WREYLAND
RURAL PLANNING CONSULTANTS

PLANNING STATEMENT

Bonds Wood Farm, North Wraxall, Chippenham, SN14 8FH | September 2023

Erection of Polytunnels and rainwater harvesting system to serve an existing agricultural enterprise

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been compiled in support of a Full Planning application for the provision of two polytunnels and a rainwater harvesting system to facilitate the development of an existing agricultural enterprise at Bonds Wood Farm.

1.2 This Planning Statement will describe the proposal and demonstrate how it accords with local and national planning policy.

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans.

1.4 This statement has been compiled by Tim Barker BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS FAAV ABIAC. Tim is the Director of Wreyland Rural Planning – a Planning Consultancy accredited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors specialising in rural and agricultural development. Tim is a Chartered Rural Surveyor, Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and Associate Member of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants. Tim also holds Undergraduate and Postgraduate qualifications from the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

2.0 Site location and context

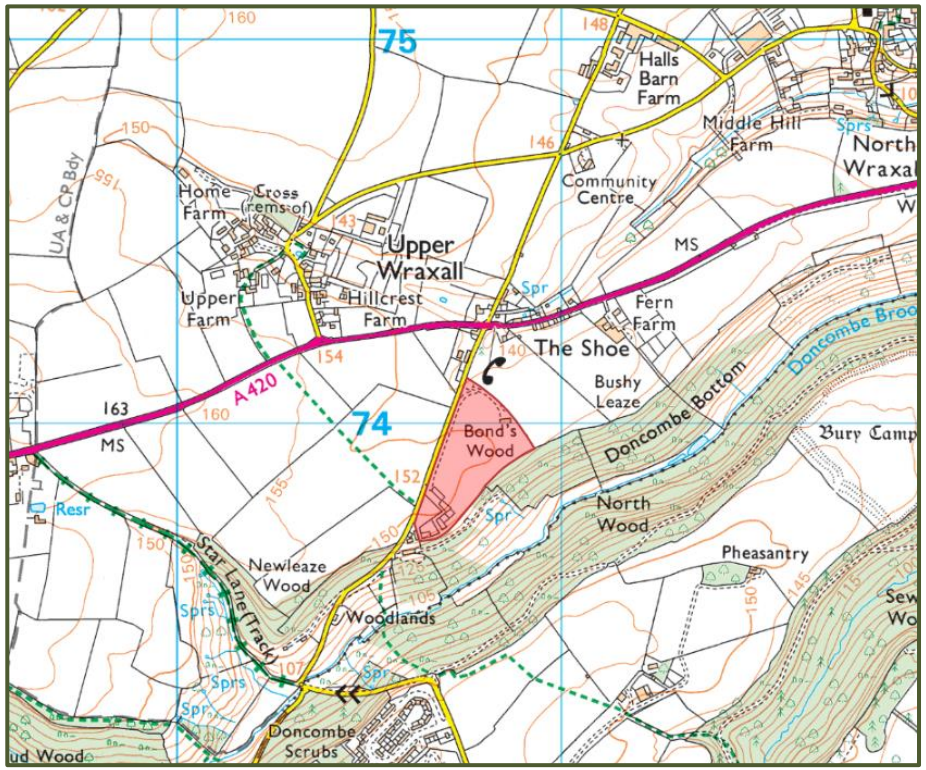


Figure 1 – OS Plan showing the extent of Bonds Wood Farm



Figure 2 – Aerial image showing existing agricultural building & nascent market garden

2.1 Bonds Wood Farm is situated to the south of The Shoe, North Wraxall, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN14 8FH (ST808739 E: 380842 N: 173964) and comprises approximately 6ha of level / gently sloping agricultural land which is used for the commercial keeping and breeding of pigs, chickens and sheep as well as for the purposes of market gardening to produce food for sale to customers. The land has been in the ownership of the Applicants, Mr and Mrs Cannings, since 2018 who operate the agricultural business from the land, trading as Bonds Wood Farm.

3.0 Planning history

3.1 A new agricultural building providing 262m^2 of secure storage space for the current enterprise, together with an access track and area of hardstandingm was permitted under Planning Reference 18/10959/FUL in March 2019 and which has since been built out (see figures 6 & 7 below).

3.2 The Delegated Report confirmed that the enterprise which the building was intended to serve was a *"legitimate proposed agricultural operation which is acceptable in principle subject to landscape and amenity considerations."* The (at the time) proposed agricultural operation has since developed further and is the same operation which now requires the proposed polytunnels

3.3 The Delegated Report further confirmed that as the building was *"agricultural in character and appearance there would be no adverse harm to the open countryside as a result."*

3.4 The Delegated Report concluded that the principle of the building was acceptable and that there would be no harm to the AONB, flood risk, highway safety or neighbouring amenity.

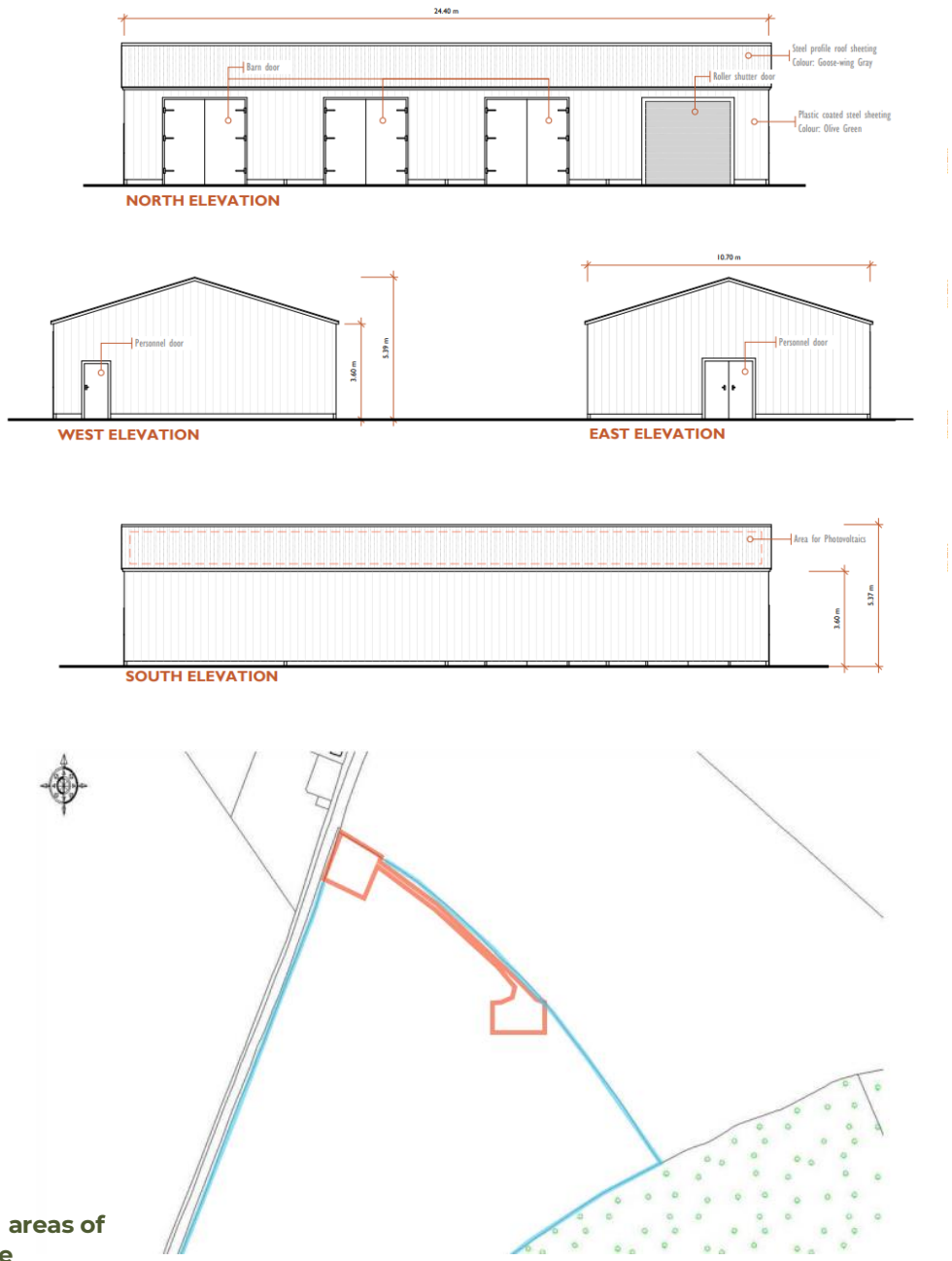


Figure 3 (right) showing the elevations, track and areas of hardstanding permitted under planning reference 18/10959/FUL

4.0 Current operations and further development plans

4.1 The provision of the agricultural building under reference 18/10959/FUL allowed the Applicant to establish their nascent enterprise on a sure-footing. Since the previous application was granted, Bonds Wood Farm has now become the Applicant's full-time occupation with the Applicant now keeping 301 laying hens, 35 pigs and 5 Wiltshire Horn breeding ewes on the land. In addition, the Applicant has also started to plant areas of fruit trees, vegetables and salads to be able to supply from new market garden beds to their customers.

4.2 As well as selling from the farm-gate, the Applicant has an extensive delivery round, supplying food wholly produced from the land to eighty individual customers, all of whom are located within a 10-mile radius. A record of the Applicant's activities on the land is available to view on their Facebook Page – 'Bonds Wood Farm.'

4.3 Having now established the enterprise and proved its viability, the Applicant now intends to further develop the range of food varieties available to the local market through establishing two polytunnels to grow high value crops, to include salad mixes, herbs, edible flowers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines and peppers among other commodities. These will be irrigated through the provision of a new watertank to be fed via the roof of the existing agricultural building.

4.4 The purpose of the polytunnels will be to establish an all year round controlled growing environment which will maximise yields while also protecting crops from predators and inclement weather conditions. This will allow a certainty of production and protection from volatility, allowing the Applicant to guarantee yield and therefore enter into contracts with larger local purchasers, which will principally be pubs and restaurants in the vicinity.

5.0 Proposed development

5.1 Two polytunnels are proposed, Polytunnel A will measure 23.8m x 5.5m, Polytunnel B will measure 18.3m x 5.5m as shown in detail on the separately submitted plans and in outline below. In addition, a 24,000 litre FRP panel type sectional GRP fibreglass water tank is proposed which will collect water from the roof of the existing building to irrigate the market garden.

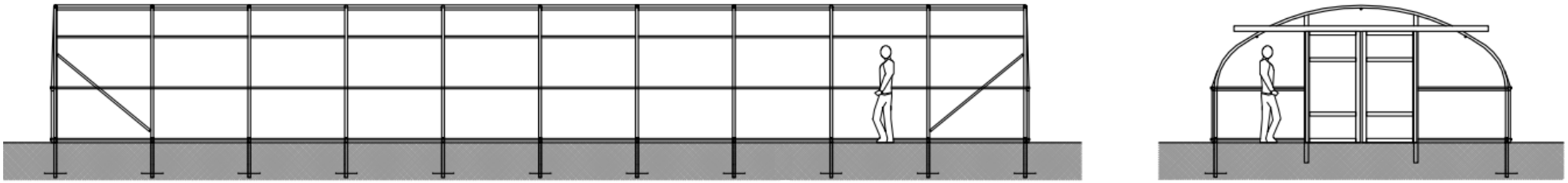


Figure 4 – Extracted from the submitted plans showing the general form of the proposal

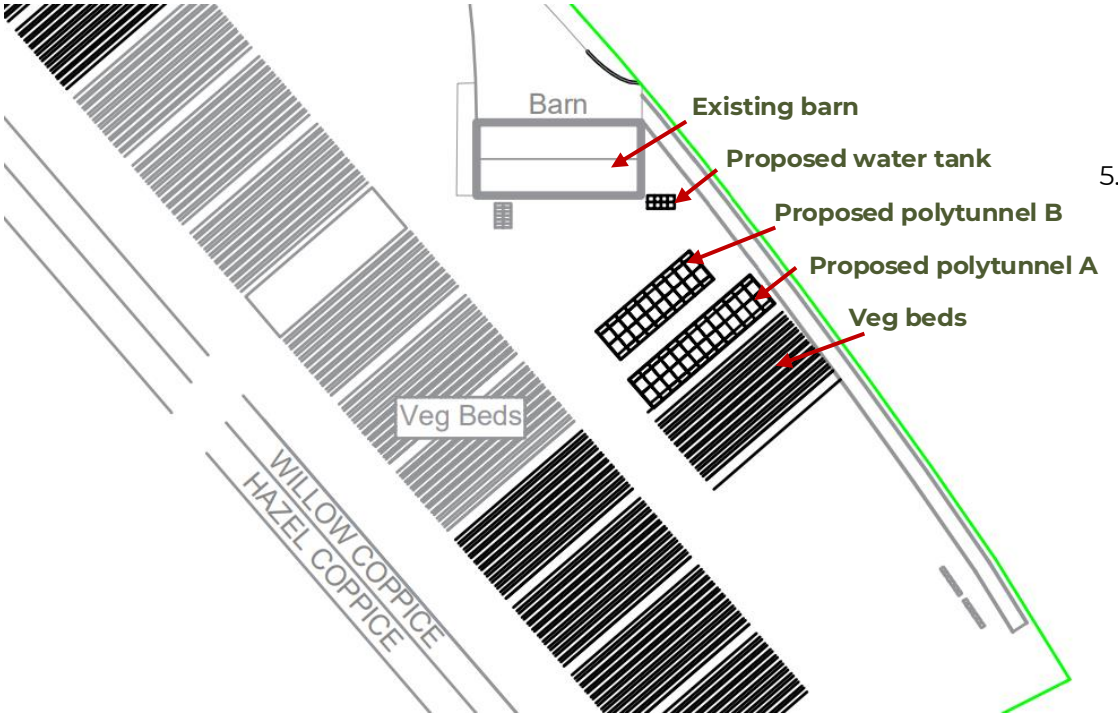


Figure 5 – Extracted from the submitted plans showing the proposed site layout

5.2 The proposed polytunnels will be of standard agricultural construction with Supertherm 200 micron covering a galvanised steel tubular framework.

5.3 The proposed polytunnels and water tank are a common feature in the countryside, notwithstanding this, the Applicant has sought to locate the proposed development in a nucleated position adjacent to the existing agricultural building to form a contiguous development form, rather than the proposed development resulting in a dispersed development. Of additional advantage is that the proposed site is situated in a discrete field corner, bordered by mature vegetation and over the crest of the local topography which will mitigate landscape impact.

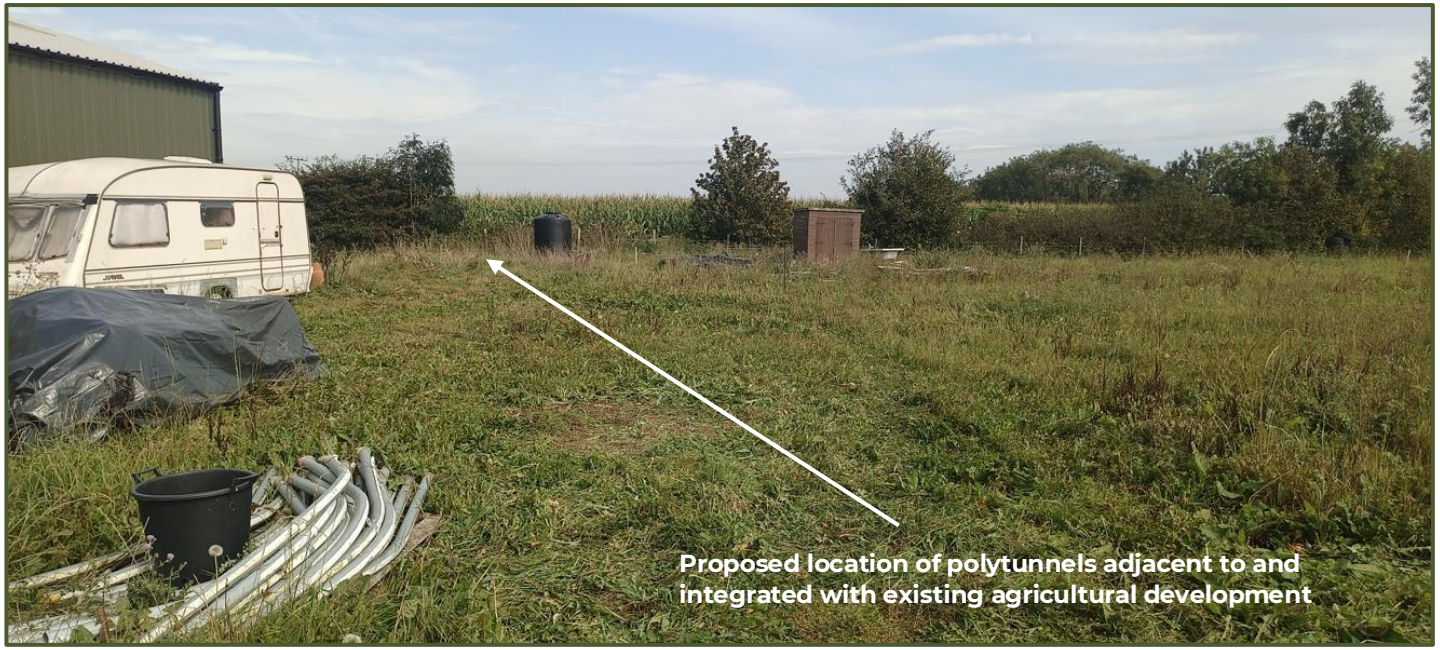


Figure 6 – The proposed polytunnels and water tank will be situated in a nucleated position adjacent to the existing agricultural building.



Figure 7 – As viewed from the highway, the proposed polytunnels will be situated behind the existing agricultural building, which itself is well integrated into the landscape thus mitigating any impact upon public views.

6.0 Planning context and policy considerations

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, in order to assess the acceptability of this proposal, it is necessary to assess it against the adopted development plan.

6.2 It is also necessary to consider any material considerations relevant to the development proposal, such as national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the national planning guidance contained within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), as well as any locally adopted supplementary planning guidance (SPG) and documents (SPD).

6.3 The development plan comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015).

6.4 In terms of immediately identifiable constraints, the site is situated within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within the Open Countryside. With the exception of these constraints, which will be considered further below, the proposed development is not encumbered by any proximate SACs, SSSIs or Heritage Assets. Furthermore the site is located within Flood Zone 1 (clear) on the Environment Agency Flood Risk Map for Planning. As the proposed development is not anticipated to result in increased traffic volume or impact upon the highway network, transport constraints have not been considered.

6.5 **Core Policy 34 (Additional Employment Land) clause ii** supports employment development in the open countryside where it constitutes *"sustainable farming and food production through allowing development required to adapt to modern agricultural practices and diversification"* where it is *"consistent in scale with its location, do not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surround area or detract from residential amenity."*

6.6 Further to this, **Paragraph 84** of the NPPF seeks to enable:

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

6.7 The proposed development seeks to facilitate the further growth of a now established agricultural enterprise which is demonstrable in its viability through its ability to already provide a full-time income to the Applicant from its current client base of 80 local customers. The proposal is therefore wholly concordant with the Local Plan's support for modern agricultural practice.

6.8 Furthermore, as the proposal is easily considered '*reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture*,' and the unit on which it is located is greater than 5ha, the proposed development could as an alternative be achieved under Schedule 2 Part 6 of the General Permitted Development Order. As per the Samuel Smith case[1] (et al) this is a realistic Fall-Back prospect and an important material consideration.

6.9 **Core Policy 51 (Landscape)** seeks to ensure that development within AONBs will conserve and enhance the special qualities of the area. This requirement is reflected at Paragraph 176 of the NPPF which attaches *'Great Weight'* to the need to conserve and enhance the landscape.

6.10 The proposed development is wholly agricultural in character and will be located in a discrete position closely associated with the existing agricultural building, bordered by existing mature boundary features and concordant with the scale of the enterprise. Accordingly there will clearly be no adverse harm to the open countryside as the development, should it be visible, does not constitute an unexpected occurrence in the countryside. Furthermore it is also the case that polytunnels are an easily reversible development – as soon as they are no longer required by the enterprise they can be removed from the land.

6.11 **Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping)** requires a high standard of design in all new developments which creates a strong sense of place, a policy which is also reflected at **Paragraph 130** of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.12 The proposed polytunnels are of standard agricultural design and will be commensurate with the scale of the enterprise.

[1] Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2009]

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

7.1 The proposed development at Bondswood Farm seeks to provide for two polytunnels together with an irrigation system to facilitate the growth of a now well-established agricultural operation.

7.2 The proposed use of the poly-tunnels is unequivocally agricultural. The polytunnels are considered to be reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture in that they protect growing crops from inclement weather and pests, expand the growing season, and provide for a controlled growing environment. This in turn provides for more surety of income and regularity of supply.

7.3 The proposed water tanks will provide a sustainable source of irrigation to the agricultural operations through the collection of rainwater to support the growing crops in the polytunnels which will reduce the need to rely on a mains water supply.

7.4 The proposals are situated adjacent to existing agricultural development with which they are fully integrated. As a result there will be no visual detriment to the landscape or dispersal of development across the site.

7.5 The proposed development complies with all policy as described. Further to this, and perhaps more fundamentally, the development provides residents in the local area with a very easily accessible supply of affordable, nourishing, proper food. For this reason alone the proposal should be lauded, and with its clear policy concordance, we look forward to a positive determination without delay.



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