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Planning Statement

Garside Farm, Bentgate Street, Milnrow, Rochdale, OL16 4NU

Change of use of existing agricultural buildings to a small-scale dog day care facility (Sui Generis), including associated parking and operational use

Planning Application Reference: PL/2026/0281

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared by Cadence Architecture Ltd on behalf of Mrs Hayley Tuck, trading as Hounds on the Hills, in support of the above planning application at Garside Farm, Bentgate Street, Milnrow.

The application seeks permission for the change of use of an existing agricultural building from agricultural use to a small-scale dog day care facility, falling within the Sui Generis use class. The building was converted from its original agricultural use approximately five years ago and has, since that time, been used continuously for dog-related purposes, most recently as a dog training facility operated by a previous business for around five years prior to Mrs Tuck taking on the premises. Mrs Tuck was not aware, at the point of taking on the premises, that no planning permission had been obtained for that earlier change of use. This application is being brought forward to regularise the position and secure permission for the site's continued use as a dog day care facility going forward.

This statement should be read alongside the accompanying drawing package (location plan, existing and proposed site plans, existing and proposed floor plans, and existing and proposed elevations, all referenced 164ROC-100 to 164ROC-106), the Green Belt Assessment, the Heritage Statement, the Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement, and other supporting documents submitted with this application.

2. The Site and Surroundings

Garside Farm is located off Bentgate Street, Milnrow, within the wider rural landscape on the edge of the Rochdale Borough, in close proximity to the M62 corridor. The application site comprises an existing agricultural building, of steel portal frame construction with corrugated steel cladding above a concrete block base, together with an associated wooden shed and a site cabin. The buildings sit within a fenced and gated yard, with an adjoining outdoor exercise field to the rear.

The wider site sits within the Green Belt. Section 4 of this statement addresses the application's compliance with Green Belt policy.

The photographs below show the existing character of the application building and its boundary treatment, consistent with the existing elevations submitted as drawing 164ROC-103.



Figure 1: Existing barn, north west facing elevation. Corrugated steel cladding over concrete block base, no proposed alterations.



Figure 2: Existing barn, gable elevation, showing the existing entrance door and boundary fence line.



Figure 3: Existing barn entrance elevation, showing the building's agricultural character and existing access.

3. The Proposal

The application seeks consent for the change of use of the existing buildings to a small-scale dog day care facility. The barn was converted internally to its current layout approximately five years ago, under the previous occupier's use of the site, and already accommodates the indoor play areas, an enrichment and puppy room, downtime and isolation areas, a dog wash, staff office, and staff WC, as shown on the existing floor plan (164ROC-102). That conversion is not part of this application and pre-dates Mrs Tuck's occupation of the site by some years. The existing wooden shed and site cabin are shown for context but are not part of the proposed change of use.

No new alterations are proposed to any of the buildings as part of this application. A direct comparison of the existing and proposed floor plans (164ROC-102 and 164ROC-105) and the existing and proposed elevations (164ROC-103 and 164ROC-106) confirms that the building footprints, internal layouts, and external appearance of the barn, shed, and site cabin remain entirely unchanged from their condition as found when Mrs Tuck took on the premises. This application relates to a change of use only.

The only physical change proposed anywhere on site is a new section of 2.2m high paladin fencing between the outdoor dog play area and the outdoor exercise field, shown on the proposed site plan (164ROC-104). This creates a secure, gated link between the two areas, allowing supervised movement of dogs between the play area and the field without the need to leave the fenced compound. This is a minor and entirely reversible addition, consistent in materials and height with the existing paladin fencing already in place around the yard.



Figure 4: Existing mesh panel fencing and gated yard access, of the type proposed for the new fence link.



Figure 5: Existing outdoor exercise field, showing the open boundary that the proposed fence link will connect to the dog play area.

Operational Details

The facility currently operates, and is proposed to continue operating, on the following basis:

- Hours of operation: Monday to Friday, 09:30 to 15:30. The site does not operate on Saturdays, Sundays, or bank holidays.
- Staffing: the site is operated by 3 members of staff.
- Capacity: the facility cares for up to 30 dogs at any one time, supervised throughout the day by site staff.
- Transport: dogs are transported to and from the site using company vehicles, reducing the number of individual car trips associated with the use.
- Parking: 3 existing parking spaces are retained on site for staff and company vehicles, as shown on the existing and proposed site plans, with no net change in parking provision.

These figures have been confirmed by the operator for the purposes of this statement and reflect current and proposed operating practice. The site has also recently been inspected by the Council's

licensing team as part of the animal welfare licensing process and has been granted a dog day care licence following that site visit. While this is a separate consent from planning permission, the inspection provides independent confirmation that the facility, its staffing, and its operating practices meet the relevant animal welfare and operational standards.

4. Planning Policy Assessment

Green Belt

The application site lies within the Green Belt. The proposal involves no new buildings, no extensions, and no external alterations of any kind, and is considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and to comply with the purposes of including land within it. A full assessment against national Green Belt policy is provided in the accompanying Green Belt Assessment, submitted alongside this application.

Heritage

The application building is a steel-framed agricultural building of modern construction, with no architectural or historic features of note, and no statutory or local heritage designation applies to the site or its immediate setting. As no external works are proposed, there is no change to the building's appearance or setting. A full assessment is provided in the accompanying Heritage Statement, submitted alongside this application.

Ecology

The Council's validation checklist has identified a requirement for a bat and bird survey on the basis that the application relates to a barn. The applicant's position, set out separately to the case officer, is that the building was converted to its current layout approximately five years ago and has been in continuous use for dog-related purposes since that time, most recently as a dog training facility for around five years prior to Mrs Tuck's occupation. No works are proposed to the roof, walls, or any openings as part of this application, and no change whatsoever to the external fabric of the building is proposed. Given the building has not functioned as an agricultural structure, and has not been vacant or undisturbed, for a number of years, it is considered that the standard trigger for a full bat and bird survey may not be proportionate to this application. The Council has been asked to confirm whether the requirement still applies, or whether a desk-based assessment would suffice. This statement will be updated, or a survey submitted as a separate document, depending on the Council's response.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposal relates solely to a change of use of existing buildings, with no external alterations, groundworks, or changes to the surrounding land, and no creation or loss of habitat. The development is considered to fall within the de minimis exemption, and a Statement of Exemption has been submitted alongside this application using the Council's required template.

Amenity and Highways

The site is accessed via Bentgate Street and an unadopted lane leading up to Garside Farm. The lower section of this lane is understood to be owned by a neighbouring farm, with access rights down to the adopted highway. This arrangement reflects the existing means of access to the site and is unaffected by this application, which proposes no change to the site's vehicular access, the lane, or its use. The corrected location plan submitted with this application reflects this position by excluding the unadopted section of the lane from the application site boundary.

The site is set within open countryside with no immediately adjacent residential properties likely to be materially affected by noise or activity from the use. Parking provision is unchanged from the existing arrangement, with three spaces retained on site, and the use of company vehicles to transport dogs to and from the site limits the number of individual visits generated by the operation.

The hours of operation, Monday to Friday only, with no weekend or bank holiday opening, further limit the impact of the use on the surrounding area. As noted above, the site has also been inspected and licensed by the Council's licensing team, providing further assurance as to the standard at which the facility is operated.

5. Conclusion

This application seeks a straightforward change of use of an existing agricultural building, converted and in continuous use for dog-related purposes for approximately five years, with no new alterations of any kind proposed to any building on site as part of this application. The only physical change is a minor, reversible section of yard fencing linking two areas already within the site's secure boundary. The application is brought forward in good faith to regularise the site's use following Mrs Tuck's discovery that no permission had previously been obtained.

Given the absence of any built development, the proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt, has no impact on heritage assets, and falls within the de minimis exemption for biodiversity net gain. The operation is modest in scale, limited to weekday daytime hours, and makes use of existing parking provision. It is respectfully submitted that the application represents an appropriate and acceptable use of the site, and the Council's favourable determination of the application is requested.