 1800 (listed grade II).*

## KITCHEN GARDEN

*The kitchen garden lies 200m to the north-west of the Hall. It is enclosed on three sides by high brick walls, the fourth, the southern side, being open to the park and enclosed by a retaining wall.*

## 5. Planning Considerations

- 5.1. Having reviewed the proposals, their context and the Development Plan policies against which the application should be assessed, this Chapter will assess the proposal against these, in accord with Section 38(6) of the 1990 Act (as amended).
- 5.2. Fundamentally, the proposal relates to the conversion of existing well-built former stud farm stables, combined with a residential extension to an existing associated residential dwelling. Proposals of this type are acceptable in principle. The green belt policy designation at the site, which follows guidance at national level, allows for both the re-use of existing permanent buildings of substantial construction and also for extensions or alterations of existing buildings. Neither of these types of development are considered inappropriate in the green belt.
- 5.3. Likewise, policies EN1, DMH4 and DMH5 of the Local Plan permit the same. The proposals satisfy the criteria of policy DMH4 relating to the conversion of barns and other buildings to dwellings through being capable of conversion, having a history as a rural enterprise and not being isolated in the landscape through connection to the existing dwelling. It is noted that the proposals here do not technically create any additional dwellings through conversion, but the support for conversion is still relevant. Conversion to additional dwellings is allowed by this policy and is also possible through permitted development rights, which in some circumstances can provide up to five new dwellings on a site. The proposals instead provide additional accommodation to the residential dwelling that is connected to the buildings and surrounding land by a recent revised planning condition originally imposed upon construction of the dwelling and stud farm buildings. The proposals satisfy policy DMH5 and DMG1 through design choices made to incorporate the barn buildings and garages into the dwelling and reapportion the property inside and out.

- 5.4. The extensions proposed to the dwelling would not be disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original buildings on site. The increase in built footprint on the site is not significant in the context of the original size and uses of the buildings, with the additions largely introduced to connect the buildings internally to form the extended family dwelling. In this regard, the proposals meet relevant policies in the local plan.
- 5.5. The proposals do not cause harm or loss of significance of the registered area and are therefore compliant with Policy DME4. The original proposals consented for this area of Woodfold Park, together with the other proposals secured across Woodfold Park in the 2003 consent detailed above, provided significant changes to the area, securing investment and a long-term future for the park. The stud farm and dwelling that was subsequently built on the site of the consented race horse training facility provided a smaller proposal and unfortunately a rural enterprise that has since proven to be unviable. The proposals now seek to retain well-built buildings and incorporate them directly with the other use on site, whilst ensuring that this dwelling is still tied to the rural management of a large area of Woodfold Park.
- 5.6. The nature of the layout of the former stud farm and residential dwelling and garages provides good planning justification for conversion of the buildings to be incorporated into the dwelling, and alongside the recent change to the planning condition, will secure the long-term management of a significant proportion of the Woodfold Park area that forms the listed park and garden, shown at Figure 3 above. This change reflects a further proposal to secure the long-term future of this area through significant investment by the new owner in converting existing buildings that are no longer required for their original purpose.
- 5.7. These changes reduce the number of uses on the site, so only a single residential dwelling tied by condition to the management of the land remains. As the introduction of the stud farm use was more recent than the designation of the park, its loss is not significant to the park and will serve to reduce the vehicular movements in this rural green belt setting.

- 5.8. In summary, we consider the proposals should be approved to secure the re-use of buildings within Woodfold Park and the rural management of the area by the applicant who will live at the extended property with their family, according to the planning condition.
- 5.9. We welcome early discussion with the Case Officer in due course to discuss any elements of the proposals as they see fit, or to seek clarifications on any matters.



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