

Location **Land North Of Totteridge Academy Barnet Lane London N20 8AZ**

Reference: **19/6686/FUL** Received: 18th December 2019
Accepted: 23rd December 2019

Ward: Totteridge Expiry 23rd March 2020

Applicant: c/o agent

Proposal: Change of use of land to be used as a City Farm with educational farming.
Erection of animal shelter, raised planters, chicken coops, beehives,
introduction of new paths and pedestrian access and associated alterations
to landscaping.

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

AND the Committee grants delegated authority to the Service Director – Planning and Building Control or Head of Strategic Planning to make any minor alterations, additions or deletions to the recommended conditions/obligations or reasons for refusal as set out in this report and addendum provided this authority shall be exercised after consultation with the Chairman (or in his absence the Vice- Chairman) of the Committee (who may request that such alterations, additions or deletions be first approved by the Committee)

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan 1003_01.1.1B; Existing Site Plan 1003_01.1.2B; Existing Sections 1003_02.1.1; Proposed Site Plan 1003_01.2.1F (Rec'd 23 June 2020); Proposed Sections 1003_02.2.1F (Rec'd 23.06.2020); Proposed Animal Shelter 1003_01.2.5 E (Rec'd 05.06.2020), Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Amended Farm Management Plan (Rec'd 5 May 2020); Foul & Surface Water Drainage Strategy; Tree Survey, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal; Additional Supporting Information(Rec'd 10 February 2020) .

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning and so as to ensure that the development is carried out fully in accordance with the plans as assessed in accordance with Policies CS NPPF and CS1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy DPD (adopted September 2012) and Policy DM01 of the Local Plan Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012).

- 2 This development must be begun within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 3 a) Prior to the installation of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the building(s) and hard surfaced areas, including internal paths, access ways and the yard area hereby approved, details shall be provided and submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the materials as approved under this condition.

Reason: To safeguard the character and visual amenities of the site and wider area and to ensure that the building is constructed in accordance with Policies CS NPPF and CS1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012), Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and Policies 1.1, 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 of the London Plan 2016.

- 4 The site shall be used for educational farming (sui generis) and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) or any other use permitted under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise control of the type of use within the category in order to safeguard the amenities of the area.

- 5 The use hereby permitted shall be used only by pupils, teachers/support staff, farm workers, local community volunteers and others explicitly listed within the Farm Management Plan (received 5/5/2020).

The maximum number of pupils, support staff and volunteers permitted on site at any one time shall be 35 people provided always that the maximum number of pupils is no more than 30 children.

There shall be no more than 40 people on site at any one time (including farm workers, pupils, volunteers, pupil support staff and all other visitors).

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise control of the type of use within the category in order to safeguard the Green Belt and amenities of the area and nearby residents, in accordance with Policy DM01 and DM04 of the Local Plan Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012).

- 6 The site shall not be open to pupils, staff and all other visitors before 8am or after 6pm Mondays to Fridays, before 9am and 5pm Saturdays, and before 10am and after 2pm on Sundays and Bank Holiday.

No deliveries, works by external contractors or use of power tools shall be carried out before 8am or after 6pm Mondays to Fridays, before 8 am and after 2pm on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To ensure that the use does not prejudice the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policies DM04 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and 7.15 of the London Plan 2016.

- 7 The animal stocking levels of the development hereby permitted are critical for animal welfare and to maintaining the quality and vibrancy of the grassland that is a characteristic of the area. At all times the development hereby permitted will:

(a) prioritise animal welfare and landscape quality over any educational or commercial needs. Using best farming practices and guidance available, the number of Livestock Units (LSU) shall not exceed that which the land designated for grazing is capable of supporting; and

(b) The development hereby permitted will manage all areas designated for grazing in such a way as to preserve the grass sward and prevent excessive poaching. Where there is more than 10% of ground damaged, all grazing shall cease and the areas restored. Grazing can then resume but at a lower level in order to prevent a reoccurrence of the damage; and

(c) A breach of this condition will be when, for x 2 consecutive months livestock have cause more than 10% of livestock areas to be poached (damaged) or over grazed. This condition will apply for the duration of the operation of the proposal.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to ensure the health and wellbeing of the livestock and quality of landscape and grasslands that are an important feature of this area of Barnet, in accordance with Policy DM01, DM04 and DM16 of the Local Plan Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), and policies 5.11 and 7.19 of the London Plan (2016).

8 No sheep dipping shall be undertaken on any part of the site.

Reason: To ensure that the development meets the objectives of development plan policy biodiversity in accordance with policies DM01 and DM16 of the Barnet Local Plan, Policies CS5 and CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012), and Policies 7.19 and 7.21 of the London Plan (2016).

9 No external lighting shall be installed prior to details of any proposed lighting being submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such lighting must be designed to minimise impacts on bats (as well as other nocturnal fauna) and their insect food and the character and appearance of the green belt. All exterior lighting should follow the guidance of the Bat Conservation Trust. Current (June 2014) advice is at <http://www.bats.org.uk/>.

Reason: To preserve character and appearance of the green belt and safeguard protected species and nature conservation in accordance with Policy DM15 and DM16 of the Barnet Local Plan, Policies CS5 and CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012).

10 a) A scheme of hard and soft landscaping, including details of existing trees to be retained and size, species, planting heights, densities and positions of any soft landscaping, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of the hereby approved development.

b) All work comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be carried out before the end of the first planting and seeding season following occupation of any part of the buildings or completion of the development, whichever is sooner, or commencement of the use.

c) Any existing tree shown to be retained or trees or shrubs to be planted as part of the approved landscaping scheme which are removed, die, become severely damaged or diseased within five years of the completion of development shall be replaced with trees or shrubs of appropriate size and species in the next planting season.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with Policies CS5 and CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy DPD (adopted September 2012), Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (adopted October 2016) and 7.21 of the London Plan 2016.

11 a) No site works (including any temporary enabling works, site clearance and demolition) or development shall take place until details of temporary tree protection have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) No site works (including any temporary enabling works, site clearance and demolition) or development shall take place until the scheme of temporary tree protection as approved under this condition has been erected around existing trees on site. This protection shall remain in position until after the development works are completed and no material or soil shall be stored within these fenced areas at any time.

Reason: To safeguard the health of existing tree(s) which represent an important amenity feature in accordance with Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), Policies CS5 and CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012) and Policy 7.21 of the London Plan 2015.

12 a) Prior to the commencement of the hereby approved development, details of a Landscape Management Plan and an Ecological Management Plan in accordance with BS 42020: 2013 for all areas for a minimum period of 25 years shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) The Landscape Management Plan shall include details of long term design objectives, management responsibilities, maintenance schedules and replacement planting provisions for existing retained trees and any new soft landscaping to be planted as part of the approved landscaping scheme.

c) The approved Landscape Management Plan and Ecological Management Plan shall be implemented in full in accordance with details approved under this condition.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), Policies CS5 and CS7 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012) and Policy 7.21 of the London Plan 2016.

13 a) Notwithstanding the details already submitted, the site shall not be brought into use until details of the site enclosures and proposed fencing both around and within the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) The development shall be implemented in accordance with the details approved as part of this condition before first occupation or the use is commenced and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not prejudice the character and appearance of the green belt and the locality and/or the amenities of occupiers of adjoining land and to confine access to the permitted points in the interest of the flow of traffic and conditions of general safety on the adjoining highway in accordance with Policies DM01, DM03, DM17 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), and Policies CS NPPF and CS1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012).

- 14 Prior to the commencement of the hereby approved development, details of cycle parking including the type of stands, gaps between stands, location and type of cycle store proposed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Authority. Thereafter, before the development hereby permitted is occupied, 3 (long stay) and 7 (short stay) cycle parking spaces in accordance with the London Plan Cycle Parking Standards and London Cycle Design Standards shall be provided and shall not be used for any purpose other than parking of vehicles in connection with the approved development.

Reason: To ensure that adequate and satisfactory provision is made for the parking of bicycles in the interests of pedestrian and highway safety and the free flow of traffic in accordance with London Borough of Barnet's Local Plan Policy CS9 of Core Strategy (Adopted) September 2012 and Policy DM17 of Development Management Policies (Adopted) September 2012.

- 15 Before this development is commenced, details of the pedestrian footpath access in relation to adjoining land including any changes in the levels of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with such details as approved.

Reason:

To safeguard the character and visual amenities of the site, the wider area and the green belt and is carried out at suitable levels in relation to the adjoining land having regard to drainage, gradient of access and the health of any trees on the site, in accordance with Policies CS NPPF and CS1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012), Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and Policies 1.1, 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 of the London Plan 2016.

- 16 No construction work resulting from the planning permission shall be carried out on the premises at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays, before 8.00 am or after 1.00 pm on Saturdays, or before 8.00 am or after 6.00pm on other days unless previously approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To ensure that the proposed development does not prejudice the amenities of occupiers of adjoining residential properties.

- 17 Prior to the installation of the chicken coop, raised planters and internal fencing and gates, the details shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To safeguard the character and visual amenities of the site, wider area and the green belt to ensure that the structures are constructed in accordance with Policies CS NPPF and CS1 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2012), Policy DM01 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and Policies 1.1, 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 of the London Plan 2016.

- 18 There shall be no lighting of bonfires at any time on any part of the site unless prior approval is obtained in writing from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the amenities of nearby residential properties and the school are protected from poor air quality and odours in accordance with Policy DM04 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012), the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, and Policy 5.3 of the London Plan 2015.

- 19 The use hereby permitted shall only hold a maximum of x6 Corporate Volunteer Days annually whereby a maximum of 35 volunteers may be permitted on site at any one time and x4 Fun Days annually open to the general public whereby a maximum of 70 people can attend at any one time within the approved opening hours.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain adequate control over the proposed use in this green belt location and to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policies DM04 and DM15 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and 7.15 and 7.16 of the London Plan 2016.

- 20 The use hereby permitted shall not be open to the general public or businesses for the selling of produce, before 4pm or after 6pm on weekdays, or before 9am or after 5 pm on Saturdays and 10am or after 2pm on Sundays and no goods other than those cultivated on the site shall be sold on the site unless prior approval is obtained in writing from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain adequate control over the proposed use in this green belt location and to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policies DM04 and DM15 of the Development Management Policies DPD (adopted September 2012) and 7.15 and 7.16 of the London Plan 2016.

Informative(s):

- 1 In accordance with paragraphs 38-57 of the NPPF, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals, focused on

solutions. The LPA has produced planning policies and written guidance to assist applicants when submitting applications. These are all available on the Council's website. A pre-application advice service is also offered and the Applicant engaged with this prior to the submissions of this application. The LPA has negotiated with the applicant/agent where necessary during the application process to ensure that the proposed development is in accordance with the Development Plan.

- 2 Tree and shrub species selected for landscaping/replacement planting provide long term resilience to pest, diseases and climate change. The diverse range of species and variety will help prevent rapid spread of any disease. In addition to this, all trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants must adhere to basic bio-security measures to prevent accidental release of pest and diseases and must follow the guidelines below.
"An overarching recommendation is to follow BS 8545: Trees: From Nursery to independence in the Landscape. Recommendations and that in the interest of Bio-security, trees should not be imported directly from European suppliers and planted straight into the field but spend a full growing season in a British nursery to ensure plant health and non-infection by foreign pests or disease. This is the appropriate measure to address the introduction of diseases such as Oak Processionary Moth and Chalara of Ash. All trees to be planted must have been held in quarantine."
- 3 In complying with the contaminated land condition parts 1 and 2, reference should be made at all stages to appropriate current guidance and codes of practice. This would include:
 - 1) The Environment Agency CLR & SR Guidance documents (including CLR11 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination');
 - 2) National Planning Policy Framework (2012) / National Planning Practice Guidance (2014);
 - 3) BS10175:2011 - Investigation of potentially contaminated sites - Code of Practice;
 - 4) Guidance for the safe development of housing on land affected by contamination, (2008) by NHBC, the EA and CIEH;
 - 5) CIRIA report C665 - Assessing risks posed by hazardous ground gases to buildings;
 - 6) CIRIA report C733 - Asbestos in soil and made ground: a guide to understanding and managing risks.Please note that in addition to the above, consultants should refer to the most relevant and up to date guidance and codes of practice if not already listed in the above list.
- 4 Refuse collection point should be located at a ground floor level and within 10m of the refuse vehicle parking bay. Levelled access should be provided for the refuse collection personnel to collect the bins. The refuse collection personnel are not expected to push the bins on an inclined surface to safeguard their Health and Safety requirements. If the refuse vehicle is expected to travel over an unadopted road then the applicant will be expected to sign a Waiver of Liability and Indemnity Agreement indemnifying the Council. Alternatively, the dustbins will need to be brought to the edge of the refuse vehicle parking bay on day of collection. The applicant is advised that the Council's refuse collection department is consulted to agree a refuse collection arrangement.
- 5 As a result of development and construction activities is a major cause of concern to the Council. Construction traffic is deemed to be "extraordinary traffic" for the purposes of Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980. During the course of the

development, a far greater volume of construction traffic will be traversing the public highway and this considerably shortens the lifespan of the affected highway.

To minimise risks and damage to public highway, it is now a requirement as part of any new development to undertake a Highway Condition Survey of the surrounding public highway to the development to record the state of the highway prior to commencement of any development works. The condition of the public highway shall be recorded including a photographic survey prior to commencement of any works within the development. During the course of the development construction, the applicant will be held responsible for any consequential damage to the public highway due to site operations and these photographs will assist in establishing the basis of damage to the public highway. A bond will be sought to cover potential damage resulting from the development which will be equivalent to the cost of highway works fronting the development. To arrange a joint highway condition survey, please contact the Highways Development Control / Network Management Team on 020 8359 3555 or by e-mail highways.development@barnet.gov.uk or nrswa@barnet.gov.uk at least 10 days prior to commencement of the development works.

Please note existing public highways shall not be used as sites for stock piling and storing plant, vehicles, materials or equipment without an appropriate licence. Any damage to the paved surfaces, verges, surface water drains or street furniture shall be made good as directed by the Authority. The Applicant shall be liable for the cost of reinstatement if damage has been caused to highways. On completion of the works, the highway shall be cleared of all surplus materials, washed and left in a clean and tidy condition.

- 6 The surface of the highway and any gullies or drains nearby must be protected with plastic sheeting. Residue must never be washed into nearby gullies or drains. During the development works, any gullies or drains adjacent to the building site must be maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Highways Authority. If any gully is damaged or blocked, the applicant will be liable for all costs incurred. The Applicant shall ensure that all watercourses, drains, ditches, etc. are kept clear of any spoil, mud, slurry or other material likely to impede the free flow of water therein
- 7 Dollis Brook (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) is located 100m to the north of the site boundary. The river feeds into the Brent Reservoir, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There is potential for Dollis Brook to be affected by storage, deposition of material, run off etc particularly when the agricultural outbuilding is erected. Therefore, it is important that pollution of the brook is avoided by adhering to CIRIA guidance.
- 8 The applicant states that 'Suitable habitat for reptiles exists immediately north of the site and within small areas of longer grass along the peripheries of the site. The area to be cleared to make way for the associated buildings and vegetable patches is currently low grazed semi-improved grassland of reduced value for reptiles' Therefore, a precautionary phased clearance is recommended where vegetation is cleared in the direction of suitable neighbouring habitat that is to be retained after 10.00hrs on a warm day.
- 9 The hedge with trees on the perimeter of the site is proposed to be retained, however, if the scattered scrub is to be removed this area may contain nesting birds between

1st March and 31st August inclusive. Therefore, if any removal is proposed to be undertaken in the spring and summer months, the site should be subject to a pre-site clearance check for nesting birds.

- 10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 aims to achieve sustainable development and places obligations on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity as required by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. The recommendations provided in Section 5.11 of the PEA report are considered sufficient to provide this required enhancement and should be included within the EMP.

This application has been called to Committee by Councillor Richard Cornelius on the grounds that this is such a large development in a green belt/metropolitan open land setting that the full ramifications should be explored by the committee so that the pros and cons can be examined publicly.

Officer's Assessment

1. Site Description

The application site comprises an area of open grassland/field (approximately 6 acres) located to the north of the secondary school The Totteridge Academy (TTA), on the western side of Barnet Lane. The land slopes gently down to the north and west. Currently on site are found some beehives, planting beds prepared for cultivation and open grassland. Recently the space has also been used in conjunction with the school as an outdoor space to teach a limited number of pupils the 'GROW' curriculum which engages pupils with nature, teaching nutrition and well-being in an agricultural/farming setting. This element of the use is not currently taking place on the site. Crops however, are currently being grown and sold on the site.

Hedgerow and a palisade fence enclose the site. Open grassland and agricultural fields bound it except for the southern boundary where it adjoins the school and its associated buildings. A substantial hedgerow containing a number of mature trees is found on the southern boundary, which partly screens the school buildings. The other boundaries are also lined by trees and hedges, with the exception of the northern boundary where the palisade fence separates the open field. The site is accessed through the school car park via a single access point, which is secured by a metal gate located in the south eastern corner of the site.

The site falls within designated Green Belt Land and within Article 4 (6) land which removes agricultural permitted development rights. To the north of the site beyond the adjoining field is found a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and a metropolitan walk (The London Loop and the Dollis Valley Green Walk). A public footpath is also found to the west of the site, which provides a linking footpath. Although the site is not set within a Conservation Area itself, to the south of the site, adjoining the school boundary is found the Totteridge Conservation Area.

The site is located within a Flood Zone 1 thus having a low probability of flooding.

2. Relevant Site History

Reference: B/04262/10

Address: The Ravenscroft School, Barnet Lane, London, N20 8AZ

Decision: Approved Subject to conditions

Decision Date: 19th January 2011

Description: Use of field to the north of the site (area 22723sq.m) as school playing field involving levelling for sports use, new pedestrian and vehicular access and the erection of a new boundary fence. Use of existing school playing field (area 22775sq.m) as public open space.

Reference: B/00011/11

Address: The Ravenscroft School, Barnet Lane, London, N20 8AZ

Decision: Environmental Statement not Required

Decision Date: 7th January 2011

Description: Environmental impact assessment screening opinion

Reference: B/03511/11

Address: The Ravenscroft School, Barnet Lane, London, N20 8AZ

Decision: Approved

Decision Date: 14th March 2012

Description: Submission of details of conditions 3 (Levels), 5 (Fencing & enclosures), 7 (Landscaping-Details), 10 (Services in relation to trees), 12 (Method statement-trees), 13 (Trees- protective fencing), 15 (External lighting), 16 (Pedestrian & vehicular accesses), 17 (Pedestrian & vehicular access bridge) and 21 (Bat surveys) pursuant to planning permission B/04262/10 dated 19/1/11.

Reference: B/04446/12

Address: The Ravenscroft School, Barnet Lane, London, N20 8AZ

Decision: Approved

Decision Date: 14th March 2012

Description: Submission of details of Condition No.18 (Construction Management Plan) pursuant to planning permission Ref: B/04262/10 dated: 19/1/2011.

There have also been a number of applications relating to the school including extensions to buildings and other works within the school grounds. Of direct relevance includes:

Reference: 19/5037/FUL

Address: Totteridge Academy, Barnet Lane, N20, 8AZ

Decision: Approved subject to conditions

Decision Date: 16th December 2019

Description: Conversion of the existing outdoor sports facility into a MUGA (multi use games area) with new access ramps and steps to sports hall entrance. Replacement of existing fencing and installation of new pedestrian gates. Provision of cycle parking and 6x10m high floodlighting to MUGA.

A recent application within the borough which is also considered of relevance includes:

Reference: 19/0581/RCU

Address: Sweet Tree Fields Marsh Lane, London NW7 4EY

Decision: Approved subject to conditions

Decision Date: 4th November 2019

Description: Use of agricultural land for care farming with retention of ancillary buildings, structures, pathways and access road.

3. Proposal

During the course of the application the proposal has been amended, with the number of proposed buildings reduced on the site. This included two polytunnels, a Dutch Greenhouse and a packing shed which included a storage room and WC and external hand washing area. The pedestrian access has also been altered.

The amended proposal comprises:

- Change of use of the land to be used as a City Farm with educational farming.
- Erection of an open sided livestock shelter and livestock enclosure to the western part of the site.
- Area of x 12 raised planters and x2 chicken coops (moveable), enclosed by fencing.
- An orchard x 20 trees.
- X 1 Pond to eastern part of site.
- X 4 Beehives, enclosed in fencing to the north east of the site (two of these Beehives plus fencing currently exist on site).
- x 16 cultivation beds adjacent the northern boundary and grassland areas.
- Introduction of new paths and yard area.
- A new pedestrian access with the school on to the southern boundary, some 26 metres west of the schools' Sports Hall.
- associated alterations to landscaping including planting of hedges on the northern and western boundaries, alongside planting some hedges within the site.
- The existing school car parking located to the south of the site would be used by visitors to the site.

The details provided within the Farm Management Plan (FMP) and additional supporting information indicates that it is proposed to create a working farm on the site that will grow organic produce and raise animals. It is intended to supply The Totteridge Academy (TTA) and other local schools with subsidised organic vegetables, as well as the local community and businesses. Additionally, it is intended to provide educational farming sessions for children as part of the 'Grow' curriculum, which is based on food, farming and wellbeing. This educational programme aims to engage young people with nature, through teaching the values of nutrition and well-being in an immersive agricultural setting. It is also proposed to extend the educational element to the wider Barnet community through offering a series of educational workshops such as beekeeping, mushroom growing, forest school sessions, family fun days and flower arranging, outside of school hours. Community volunteering days to learn about food growing and regenerative farming are also proposed, as well as supported volunteering sessions for adults with additional support needs. A maximum of six Corporate Volunteering days a year are also planned.

In the future it is intended to extend the use to include attendees including referrals from special needs schools, families, Barnet Social Services, third party referrals and those discharged from hospitals.

The submitted FMP details that visitors to the site would include children from the local primary and secondary schools. These sessions would run from 9am to 4pm for up to 30 children at a time. These groups would be supported by up to 5 teachers, support workers and/or facilitators. Further supporting information cites that school farming sessions had already been running twice a week for twelve weeks of the year.

A main volunteering day would take place on a Wednesday between 10am and 4pm, although the site would also be accessible to the community outside of normal school opening hours. Up to 25 adult volunteers would be on site assisting with daily farm tasks. The corporate volunteer groups would include up to 35 adults a year.

In terms of staffing levels the FMP states that a full-time farm manager and seasonal farm assistant would be present on the site. Other professionals including invited guests supporting and operation and maintenance of the farm and the operation of Grow would also be present.

The proposal will be for a maximum of 45 people on site although it is hoped to extend their school farming sessions to accommodate up to 40 young people with 5 adults 6 days a week (9am-5pm).

The hours of use proposed are: 8am-6pm Mondays to Fridays, 9am- 5pm Saturdays and 10am-5pm Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The animal inventory detailed in the FMP stipulates an indicative list of animals and stock numbers as follows:

- 20 sheep;
- 8 goats;
- 40 chickens;
- 4 ducks.

4. Public Consultation

Consultation letters were initially sent to 2 neighbouring properties.

The application was advertised in the press and on site.

652 responses have been received, comprising 649 letters in support, x3 letters in support but with additional comments.

The comments can be summarised as follows: -

- An excellent idea and local initiative, a good use of land, which use to be farmed, environmentally minded, progressive and innovative and will compliment school.
- Will promote confidence and provide fun practical hands on experience and develop life skills (such as teamwork, patience, caring, cost sharing and sometimes disappointment).
- Will improve the learning opportunities for young people. Teaching farming skills, how to connect to /value their environment, how to grow and care for their own food, animal husbandry, wellbeing and how to make healthy choices. Important in global pandemic and obesity crisis.
- Will bring life to land, teaching about land justice, food chains, our wildlife, climate issues, care for our planet, ecological growth, pollution prevention and will reduce/eradicate littering natural environment.
- May inspire children into farming career.

- Schools sometimes miss the "learning of real life" part of education, will teach skills leading to more sustainable and fulfilling life.
- Learning food production can help reduce food insecurity during economic uncertainty.
- Good use of fallow land, will allow us to enjoy fresh ethical, reasonably priced organic produce. People already benefitting from purchasing produce from farm/farm shop.
- Helped provide food packages during lockdown and supports local families in need with food parcels and via food banks.
- Will allow further support of other local produce.
- GROW has been supplying the Barnet Foodshare Coop since it has started producing for business.
- Now UK has left European Union our agricultural sustainability needs developing to ensure UK agricultural dependency.
- Existing small farms in Barnet are private/commercial not open to public.
- Will make a positive impact and a massive benefit/asset to the community. A community hub will bring school and the local community together, including older community. Fulfills so much public good/ good example of excellent community engagement and volunteering benefitting many.
- Brownies and Scouts could use the facilities for badge work and learning life skills.
- Should be extended to other schools, to other London Boroughs and nationwide.
- As Inner London Boroughs can create such learning experiences so should outer London Boroughs.
- Will enrich lives, good for peoples mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Similar schemes have provided an excellent source of education, wellbeing and positive impact on community.
- Will benefit local economic development, employment benefits and culture of Barnet.
- Project has community's full support.
- Good for people without gardens to have access to city farm nearby, it provides variety of activities for children in holidays.
- An essential, exciting and necessary project for young people in Barnet.
- Students have already enjoyed 'GROW' project. Changed my sons' life, makes him excited to go to school. Will be traumatic if taken away from children.
- Provides an alternative for less academic children.
- Will help daughter feel less anxious about starting a new school.
- Will get young people off the streets, provide a quiet and safe place for younger generation
- need more places for children in Barnet.
- Therapeutic for children with learning difficulties, mental health and special needs. Improves well-being, self-esteem and social interactions. Will benefit pupils from deprived backgrounds.
- the Forest School can include students educated at home to mindful exercises and yoga.
- Interested in involving pupils from their special needs school.
- An outside interest children can add to their CV.
- Government cuts have destroyed so much that would help kids we need this sort of initiative.
- Will save the council money by increasing respect for spaces people use.
- The proposed classroom area can only be positive for Barnet as a whole.
- Welcoming and inclusive.
- Farm is thriving, well kept, managed and organised and interesting project for walkers to view.
- Only operates during the day therefore there will be no noise in the evening.
- Like seeing the chickens would be amazing to have full range of animals.
- Grow has gone from strength to strength within the community with their popular open days and volunteering events.

- If Barnet Council supports scheme will show that it is a progressive, sustainable and caring borough. Barnet Council should be partnering with GROW
- Will enhance biodiversity, encourages nature pathways and increase the pollinators population.
- Land is not overlooked.
- Good use of green belt land, good design for green belt the building is low, simple, enhances and fits into environment, maintains openness. Will not have a negative impact on Green Belt.
- What is alternative. Leave land unused or build concrete blocks/Costas. Good way of keeping open space rather than building more homes. Will secure land from developers who build unaffordable housing.
- Green belt surrounding Dollis valley deserve such ecological initiatives.
- Should look to other boroughs and their innovative use of green belt.
- The school field was previously under used and there are other playing fields on site.
- Will not cause any pollution (noise/light)
- Good site, on edge of town supporting countryside hidden from view.
- Has improved natural surveillance of neighbouring footpaths and safety of walkers.
- TTA has turned itself around to a pillar of the community. Land should be for the benefit of community rather than rich neighbours.
- In line with borough plans to create a regional park in the surrounding area.
- A crowd funded project of great relevance to young and whole community.

Three further representations were also received which support the application as it brings people closer to nature but also commented:

- Scheme is acceptable providing there is no building on green belt land or provides the first step for a future change of use such as flats. - A covenant is suggested that states that the land can only be used for farming or returned to former use.

The Barnet Society supports the application commenting that it is imaginative & Assemble's design response straightforward. A city farm open to the public would add to the area's environmental assets, should be endorsed by the Council's Chipping Barnet Community Plan.

- Additional benefits not listed in the Planning Statement are cited and in summary include:
- revitalisation of a historic agricultural landscape;
 - an opportunity to mitigate the visual intrusiveness & physical inconvenience to walkers of the present boundary fence.

They seek conditions however for any approval:

1. Reservations are raised regarding durability & visual appropriateness for roofing of black hemp fibre cladding.
2. The accessible paths referred to in the Planning Statement are not shown on plan. Given objections to those at Sweettree Farm, details of their routes & construction must be approved.
3. The poor drainage N & W boundaries is a serious deterrent to walkers who previously could use the higher land. The proposed 'sewer' to the Dollis Brook should be repositioned to run from the N-W corner of the site.
4. For the same reason, a financial contribution towards upgrading the public footpath along the western boundary should be required.
5. The proposed willow hedge would be an attractive way of both disguising the present institutional fence and absorbing some of the surface water run-off.

Representations from External Consultees

A number of external consultations have taken place and the responses are summarised below.

Sports England

The Sports Council commented that the proposed development does not fall within either their statutory remit, or non-statutory remit and therefore has not provided a detailed response in this case. It does direct the council to general advice to aid the assessment of this application. If the proposal involves the loss of any sports facility then full consideration should be given to whether the proposal meets Par. 97 of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is in accordance with local policies to protect social infrastructure and any approved Playing Pitch Strategy or Built Sports Facility Strategy that the local authority has in place.

Environmental Agency

The Environmental Agency commented that a formal consultation is not necessary for this proposal, as the red line boundary is outside the 20 metres of the Dollis Brook main river, and well away from fluvial Flood Zones 2/3.

London Wildlife Trust/Barnet Wildlife Trust

No comments have been received to date.

Representations from Internal Consultees

Environment Health

Raise no objection subject to conditions. The following comments are made. As a major application an assessment under the Mayor's London Plan for its air quality impacts may be required; the existing fields are being changed to a proposed farm so there will be a net increase in the air pollution. The site is a considerable distance from existing residential. The main issues to assess are air quality, noise impact, contaminated land and odour issues. Other issues not covered by Environmental Health include water contamination and waste storage and it is advised to consult with the Environment Agency and Thames Water with regards to any licences required for the site in terms of water discharge and waste management.

Noise - the impact is likely to be limited due to the relatively high distance to nearest residential, small number of farmstock and proposed site usage. However, details should be submitted of any plant/generators to be installed, in order to assess the impact. Otherwise two noise of plant conditions are proposed. Detail of any proposed heating to buildings are also required.

Air quality - it is suggested that if the existing car park is improved to include electric car charging in line with highways current standards and the planting is increased on site which would be beneficial. An air quality neutral report condition is recommended due to the size of this development and would advise that this should help alleviate concerns about the usage of green belt.

Construction - the construction would be likely to be limited on site. Conditions are proposed that cover construction impacts for air and noise.

Details of heating of the farm building have not been provided. The burning of any solid fuel is strictly controlled as Barnet is a smoke free zone. A condition is proposed if any boilers are to be installed.

Contaminated land - historical land use appears to be fields with no buildings or infills to date. Therefore, there is no need for a contaminated land survey as per condition.

Odour - due to the distance of this site from nearest residential there is unlikely to be any odour concerns. The general government DEFRA guidance available on farm maintenance will cover these aspects.

Following the amendments to the scheme and further information, the requirement for an Air Quality Neutral Report was withdrawn. The reason included that there would be no heating on site, the car park is part of an existing development, visitors will be arriving on foot from the school, or in a bus/mini bus, the site will employ two people requiring fewer parking spaces and on site cycle provision would be provided. Further mitigation measures including boundary and on site planting, no heating and cycle stands. Furthermore it is considered that providing infrastructure for electric vehicles at the existing school car park would be costly, it would be more beneficial to provide hard standing on the farm for electric vehicle provision. Also site is being provided for schools and will be good environment for students to access countryside, alongside being a charity concerned with well-being of community.

An additional condition banning bonfires was also recommended.

Policy Section

Made the following comments:

It is unclear if the use is solely agricultural and that it is actually part of the school albeit open to the community out of school hours. From the descriptions it will be ancillary to the school.

Whilst the NPPF states that agricultural use and buildings in the Green Belt are appropriate use, clarity is needed to be established as to the exact nature of this proposal and its purposes.

Additional comments include:-

- Questions if the Dutch Greenhouses will be artificially lit at night and if so whether there will be an impact on bats and other nocturnal animals.
- Given references to packing shed questions whether there an intention to have a commercial element to this school farm?
- Questions why the toilet isn't plumbed in and requests more information on the compostable toilet regarding impact on water table and close to residential properties
- Barnet Lane is a busy road and the transport assessment is very basic.
- Biodiversity improvements: bat boxes and nesting boxes mentioned, but other initiative required such as hedgehog houses. The wildflower meadow is mentioned in the application information but not shown on the plans. If this is meant to benefit the bees in the proposed beehive there needs to be an understanding of where would be best for the bees as bees do not forage immediately outside their hives.
- the land is identified as Public Open Space (POS) in Barnet's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2016-2026). It is not designated however as POS in the Local Plan.

Green Spaces Team

No comments received.

Property Services

No comments received.

In addition, the Lead Local Flood Authority was consulted and the Council's Highways, Ecology and Trees and Landscaping Officers were consulted. They consider the amended scheme to be acceptable subject to conditions. The report will detail their assessment separately.

5. Planning Considerations

5.1 Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

The determination of planning applications is made mindful of Central Government advice and the Local Plan for the area. It is recognised that Local Planning Authorities must determine applications in accordance with the statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against another.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 19 February 2019. This is a key part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, and to promote sustainable growth.

The NPPF states that 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people'. The NPPF retains a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This applies unless any adverse impacts of a development would 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits.

The Mayor's London Plan 2016

The London Development Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, and it sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2050. It forms part of the development plan for Greater London and is recognised in the NPPF as part of the development plan.

The London Plan provides a unified framework for strategies that are designed to ensure that all Londoners benefit from sustainable improvements to their quality of life.

The London Plan is currently under review. The current 2016 Plan is still the adopted Development Plan but the Draft London is a material consideration. The weight attached to the Draft Plan increases as the Plan progresses through the various stages of adoption. The Draft Plan is at an advanced stage as it is near publication subject to the Directions issued by the Secretary of State and therefore carries increasing weight. Applications should however continue to be determined in accordance with the adopted London Plan

Barnet's Local Plan (2012)

Barnet's Local Plan is made up of a suite of documents including the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Documents. Both were adopted in September 2012.

- Relevant Core Strategy Policies: CS NPPF, CS1, CS5, CS7, CS9, CS10, CS11, CS13
- Relevant Development Management Policies: DM01, DM02, DM03, DM04, DM13, DM15, DM16, DM17

The Council's approach to development as set out in Policy DM01 is to minimise the impact on the local environment and to ensure that occupiers of new developments as well as neighbouring occupiers enjoy a high standard of amenity. Policy DM01 states that all development should represent high quality design and should be designed to allow for adequate daylight, sunlight, privacy and outlook for adjoining occupiers. Policy DM02 states that where appropriate, development will be expected to demonstrate compliance to minimum amenity standards and make a positive contribution to the Borough. The development standards set out in Policy DM02 are regarded as key for Barnet to deliver the highest standards of urban design.

Barnet's Local Plan (Reg 18) 2020

Barnet's Local Plan-Reg 18 Preferred Approach was approved for consultation on 6th January 2020. The Reg 18 document sets out the Council's preferred policy approach together with draft development proposals for 67 sites. It is Barnet's emerging Local Plan. The Local Plan 2012 remains the statutory development plan for Barnet until such stage as the replacement plan is adopted and as such applications should continue to be determined in accordance with the 2012 Local Plan, while noting that account needs to be taken of emerging policies and draft site proposals.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2016-2026

Green Infrastructure - Supplementary Planning Document (October 2017)

Playing Pitch Strategy (2017)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (adopted October 2016)

5.2 Main issues for consideration

The main issues for consideration in this case are:

- Whether the use is appropriate for the Green Belt;
- Whether the proposal would result in the loss of public open space or playing fields
- Whether harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider locality;
- Whether harm would be caused to the living conditions of neighbouring residents;
- Whether harm would be caused to existing trees, landscaping and ecology;
- Whether harm would be caused to traffic and parking.
- Whether harm would be caused to the drainage of the site.

5.3 Assessment of proposals

Principle of Change of Use

The first issue for consideration is whether the proposal would result in a material change of use of the land. As noted in the planning history above, the application site previously formed part of a land swap, whereby existing playing fields to the west of the site were to be relocated to the application site, with the existing playing fields to be returned to public open space. Planning permission was granted under application B/04262/10, which enabled this land swap to take place. This permission included the application site to be used as a school

playing field, involving levelling for sports use, new pedestrian and vehicular access and the erection of a new boundary fence.

The boundary fence and new vehicular access have been provided however the field has not been levelled and no other works have been carried out. The Applicant has contended that although operational development elements of the permission have been implemented (construction of the fence and access) a material change of use in the land has not commenced, as the levelling has not taken place and the site is not suitable for sports playing fields in its current condition. The LPA sought a legal opinion over this issue, which supported this view. The opinion concluded that although the works that have been carried out may be sufficient to constitute material operations for the purpose of commencing the planning permission, the works would not in any event be likely to be sufficient to constitute a change of use. Therefore "the 2011 Permission has not been implemented so as to materially change the use of the site".

In terms of the proposed use the Applicant has stated that the site is to be used for agricultural purposes and as such would not involve development under the definition of development within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Therefore, planning permission for the use is not required. This view is supported the Applicant's legal opinion, which was sought during the life of the application.

Officers however do not support this view. It is considered that the proposal would result in a mixed use (Sui Generis use), given the proposed agricultural use of the land would be undertaken in conjunction with an educational use, through the teaching of the GROW curriculum to pupils and the activities to be provided to outside visitors. The educational use would not be ancillary to the agricultural use but a key element of the proposal. The LPA legal opinion also considered this issue and supported the view of officers that the proposal would result in a mixed agricultural and educational use (a Sui Generis Use). The LPA's Counsel commented that:

"the proposed educational activities are not agricultural tasks, and moreover, nor are those activities ancillary or incidental to the agricultural use of the site."

He continued that a general working farm would not have the consistent and frequent level of educational activity, also the number of pupils and visitors in regular attendance would be significantly different to an ordinary working farm. Also the pedestrian link both practically and visually affirms the site's connection to the school. Furthermore, it was considered that the educational activities were not ancillary or incidental to the agricultural use of the site, given the Applicant's primary purpose is to use the site to teach the GROW curriculum. Also the school lessons cannot be regarded as ordinarily incidental to normal farming activities on a regular working farm.

Given the above the following assessment is based on the proposal being considered a Sui Generis Use.

Whether harm would result to the Green Belt

The Sui Generis interpretation of the use is key when assessing Green Belt policy given the application site is wholly sited within the Green Belt.

Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) establishes the great importance government attaches to Green Belts, "the fundamental aim" of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The guidance indicates the

essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence and identifies five purposes:

- To check the uncontrolled sprawl of urban areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- To assist in the safeguarding of countryside from encroachment
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 141 states "... LPA's should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity. "

Paragraphs 143 - 144 advocates that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be granted planning permission except in very special circumstances. In considering planning applications, local authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 145 goes on to state that the construction of new buildings as being inappropriate in the Green Belt, with the exception (in part) of limited number of scenarios to this general approach. Paragraph 146 also comments that "certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it." It goes on to outline such exceptions.

London Plan policy 7.16 states that the strongest protection should be given to London's Green Belt, in accordance with national guidance. Inappropriate development should be refused, except in very special circumstances. Development will be supported if it is appropriate and helps secure the objectives of improving the Green Belt as set out in national guidance.

Local Plan Policies CS7, DM01, DM15 would apply to the proposal in particular Policy DM15 of the Development Management Policy DPD which aims to protect the Green Belt. Although the Policy was formulated before the revised NPPF the aims of the policy echo the provisions of the revised guidance. The policy states:

"ii Except in very special circumstances, the council will refuse any development in the Green Belt.... which is not compatible with their purposes and objectives and does not maintain their openness.

iii The construction of new buildings within the Green Belt, unless there are very special circumstances, will be inappropriate, except for the following purpose:

- a. Agriculture, horticulture and woodland;
- b. Nature conservation and wildlife use; or
- c. Essential facilities for appropriate uses will only be acceptable where they do not have an adverse impact on the openness of Green Belt or MOL...

The supporting text to the policy confirms that appropriate development in the Green Belt includes development for agriculture. It is important to consider that Barnet planning policy

and the Planning Policy Framework supports agricultural use at the site. This should be an important material consideration in determining the proposal.

In evaluating the scheme it is important to consider whether it would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As set out above, paragraph 145 identifies a number of exceptions where the construction of new buildings can be supported, which of relevance to this application includes:

a) buildings for agricultural and forestry;

b) the provision of appropriate facilities..... for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation.... as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

Although the Applicant has argued that the use is an agricultural use, in the LPA's opinion the proposal would not benefit from these exemptions given above in that the use has been identified as a mixed agricultural and educational use. As such the proposed use does not fall solely within an agricultural use, or a recreational use, (thereby failing the first test of this exception), as these uses cannot be separated from the educational use. Therefore, the proposal goes beyond the uses identified within parts (a) and (b) so these exceptions cannot apply.

The Applicant's legal opinion contends that if the LPA are to adopt the above stance then proposal would meet the exception test of paragraph 146(e) of the NPPF 2019,

"certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it...."

(e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or cemeteries and burial grounds); "

In terms of the proposed use it is considered that the use could partly meet exception (e) in that the mixed use of agriculture and educational farming would not be an inappropriate development within the Green Belt, given that an agricultural use is supported by national and local plan policy in the green belt and agriculture itself does not require planning permission. Other than the intensity of the use of the land (which is returned to later in the report) the educational element would take place in conjunction with the farming use, utilising the working farm position to provide an educational opportunity. In terms of the built development no singularly dedicated educational building would be erected. Therefore, with regard to Green Belt policy it is considered the mixed use is acceptable providing the use and its associated development and alterations to the landscape do not harm the openness of the green belt and conflict with the purposes of including land within it, which is turned to below.

Openness is not defined within the NPPF, but case law has found open to mean the absence of development, irrespective of the degree of visibility of the land in question from public vantage points. Openness is open textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant including spatial and visual considerations. Recent case law confirms that it is a matter of planning judgement as to whether, given the amount of building and development, the proposal would preserve the openness of the green belt and whether it would conflict with the purposes of including land within in it. A key consideration is, whether the level and amount of proposed built form, and its impact on the surrounding Green Belt, would be consistent with openness (as distinct from urban sprawl). The visual impact is not irrelevant

and can be taken into account in determining the impact on openness, with the proviso that it should not be determinative on openness.

With regard to the proposal, the scheme has been amended within the course of the application to remove the proposed barn, x2 polytunnels and a Dutch green house in order to reduce the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt. The amended scheme has been designed to include a yard area (27metres x 18 metres) to the west of the site which is bordered on the western side by a single storey open sided livestock shelter and fenced livestock enclosure area. The shelter would have a maximum width of 14.6 metres and depth of 4.6 metres (including the roof overhang). A mono pitched roof is proposed over with a minimum height of 2.4 metres increasing to a maximum of 3.1 metres. It would be constructed from black painted timber, with a corrugated aluminium roof over. The northern end of the yard would be a fenced area of x12 raised beds and x2 chicken coops (measuring individually approximately 1.5metres x2.5metres). No details have been supplied regarding the design and height of the structures although the D&A Statement includes a typical example of wooden raised planter. A condition is proposed to secure such details and to control their size. Four beehives are also proposed to the north east of the site. Two such beehives currently exist on the site, which are enclosed by a picket type fence with a green netting surround. A main spinal path is proposed to run parallel with the southern boundary from the existing site entrance to the yard area. Two further paths with north south axes, would run on the eastern and western end of the site to allow access to the cultivation beds. A further path would link the yard to the proposed pedestrian access to the south-eastern corner. The paths would be constructed from grasscrete. The remaining parts of the site would be given over to open grassland, an orchard and x16 open cultivation beds.

At the time of the site visit, the site was open, having no buildings, structures or access roads, with the exception of x2 beehives and some picnic tables. Spatially the proposal would result in a more formalised space with an increase in intensity of use and volume of built development, as well as the introduction of structures such as fences and raised beds, beehives and chicken coops and paths. Given its size the livestock shelter would have the greatest impact in terms of built development. It would however be single storey and constructed from materials designed to reflect a typical agricultural/stable building found in the countryside. Given its scale and location to the north west of the site, (seen against the backdrop of the hedgerow and school buildings) the majority of the site would still be read as open land. Although the details have not been provided, raised planters and chicken coops tend to be of a low height and the design would be controlled by a details condition. These would also be located near the livestock shelter, which would cluster the built development and thus maximise the area left for open land/grassland.

The beehives are of a small size and located towards the northeast of the site set amongst open grassland. The growing of crops in themselves, would be an appropriate use of green belt land. The grasscrete construction of the paths will retain a grassland feel whilst reducing the impact of the path directly on the grass especially in wet conditions when grass growth can be damaged.

In terms of the visual impact of the proposal on the openness of the green belt, the proposal results in the once open field becoming more formalised. The site holds an elevated position, with the undulating land allowing long ranged views and vistas over the open countryside. Long views from footpaths and fields can be gained to the site. The proposal would result in the majority of the site remaining open, albeit more intensely utilised for the growing of crops. Currently no established planting is found along the northern boundary where the palisade fence is found. Subsequently the livestock shelter and associated

structures would be visible from the surrounding area. Planting however is proposed along this boundary, which would once established, limit views into the site. Similar planting has been previously approved under application B/04262/10. Hedgerow boundaries are not considered unusual in this part of the Green Belt. Therefore, such planting is not considered to represent an encroachment into the countryside. On balance although the proposal would currently be visible given the nature of the use and limited built develop it is considered the scheme would still preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

In terms of the intensity of use the proposal would result in an increase in the numbers of users on the land, with a maximum of 45 people at any one time proposed on site. It is considered however that 40 people should be the maximum that the site should accommodate, to ensure the noise and activity associated with the use does not impact on the openness of the Green Belt or adversely impact on the amenities of neighbours in the vicinity of the area. The Applicant has provided information that 30 children would form a class with 5 support staff, and two farm workers are proposed to tend the land. This would enable a further 3 facilitators to deliver the teaching. It is therefore considered that a maximum of 40 people on the site whether children or adult volunteers would be reasonable and would still allow the use to function effectively. A condition has been proposed in this regard.

The Applicant has also stated that they wish to hold family funs days. Therefore, in addition to the above a further condition is proposed whereby family fun days could take place, but this would be restricted to allowing up to 70 visitors and would be permitted for only four times a year.

The proposal would also result in a commercial element being introduced whereby subsidised goods are to be supplied to TTA and other schools as well as local businesses and the community. It is considered however that this could result in an unacceptable number of movements of people visiting the site to purchase goods and impact on the Green Belt. Furthermore a security issue may result given the only access is through the school grounds. Therefore, a condition is proposed to restrict the selling of produce to the general public and businesses from the site to restricted times outside of school hours.

With regard to the proposed hours of use, the site would not operate before 8am and beyond 6pm during weekdays and between 9am and 5 pm at the weekend. It is considered that the hours of use should be controlled further to 2pm on a Sunday to safeguard residential amenity, which is discussed further below. It is considered that the proposed hours of use would control the intensity of use, and thus preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

No details regarding lighting have been proposed for the animal shelter or elsewhere on the site within the amended plans. As such a condition has been recommended to control any lighting on the site. This would allow the site to remain dark at night, to reflect the character of a rural area and Green Belt, as well as for ecology reasons.

On balance, it is considered that the structures and the educational farming activities and associated numbers of people present on site resulting from the proposed mixed use would not have a material impact on the openness of the site. Thereby the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved. The site retains large areas of grassland and cultivated areas. The one building on site in the form of a livestock shelter and other structures are not considered to represent an encroachment into the countryside, adding to the perception of urban sprawl. The proposal would therefore meet the test of paragraph 146 (e) of the NPPF and is considered an appropriate use within the Green Belt.

Impact on the Provision of Public Open Space and Sports Pitches

Provision of Public Open Space

The NPPF (2019) states within paragraph 96 that "Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities". Paragraph 97 goes on to say

"Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- (a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- (b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- (c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts. Therefore, identifying the land as POS would not add additional protection given the restrictions of Green Belt Policy.

Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy in part aims to protect open spaces, including the Green Belt, and enhancing open spaces through positive management of the Green Belt to provide improvements in overall quality and accessibility.

The application site is identified as POS in Barnet's Parks and Open Space Strategy (2016-2026). Although this document is a material consideration it must be considered alongside the Local Development Plan, which carries more weight than the strategy document. Within the Local Plan, as confirmed by the Policy Section, the site is not identified as POS.

As previously commented, application B/04262/10 resulted in the previous school playing fields located to the west of the site being returned to POS. The application site was fenced off as part of the school grounds and as confirmed by the Applicant the site is now under the ownership of the school. Therefore, the land swap took place and as such there has been no net loss of POS.

The land has remained as open grassland for use only by the school. The proposal however would allow the public to access the site through its volunteering programme which in part offers a recreational element linked to the educational farming use. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal will allow the site to be used in part, similarly as POS by offering recreational opportunities to members of the public.

Provision of Sports Pitches

An objective of Barnet's Playing Pitch Strategy (2017) follows the Sport England principle of protecting sports facilities from loss as a result of redevelopment. A priority action for Barnet's Playing Pitch Strategy (2017) is that all existing playing field land is protected by the LB Barnet Local Plan, Sport England policies and the NPPF to deliver current and future needs.

With regard to the application site the two sport pitches that were to be constructed under application B/04262/10 have not been provided. Other than inclusion within the description of the previous permission (B/04262/10) that the land should be used as playing fields, there is no planning legal agreement in place or condition attached to the planning permission to tie the two land swap sites together to ensure the sport pitches were provided. Since gaining permission the Applicant has confirmed that no sports pitches have been delineated on the application site and the levelling works to make the land fit for purpose as sports pitches has not been carried out.

Although no detailed assessment has been provided, the Applicant has stated that there is no need for the grass playing field with TTA considering them surplus to requirements. Currently TTA has two pitches and a cricket pitch available on the school playing fields located to the south and west of the main school buildings. A multi-use games area (MUGA) with an all-weather pitch has also been recently approved within the school grounds. The MUGA provides an upgrade to some existing outdoor hard surfaced pitches located adjacent to the existing sports hall. The Applicant has stated that this facility provides a more suitable location for outdoor sports facilities.

Given the existing sports provision on the site, (including the improved facilities of the MUGA), the location of pitches off site on the opposite side of Barnet Lane at King George V Playing Field and that the proposed pitches have never been provided, it is considered the proposal would not result in the unacceptable loss of playing pitches on the site.

Impact on the Character of the Area

Any scheme for the site will need to respect the character and appearance of the local area, relate appropriately to the sites context and comply with development plan policies in these respects. This will include suitably addressing the requirements of development plan policies such as DM01, CS05 (both of the Barnet Local Plan), 7.4 and 7.6 (both of the London Plan).

Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy states that the Council "will ensure that development in Barnet respects local context and distinctive local character creating places and buildings of high quality design". In addition to this, Policy DM01 of the Council's Development Management Policies 2012 states that "development proposals should preserve or enhance local character and respect the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings, spaces and streets... development (should) demonstrate a good understanding of the local characteristics of an area. Proposals which are out of keeping with the character of an area will be refused".

As previously described the character of the area is that of open fields and grassland which are generally lined with trees and hedgerows. Although the proposal would result in open countryside becoming a more intensively farmed piece of land it is considered that the agricultural practices on the site would be acceptable. Although an orchard and cultivated beds are not evident in the surrounding countryside (although some allotments are found to the north enclosed by built development), these will be set within the areas of open grassland. It is also important to note that the growing of crops in is not considered as development within the Planning Act 1990. The site does however lie in an Agricultural Article 4 area, which includes removing the permitted development rights to erect agricultural buildings, which aims to protect the landscape. The size of the site is also too small to benefit from permitted development rights to construct agricultural buildings.

As aforementioned the proposed livestock shelter and other structures would be visible from the surrounding land, especially from the informal path of the adjoining field to the north. They would however be low level and of an agricultural design. There is no public visibility of the building and structures from the streetscene given the setting, access and topography. No changes are proposed to the vegetation around the site, which provides a useful screening, other than the introduction of the pedestrian access to link the site to the school. This would measure approximately 5 metres wide and would result in the loss of part of the hedgerow on the southern boundary. The size of the link has been reduced during the life of the application in order to reduce the loss of hedgerow. It should be noted that a pedestrian access has previously been approved on the site under application B/04262/10, albeit of a smaller width and further east along the boundary.

A condition to secure a landscape management plan has been proposed which would require details on the long term management of the existing trees as well as details on proposed enhancement planting around the site. This will help ensure the site retains its woodland and hedgerow features at the boundaries of the site, which is characteristic of the area. Furthermore, additional planting is proposed along the northern boundary which once established will help screen the proposal. Therefore, although the proposal will have some visual impact on the surrounding countryside on balance it is considered the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the area.

Impact on the amenities of neighbours

Any scheme will be required to address the relevant Development Plan policies (policy DM01 of the Barnet Local Plan and policy 7.6 of the London Plan) in respect of the protection of the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. This will include taking a full account of all neighbouring sites.

Other than what appears to be the caretakers cottage within the school grounds, which is located on the southern boundary of the school boundary (approximately 120 metres from the site), the nearest residential neighbours include Long Orchard, Barnet Lane and the rear of the properties located on Oaklands Road. These properties are set approximately 190 metres south of the site with the school and its grounds located in between. To the north of the site beyond open grassland and Dollis Brook at a distance of almost 200 metres are found allotments and the properties of Leaside, Archer Close and Meadow Close. Approximately 190 metres to the east on the other side of Barnet Lane is found the commercial use of the Stables Horse Activity Centre.

The proposal will result in the site being more intensely used. Conditions however have been proposed to control the hours of use and the number of people and animals present on the site at anyone time. Given these measures, in addition to the degree of separation from the nearby residential properties it is considered that the proposal would not result in harmful impacts from traffic generation, noise, dust and odours. Furthermore, the existing hedgerow and woodland areas offer a visual and acoustic barrier to these residential properties. Environmental Health have been consulted and raise no objections to the proposal subject to conditions. In light of the above it is considered that the proposal would not be detrimental the residential and visual amenities of nearby properties.

Trees and Ecology

The NPPF advocates that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment including "protecting and enhancing valued landscapes" and "minimising impacts on biodiversity".

Impact on Trees

Policy DM01 of the Adopted Barnet Development Management Policies advises that trees should be safeguarded. High quality landscape design can help to create spaces that provide attractive settings for both new and existing buildings, contributing to the integration of a development into the established character of an area. The council will seek to retain existing wildlife habitats such as trees, shrubs, ponds and hedges wherever possible. Where trees are located on or adjacent to a site the council will require the submission of a tree survey with planning applications indicating the location, species, size and condition of trees. Trees should be retained wherever possible and any removal will need to be justified in the survey. Where removal of trees and other habitat can be justified appropriate replacement should consider both habitat creation and amenity value.

The Council's Trees and Landscaping Officer has also been consulted and following the amendments to the scheme, including the reduced size of the pedestrian access raises no objection subject to conditions.

The Officer comments that the submitted arboriculture report correctly values the trees and the findings and recommendations are broadly acceptable. In terms of impact on the landscape the scale of the structures and locations have been reduced from that submitted at pre-application and are located close to the school hedge boundary. This approach leaves most of the field open which will be used for market gardening, livestock, poultry and an orchard. The surrounding area has large open fields mainly managed for pasture or arable crops with little noticeable activities. This proposal will alter this and perhaps returns the countryside to an era when the land was more actively managed. Toilets will be dry meaning there is no need for foul water pipes.

The tree works include removal of a small section (as amended during the life of the application) of hedgerow to facilitate access between school and the city farm. Also it is proposed to re-pollard one tree and reduce the height of another to down to a safe level for ecology. These works are considered to be acceptable with the later works required in any event regardless of the application.

In terms of ecology the ecological enhancement recommendations as recommended within the ecology report must be fully implemented.

With respect to landscaping the biggest impact is likely to be choice of fencing, both internal and boundary treatments. Internal fencing must be kept to a minimum and be of an agricultural character. More tree planting along the boundaries would provide long term ecological benefits and help mitigate/soften the impact of the city farm.

The proposal will not have a significant impact on visual tree amenity.

Impact on Ecology

Policy DM16 stipulates that "when considering development proposals, the Council will seek the retention and enhancement, or the creation of biodiversity". In addition, "where development will affect a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and/or species of importance the council will expect the proposal to meet the requirements of London Plan Policy 7.19E." Policy 7.19E seeks to avoid adverse impact to the biodiversity interest and minimise impact and seek mitigation.

The Council's Ecology Officer has reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report that supports the application. This evaluates the ecological value of the site and assesses the ecological impacts of the scheme, including identifying possible ecological enhancements that could be incorporated into the development. The following comments were made. It should be noted that these comments were based on the original scheme which included the additional buildings.

Dollis Brook (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) is located 100m to the north of the site boundary. The river feeds into the Brent Reservoir, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There is potential for Dollis Brook to be affected by storage, deposition of material, run off etc particularly when the agricultural outbuildings /WC's are erected. Therefore, it is important that pollution of the brook is avoided by adhering to CIRIA guidance.

Reptiles

The applicant states that 'Suitable habitat for reptiles exists immediately north of the site and within small areas of longer grass along the peripheries of the site. The area to be cleared to make way for the associated buildings and vegetable patches is currently low grazed semi-improved grassland of reduced value for reptiles' Therefore, a precautionary phased clearance is recommended where vegetation is cleared in the direction of suitable neighbouring habitat that is to be retained after 10.00hrs on a warm day.

Lighting

The site is within a dark landscape and the hedgerow and trees would provide value for commuting bats. Proposals could disturb foraging and commuting bats with additional artificial lighting on site. Due to the close proximity of the designated sites, a condition should be attached on stating that a lighting strategy must be designed to minimise impacts on bats (as well as other nocturnal fauna) and their insect food. All exterior lighting should follow the guidance of the Bat Conservation Trust. Open green space such as the wildflower meadow areas and semi improved grassland should remain unlit, particularly between April and October, inclusive. The lighting strategy should be submitted to the LPA for approval.

Nesting Birds

The hedge with trees on the perimeter of the site is proposed to be retained, however, if the scattered scrub is to be removed this area may contain nesting birds between 1st March and 31st August inclusive. Therefore, if any removal is proposed to be undertaken in the spring and summer months, the site should be subject to a pre-site clearance check for nesting birds.

Ecological Management Plan

An Ecological Management Plan (EMP) for the site should be produced and implemented for the site which should be secured through planning condition in accordance with BS 42020: 2013.

Biodiversity Enhancements

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 in aiming to achieve sustainable development and the obligations on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity as required by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. The recommendations provided in Section 5.11 of the PEA report are considered sufficient to provide this required enhancement and should be included within the aforementioned EMP.

The Ecology Officer therefore subject to conditions and submission of an acceptable Ecological Management Plan raises no objection to the proposal.

Impact on Traffic and Parking

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the transport information submitted and his comments are provided below.

"The proposed change of use is unlikely to have a significant impact as the numbers of visitors to the farm during the busy season is expected to be around 70 per day with 15 employees. Most of the visitors are likely to arrive by car, minibus or coach and parking will be available in Totteridge Academy.

The change of use is sui generis and thus based on 15-20 helpers @ 1 space per 8 helpers/staff, 2 long stay spaces are required. For the 70 visitors expected daily 1 space should be provided for every 10 visitors which equates to 7 short stay spaces. Servicing will be accommodated by the Academy and so this are not expected to be an issue.

Also, a construction method statement is requested to ensure that the work is managed sensitively to reduce its impact on the surrounding environment. Both cycle parking and a construction method statement can be secured by way of a planning conditions."

Therefore, Highways would raise no objection to the proposal subject to conditions and informatives.

It should be noted that during of the life of the application further details have been provided which reduces the numbers people on site at any one time. Therefore, the parking requirements as set out above would be less than advised. It is also considered that as only the paths and an animal shelter are to be constructed that a Construction Method statement would not be necessary.

Impact on Drainage

Drainage advice was sought from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). They commented that the site is in Flood Zone 1 (although only 75m away from the nearest Flood Zone 2). It is at low risk of flooding from other sources including surface water. However, a small area to the west of the site is at risk of flooding from a small tributary of Dollis Brook. The site is classified as "less vulnerable", under the NPPF Vulnerability Classification as it comes under the category of "land and building used for agriculture and forestry". According to West London Strategic Flood Risk Assessment report, there are historic sewer flooding records in the area and at least half of the site is susceptible to groundwater flooding. SuDS

guidelines do not recommend limited discharge of less than 2 l/s using a flow control device, which could result in considerable risk of control device blockage and excessive maintenance with associated costs. It is recommended discussions to be held with the Environmental Agency to obtain their agreement regarding the maximum discharge they would accept into Dollis Brook.

Initially the Lead Local Flood Authority recommended that the application should not be approved until further information was provided in the form of a Flood Risk Assessment Statement and a Surface Water Management Strategy. Re-consultation took place however following the reduction of buildings on the site to which no objections were raised.

Other Matters

Paragraph 91 of the NPPF (2019) states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, such as through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure and access to healthier foods.

Policy 7.22 of the London Plan encourages the use of land for growing food, particularly in the Green Belt.

The Draft London Plan Policy G2 continues to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development stating that development proposals that would harm the Green Belt should be refused. It also goes on to state that the enhancement of the Green Belt to provide appropriate multi-functional beneficial uses for Londoners should be supported. The growing of food is identified within the supporting text as a beneficial function.

Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy in part aims to create a greener Barnet by enhancing local food production through support for community food growing including the Mayor's Capital Growth Initiative. Whilst Policy C5 promotes the role of schools as 'community hubs'.

The site is located in an area which is poorly accessible by public transport, however when considered against the benefits of the scheme in that it would support the growing of food, promote social infrastructure through the involvement of the community and not harm the Green Belt or character of the area, on balance the proposal is considered acceptable.

The Applicant has stated that in reaching a decision the recent application at Sweet Tree Fields (19/0581/RUC) for use of agricultural land for care farming is relevant given the use and Green Belt location. It is considered that although there are similar aspects of this scheme compared to the current application, there are also distinguishing factors between the two sites. Notably the Sweet Tree Farm site is much larger and previously had a lawful agricultural use, which would have allowed the construction of some buildings on site through exercising permitted development rights. The application site however is located in an Agricultural Article 4 Area which removes permitted development rights for the construct agricultural buildings and engineering operations. Although given the size of the site the construction of new buildings would not have been permitted in any event.

Planning Balance

In summary it is considered the proposal is acceptable. Although it would introduce some built development into the Green Belt and result in a more intensive use, on balance it is considered that the use would be an appropriate use within the Green Belt and the proposal would still preserve the openness of the Green Belt. As such it would not conflict with the purposes and function of the Green Belt by unacceptably encroaching into the countryside or result in urban sprawl. The proposal would be visible from the surrounding countryside, but it would be viewed as agricultural land, which is in character with the area, albeit the surrounding land remains as open grassland. Given the previous land swap no POS has been lost. The playing pitches, which were part of the previous permission, have never been provided and their installation cannot be enforced against. Playing pitches still remain elsewhere at the school and some hard surface pitches are being replaced with an upgraded all weather surface MUGA. Therefore the school still has access to playing pitches. Also the application site would be used by the school and would provide a recreational element associated with the educational use. Given the distance from the boundaries and the restrictions imposed by the proposed conditions, the amenities of nearby properties would not be detrimentally harmed. Landscaping and ecology improvements would be provided and secured through a Landscape Management Plan and Ecological Management Plan. The Highways and Drainage Officers have raised no concerns regarding the proposal. The scheme has received significant public support and would provide sustainable development, support healthy lifestyles and access to healthier foods whilst providing community volunteering opportunities.

5.4 Response to Public Consultation

Planning related objections and comments in support have been largely addressed in the report above.

1. The roofing material has been replaced with aluminium sheeting.
2. The accessible paths are shown on the plans and a condition has been recommended to control the materials used for construction.
3. The amended scheme removed the majority of buildings, which could have increased surface water flooding. Therefore, it is not considered reasonable or necessary to seek a financial contribution towards upgrading the public footpath along the western boundary or relocating the 'sewer'.
5. Any future development of the site would be subject to a separate permission and would be considered against relevant Green Belt Policies.

6. Equality and Diversity Issues

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) came into force in April 2011. The general duty on public bodies is set out in Section 149 of the Act. The duty requires the Council to pay regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality with regard to those with protected characteristics such as race, disability, and gender including gender reassignment, religion or belief, sex, pregnancy or maternity and foster good relations between different groups when discharging its functions.

Equality duties require Authorities to demonstrate that any decision it makes is reached in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different members of the community. This is achieved through assessing the impact that changes to

policies, procedures and practices could have on different equality groups. It is an opportunity to ensure better decisions are made based on robust evidence.

The proposal does not conflict with either Barnet Council's Equalities Policy or the commitments set in the Equality Scheme and supports the Council in meeting its statutory equality responsibilities.

7. Conclusion

The proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of the Development Plan and is therefore recommended for approval.

