

# **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

**Case No:** 25/00069/FUL

**Proposal:** Partially retrospective application for change of use of land to Use Class B8 (storage or distribution) to provide self-storage facilities including the provision of storage containers

**Location:** The Barn, Overcote Lane, Needingworth, PE27 4TN

**Applicant:** Mr John Gray

**Grid Ref:** (E) 535241 (N) 271710

**Date of Registration:** 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025

**Parish:** Holywell-cum-Needingworth

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## **RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE**

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation as the Officer recommendation of refusal is contrary to that of the Parish Council.

### **1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION**

- 1.1 The application site is an area of land measuring approximately 5640m<sup>2</sup>. It is a mixture of hard surfacing, compacted earth and grass/meadowland extending south. The meadowland appears to be outside of the red line but within the blue line (and so within the control of the applicant). At the time of the site visit a number of vehicles/caravans were parked on the grassed area. There is some informal Heras fencing in place within the site. Where containers are placed, these are largely on solid bases. The site appears very 'informal', there is no structure in terms of hard surfacing for vehicle movements around the containers.
- 1.2 The site lies within the countryside, to the east of Needingworth and on the south side of Overcote Lane. A section of the site (towards the front) includes an area of land given permission for the siting of two shipping containers under planning application reference number 20/01030/FUL.
- 1.3 The site is located within Flood Zone 3 and has a very high risk of river flooding as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data and the 2024 Strategic Flood Risk

Assessment. It also lies within the Great Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area. There are no other constraints associated with it.

- 1.4 This planning application seeks permission for the change of use of land to provide self-storage facilities as well as the provision of storage containers for this purpose. The application is partially retrospective as some of the land outside of that permitted under previous planning permissions or certificates of lawful development is being used for storage/storage containers which is unauthorised. Part of the site within the red line does have an authorised use (as detailed in the proceeding sections of this report) but the layout differs from that approved. There are already containers within this section and more are proposed.
- 1.5 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.
- 1.6 Throughout the lifetime of the planning application and at the agreement of the agent the description has been revised to better reflect the development proposed. This was for matters of clarity. The development proposed was clearly set out in the submitted documents and so further full consultation was not considered to be necessary on this occasion. In any event, re-consultations have taken place with some key contributors by default and the site notice displays the revised description.

## **2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE**

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives – economic, social and environmental – of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: ‘So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).’
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
  - delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
  - building a strong, competitive economy;
  - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
  - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment
- 2.3 Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#)

### **3. PLANNING POLICIES**

#### **3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)**

- LP1: Amount of Development
- LP2: Strategy for Development
- LP3: Green Infrastructure
- LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
- LP5: Flood Risk
- LP9: Small Settlements
- LP10: The Countryside
- LP11: Design Context
- LP12: Design Implementation
- LP14: Amenity
- LP15: Surface Water
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP19 Rural Economy
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP36: Air Quality
- LP37: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

#### **3.2 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:**

- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2024)
- LDF Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- The National Design Guide (2021)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

Local For full details visit the government website [Local policies](#)

### **4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 7600013REFUSL – Hardstanding for parking lorries (Refused)
- 4.2 8000320FUL – Hardstanding area for parking of lorries (Refused)
- 4.3 8001435FUL – Hardstanding for parking three lorries (Permission)
- 4.4 9100213FUL - Removal of personal condition of Planning permission Land off Overcote Lane, Needingworth (Permission)
- 4.5 20/01030/FUL – Use of land for open storage and the siting of 2 shipping containers (retrospective) (Permission)

- 4.6 21/01528/CLED – Commercial open storage along with the siting of shipping containers and use of former workshop building for commercial storage (Consent)
- 4.7 22/80225/COND – Conditional information for 20/01030/FUL (C2 – Eco Mitigation) (Condition approved)

## **5. CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 Holywell-cum-Needlingworth Parish Council were consulted twice. Originally they objected with reasons broadly set out below:
- Members noted that the application was retrospective.
  - Result in further increase of containers (though suggested the number unclear).
  - Highway safety and damage to the highway concerns.
  - Light pollution.
  - Health and concerns if no controls over what is stored.
  - Noise concerns (traffic).
  - Breach of Policies LP5 (flood risk) and LP10 (the countryside).
- 5.2 Following a request for further details from Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Team, Officers allowed the applicant to submit additional information in the form of a Highways Technical Note and general response to concerns raised in a Cover Letter. Re-consultation was then undertaken with Highways and the Parish Council. Following this, the Officers received an email from the Parish Council dated 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 which stated that they accepted the report from the agent as it answered 'many' of the questions raised with the original application. It was considered that this response was ambiguous and so clarity was sought. The Parish Council then confirmed in an email dated 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 that the original objections still stood due to concerns regarding development in the countryside, environmental impacts and the flood zone.
- 5.3 However further to this final published comments were received from the Parish Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 confirming that they wished to support the application in full. Their objection is therefore considered to have been removed.

- 5.4 Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Team – No objections.
- 5.5 CCC Lead Local Flood Authority – No representations received at the time of writing this report.
- 5.6 HDC Ecology Officer (informal) – raises concerns but notes the retrospective nature of the application.
- 5.7 HDC Environmental Health Team – No objections subject to conditions.
- 5.8 Environment Agency – No objections, recommendations made for flood protection detailed in the proceeding sections of this report.

## **6. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 6.1 None received at the time of determination.

## **7. ASSESMENT**

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".
- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of a number of adopted neighbourhood plans, however, there is not an adopted neighbourhood plan in place for Needingworth. Therefore, in this case no neighbourhood plans are given weight in the determination of this planning application.
- 7.4 The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: *Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor* [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the

Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining planning applications.

7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this planning application are:

- The principle of development (including impact on the countryside)
- Design, visual amenity and the impact upon the character of the area
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety
- Flood risk
- Biodiversity
- Other issues

### **The principle of the development**

7.6 In assessing this proposal it should be noted that regard has been given to the earlier approvals/certificates which have been issued in relation to the site and which are referenced in the submitted statement. These are referenced above, but, for further clarity:

- Planning application reference 8001435FUL – Hardstanding for parking three lorries was given permission but related only to a section of land at the very front of the site (largely covering the location of the 2021 Certificate of lawfulness of existing development (CLED) application). This is provided for clarity and is not considered to have a bearing on this determination as it relates to an entirely different character of development and a smaller section of the site.
- Planning application reference 20/01030/FUL gave retrospective permission for the change of use of a section of land (also included in this planning application site) to the front of the site for open air storage and the siting of two shipping containers. It should be noted that whilst this was a 2020 application the approval was not issued until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2022 after the Lawful Development Certificate (referenced below) had been issued and deemed lawful. This was a key consideration of the Case Officer in the determination of this application.

- Planning application reference 21/01528/CLED issued a Lawful Development Certificate dated 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 establishing the use of a section of land to the front (east of that considered under the FUL application above) to B8 (Storage) use. This land is shown in blue in the current application but outside of the red line. The Certificate of Lawfulness was issued as the LPA were satisfied that the use (including the siting of some shipping containers) had been established for a period in excess of ten years.

- 7.7 Based upon the details submitted as part of this planning application there are unauthorised containers within the land subject to both of the above approved applications. It is noted that the proposed detailed site plan (drawing no. 24-096-DK0002-P5) shows the area subject to the 21/01528/CLED application highlighted in pale yellow. However, plans approved as part of the 21/01528/CLED application did not show as many containers as now indicated on the submitted plans. It should be noted that a Certificate of Lawful Development was issued at a point in time and that changes could 'tip the balance' to planning permission being required. This land is excluded from this planning application and so the applicant should be satisfied that any material changes have not resulted in an alteration in the validity of the certificate issued or contains works that would require the benefit of planning permission.
- 7.8 Both of the above applications related to land measuring approx. 2490m<sup>2</sup>. This present planning application relates to a further 4500m<sup>2</sup> approx. (excluding the section already covered by the approved 20/01030/FUL planning application) extending south into the countryside which is a key consideration in the below assessments. Also proposed is the siting of 79 shipping containers (49 existing on site and a further 30 proposed) though this does not include the additional containers within the site subject to the 21/01528/CLED application. Overall, there are 114 containers shown on the plans. 35 in the area which is not part of the application but which was dealt with under the 21/01528/CLED application. (It should be noted that only 11 were shown on the plans submitted with the 21/01528/CLED application). In the site for consideration (within the red line), a total of 79 containers are shown, 49 of which are suggested to be existing (the retrospective element) and 30 proposed).
- 7.9 The site is located outside of the built-up area of Needingworth which is the nearest settlement and therefore considered to be within the countryside. As

such, Policy LP10 of the Local Plan is the starting point for assessment.

7.10

Policy LP10 seeks to limit development within the countryside except where it is permitted through other policies of the Local Plan. One such policy which allows LP10 to be relaxed is LP19 (Rural Economy) and this is discussed in more detail below. Regardless of any relaxations LP10 states that all development in the countryside must:

a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:

i. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and

ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;

b. recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and

c. not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

7.11

In this case, the land in question is Grade 3 Agricultural Land, and, so whilst not land of the highest value it is considered to be some of the most versatile land. Whilst as detailed below the site is considered inappropriate for the use applied for, having regard to the history of the site (use of the front of the site for lorry parking dating back to 1980 and the permission/certificate granted above) indicate that it is not (and has not for some time) been in use for agricultural purposes. Therefore, the weighting that can be given to the loss of the land for agricultural purposes is limited. Furthermore, given the nature of the development it is arguable that it could be considered the irreversible loss of the land. As such, the LPA raise no objection in this regard.

7.12

Turning attention to part b, whilst the loss of the land is not given weight it remains that this has/would result in a significant intrusion into the countryside (approx. 62 metres further south of the current boundary with the established uses). A site visit reveals that whilst generously screened to the frontage and there is planting to the east and west, the southern boundary remains open and it is very much viewed as a countryside location with a rural character. The submitted Planning Statement

details that planting is proposed along the southern boundary (which could be conditioned) but it remains that regardless of any efforts to try and propose new planting to screen the visual intrusion, such a use is not visually characteristic of the countryside and the ancillary factors of such a use (additional vehicle movements within the site/vehicles depositing or moving containers) all erodes the intrinsic character of the countryside, and is the expansion of a use that is unsuitable in this rural location. For the same reasons, it is considered that this use would also give rise to factors detailed within part c of LP10, with the potential introduction of security fencing etc. Such uses are generally focused on industrial or established employment areas where such factors are expected and are focused such that they do not cause harm to the rural character of an area. It is considered that this scheme is inappropriately sited and contrary to Policy LP10 (parts b and c).

7.13

Policy LP19 of the Local Plan details that a proposal for the expansion of an established industrial or rural business on land outside of its existing operational site in the open countryside will be supported where it is demonstrated that:

e. opportunities to reuse existing buildings have been fully explored; and replacement or new build are only proposed where it can be demonstrated that no suitable reuse opportunities are available;

f. any opportunities to make more efficient use of land within the existing site boundary are not suitable for the proposed use;

g. it avoids the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) particularly Grade 1 where possible and should use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value; and

h. the scale, character and siting of the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape.

LP19 goes on to state that a rural business is one which has a legitimate reason to be located in the countryside, including but not limited to agriculture, horses, horticulture or forestry with Para. 6.22 specifically stating that “the primary justification for employment related development in the countryside is where either a rural location is essential to the successful operation of the business or the business is dependent upon natural resources only

available in limited locations. The LPA acknowledge that there are established industrial uses within rural areas and, as required, these are assessed upon their own merits. However, in this case, the existing and intended expansion of this operation is considered to cause harm and there is no legitimate justification for its siting.

- 7.14 The key question here is whether the proposed expansion of the established business is within its existing operational site or outside of its existing operational site.
- 7.15 The Local Plan does not define what an 'existing operational site' is. In planning terms, existing could be interpreted as lawful. Lawful is the granting of a planning permission or the granting through the passage of time (4 years for a building or 10 years for a continuous change of use). The following planning legislation provides the definition of lawful in the context of existing development.
- 7.16 *Section 191 (certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development) of Town and Country Planning Act 1990:*
- (2) For the purposes of this Act uses and operations are lawful at any time if—*
- (a) no enforcement action may then be taken in respect of them (whether because they did not involve development or require planning permission or because the time for enforcement action has expired or for any other reason);*
- 7.17 Therefore, officers deem the correct assessment here is to establish what the lawful operation site is, in order to understand whether the proposed expansion of the established business is within its existing operational site or outside of its existing operational site.
- 7.18 As outlined above, the proposal extends approx. 62 metres further south of the current boundary with the established use permitted under the Certificate of lawful development (ref 21/01528/CLED). This defines the existing operational site. Therefore, officers have concluded that the red line for this current change of use application contains land outside of its existing (lawful) operational site. The application must be assessed against the criteria e to h of Policy LP19. Officers consider criterion h to be the most relevant for this application.
- 7.19 The submitted planning statement seeks to demonstrate compliance with parts e to h of LP19, but only limited information has been provided. In summary it suggests that there are no existing buildings which can be-reused

and the additional containers are to meet demand (but no physical evidence has been provided as to current capacity or the additional demand). It goes on to state that as the approved sites (which is questionable given the earlier assessment on their current state) are at capacity this makes more efficient use of the land. It further states that the loss of the agricultural land is acceptable (which Officers do accept and is assessed in the preceding sections of this report), and that the impact on the surroundings will be minimised due to not stacking the containers and landscaping (which could be secured by condition in the event that Members are minded to support the application).

7.20 The applicant has put forward the argument that part of the site benefits from a fall back B8 use. As such, there is no control over the height of materials that can be stored or the methods of storage. It should be noted that condition 3 of planning permission reference 20/01030/FUL stated that: "No more than two shipping containers shall be placed on the site which shall not be used for any purpose other than for B8 storage use as approved by this planning permission". A fallback position is a material consideration for the Local Planning Authority when assessing the merits of any planning proposal. The weight afforded to this is limited given that it only relates to the front of the site and the breach of condition 3 as detailed above.

7.21 Whilst some of the arguments put forward are acknowledged (and arguably more palatable - avoiding the stacking of containers on the existing site for example) this is not a reason to grant permission for such a significant intrusion and intensification of use which result in harm to the surrounding countryside. No clear evidence has been provided to support the justification for compliance with LP19. From the planning history it appears that the established use of the front of the site has solely been achieved through retrospective permission and a Lawful Development Certificate which demonstrated a use (in breach) for in excess of ten years. This likely acted as a fallback position for the FUL planning application (being next to the site granted the Certificate). This scheme seeks to expand the site further into the countryside (by approx. 62m) resulting in the further harm assessed above. It is therefore not considered that this is an appropriate location or that it makes the most efficient use of the land.

7.22 Overall, whilst it is accepted that some arguments have been put forward with regard to compliance with Policy

LP19, taken as a whole the scheme is considered to be contrary to the policy.

7.23

Further to the above a consideration in establishing the principle is the location of the site within the Great Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area. The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022) states that development proposals should:

- Enrich the area by reinforcing its special qualities and acknowledging its distinct local character.
- Use appropriate building materials to retain the distinctive local character of villages.
- Maintain or enhance water quality and quantity and not lead to any adverse impact on flood risk or flood defences.
- Protect and enhance the strategic green corridor formed by the river valley, particularly where it passes through settlements.
- Minimise the environmental impacts of recreational activities.
- Protect and enhance the ecological value of the river, its margins and the valley floor.
- Promote opportunities for wildlife and conservation initiatives to support and enhance the area's biodiversity.
- Protect the setting of historic structure such as bridges and mill buildings.
- Encourage public access along the Great Ouse Valley through.

Policy LP3 of the Local Plan goes on to state that a proposal within the Ouse Valley Landscape Character Area will be supported where it contributes to the landscape, wildlife, cultural and historical value of the area.

7.24

As can be seen, not all aspects of the above are relevant to this scheme. However, it is not considered that the scheme is fully compliant with the above principles as it does not seek to enrich the area by reinforcing its special qualities and acknowledging its distinct local character nor contribute positively to the landscape. It is acknowledged that given the limited height wider views would be limited

(and storage height could be secured by condition) but it remains that this is an unacceptable expansion of the site into the countryside to the south. At a depth that would be significantly beyond the built form of the uses on either side of the site. This together with the significant increase in use and storage containers would result in the introduction of an uncharacteristic and alien feature in a protected rural setting. Matters regarding flood risk are discussed in the proceeding sections of this report but for the purposes of this assessment it is considered that the scheme does not fully accord with Policy LP3 of the Local Plan to 2036.

- 7.25 To conclude, the development is considered contrary to Policies LP3, LP10 (parts b and c) and LP19. It is therefore considered to be unacceptable in principle and harmful to the rural location and is therefore recommended for refusal.

### **Design and Visual Amenity**

- 7.26 The general characteristics of the area are discussed above. As the site lies outside of the built-up area of the village it is rural in character and built development is sparse and sporadic. The northern side of Overcote Lane is mainly undeveloped land (though as with the application site is heavily bounded by dense trees/hedgerows). The southern side is punctuated by gaps in the vegetation and there are accesses to a number of developed sites to the south and views across the countryside. There are some commercial enterprises along Overcote Lane but the general rural agricultural character remains.
- 7.27 This scheme results in the introduction of additional storage containers extending approximately a further 37m from where those on the land granted the certificate terminate (the full extent of the land subject to the change of use extends approx. 62m from that approved under the 21/01528/CLED application). As above, it is unclear if all of the containers currently on the land subject to the 21/01528/CLED application are authorised – this measurement is provided for context. Further containers are proposed to the south of the land permitted under the FUL application (though not extending as far south). The containers are typical metal storage containers the majority of which are of a similar scale and appearance. Plans have been provided which show a footprint of approx. 14.5m<sup>2</sup> and height of 2.59m.
- 7.28 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new

development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. The above policies are reinforced by Paragraphs 129 (d) and (e) and Paragraph 135 (b) and (c) of the NPPF that seek to maintain an area's prevailing character and ensure development is sympathetic to local character. The National Design Guide (2021) sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It covers the following: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan.

- 7.29 As considered above, permitting the change of use of this land which extends 62m into the countryside outside of the existing operational site boundary along with the introduction of additional storage containers would result in development which would be uncharacteristic of and visually harmful to the rural setting. Whilst landscaping is in place at present this is not protected and could be removed at any time with no prior agreement with the LPA rendering the site much more visible. The intention to provide further landscaping to the south is acknowledged (and could be conditioned) but this remains insufficient to satisfy Officers that this would resolve all of the visual impact concerns and, notwithstanding this, aside from the built development the use would be at odds with the rural setting and so is not supported.
- 7.30 As such, it is considered that the scheme fails to respond positively to its context, fails to contribute positively to the area's character and identity, and fails to successfully integrate with the adjoining open landscape and is therefore contrary to Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the provisions of the NPPF (2024).

### **Residential Amenity**

- 7.31 Given the degree of separation to adjacent dwellings and land and limited height of the proposed containers it is not considered that there would be any concerns with regard to overbearing impacts, overshadowing or loss of light nor matters of reduced privacy for any surrounding neighbours.
- 7.32 It is therefore considered that the main impacts to consider are the increased vehicle movements and activity through the village as a result of the expansion of the business creating noise and odour through emissions. HDC's Environmental Health Team have been consulted and raise no objections subject to a condition to limit any heavy goods

vehicles of 7 tonnes or more between the hours of 11pm to 7am. This could be imposed in the event that Members are minded to support the proposals.

- 7.33 On balance, whilst this would be an expansion of an existing business which would be uncharacteristic of the location, given the authorised use of the front of the site along with typical vehicle movements associated with other activities (agricultural for example) it is not considered that the scheme would result in significant harm in terms of residential amenity and would therefore comply with Policies LP14 and LP36 of the Local Plan to 2036.

### **Highway Safety**

- 7.34 Access to the site would be via the existing access from Overcote Lane (serving the authorised uses). Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority have been consulted and initially requested further details on a number of points including the provision of inter-vehicle visibility splays, details of trip generations for the current permitted uses, clarity on the number of containers, details of how many businesses are using the site and vehicle movements generated by these, details of any haulage use of the site (from previous permissions), details of on-site customer parking, details of the existing access and distances between the edge of the carriageway and gates and finally details of predicted movements in line with the proposed use. Subsequently revised drawings and a Technical Note has been provided. Both CCC and the Parish Council have been re-consulted.
- 7.35 Following a review of the submitted details CCC have confirmed that they raise no objections. They confirm the access dimensions and visibility splays proposed are acceptable. They consider the proposed vehicle movements to be commensurate with other similar sites. They acknowledge reservations regarding the intensification of Overcote Lane, which has a limited number of passing places, but the vehicle movements would be insignificant in comparison to other businesses/uses which the lane serves. Therefore, they are satisfied that there will be no significant adverse effect upon highways safety as a result of the scheme.
- 7.36 On balance, given the flows associated with the authorised uses and other uses in the vicinity and the lack of objection from CCC Highways as specialists, the scheme is considered to be acceptable in terms of highway safety impacts and traffic generation and

therefore the proposal would accords with Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036.

### **Flood Risk**

- 7.37 The application site is located within Flood Zone 3a and has a high risk of river flooding as indicated in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024).
- 7.38 The proposed storage use is classified as a Less Vulnerable use under the flood risk vulnerability categories. In Flood Zone 3a, less vulnerable uses are considered appropriate, and not subject to the exception or sequential tests.
- 7.39 A Flood Risk Assessment (dated May 2020) accompanies the application and the Environment Agency have been consulted and comment that whilst they have no objections in principle, a flood emergency plan, and flood resilient measures should be incorporated. If Members are minded to approve the application then these could be included as planning conditions.

### **Biodiversity**

- 7.40 Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires a development to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. As well as this (and separate from the requirements of LP30), qualifying new development is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. This means that a 10% statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) would be required with any future application, following the hierarchy of onsite provision; mixture of on-site and off-site provision; and the last resort of statutory biodiversity credits unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt.
- 7.41 In this case, at present there is no legislation to deal with planning applications which are made retrospectively as matters relating to BNG are generally pre-commencement and so opportunities to impose controls or evaluation of habitats are lost. The land subject to the application appears to be of limited value. It may have previously been grassland but due to the operations taking place within it, it is now largely compacted earth/hard surfacing with rubble/hardcore in some places. HDC's Ecology Officer noted that it was intended to provide a net gain by the introduction of 33 native trees to the south of the site as detailed within the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Statement. The Officer raised concerns regarding the

likelihood of this being achieved given the space given over to the trees and the chance of their longer-term survival. However, he did also acknowledge the retrospective nature of the proposals and so it is not considered necessary to pursue this further.

That said, despite this, LP30 does still apply and a net gain should be achieved where possible. In this case however, Officers are satisfied that given the commercial nature of the site, opportunities for providing a net gain are limited and so it is not considered necessary to pursue these on this occasion.

- 7.42 Overall, having regard to the above matters, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to biodiversity impacts and broadly accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

### **Other Matters**

- 7.43 \*Developer contributions (CIL)

The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education. No CIL forms have been provided with the planning application, but this is a matter which will be pursued by the Council's Implementation Team.

- 7.44 The proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of Policy LP4 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contribution SPD in this regard.

### **Planning balance**

- 7.45 As outlined above, all planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.46 It should be noted that not all proposed developments are entirely without harm or entirely without benefit. Therefore, in reaching a recommendation on the application, Officers have considered the potential harm of the development against the potential benefits of the development. Officers have considered what weight should be given to each material consideration. This forms the overall planning balance.
- 7.47 The applicant has made attempts to demonstrate compliance with Policy LP19 of the Local Plan but this has not been supported by evidence to substantiate the claims.

For example, no details of the actual capacity or demand for the services have been provided and so it is unclear why the existing established containers are no longer sufficient for the needs of the business.

- 7.48 Officers acknowledge that this is an established business within the countryside and the need to support a thriving rural economy. However, this must be assessed against the full suite of local and national policies, justification put forward to permit such development and the harm caused. There are some economic benefits but, based upon the details submitted, as detailed throughout this report, the environmental harm is significant and the extension to this site at the scale proposed would cause harm to the rural setting by virtue of its intrusion into the countryside.
- 7.49 As such, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policies LP10 and LP19 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and would result in significant and demonstrable harm both visually and upon the character of the area.
- 7.50 Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development is contrary to policy and not acceptable. There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted in this instance and it is therefore recommended that the application be refused.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION – REFUSAL**

- 8.1 The proposed change of use of land to Use Class B8 (storage or distribution) to provide an extension to accommodate further self-storage facilities including the provision of storage containers represents a 62m intrusion into the countryside beyond the existing operational site. The impact of allowing the extension of such a use (including the containers) a further 62m into the countryside would result in significant and demonstrable harm both visually and upon the character of the area through increased activity/vehicle movements within the site and is contrary to Policies LP3, LP10 (parts b and c), LP11, LP12 (particularly parts a, b, and c), LP19, Paras. 129 (d & e) and 135 (b and c) of the NPPF (2024) and the provisions of the National Design Guide (2021).

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388424 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

**CONTACT OFFICER: Kevin Simpson:**  
**[kevin.simpson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.simpson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)**

**From:** [DevelopmentControl](#)  
**To:** [DevelopmentControl](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for Planning Application 25/00069/FUL  
**Date:** 05 February 2025 11:58:28

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## Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 05/02/2025 11:58 AM from [REDACTED] - Needingworth PC.

### Application Summary

Address:	The Barn Overcote Lane Needingworth St Ives PE27 4TN
Proposal:	Change of use to self-storage yard (Use Class B8)
Case Officer:	Kevin Simpson

[Click for further information](#)

### Customer Details

Name:	[REDACTED] - Needingworth PC
Email:	[REDACTED]
Address:	Village Hall Overcote Lane Needingworth Cambridgeshire

### Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Town or Parish Council
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application

Reasons for comment:

Comments:	<p>In considering the application Council noted that the facility does provide a service to local businesses and residents.</p> <p>Members commented on the fact that this is another retrospective application for the site and that this application also includes further increase in the number of containers to be permitted, although the total numbers of containers that will be allowed if the application is approved is confusing and unclear.</p> <p>Whilst members understand that one site cannot be held responsible for problems with the Highway something needs to be done to resolve issues of increasing traffic on a single-track road which has no pedestrian footpath and is used by horse riders to access a public bridleway. The letter from CCC Highways dated 29/1/25 raises many concerns shared by the Parish Council.</p> <p>The application is unclear, but Council considers the proposed development may cause light pollution, Health &amp; safety issues if there is no control over what is stored on the site, noise from additional traffic and damage to the highway.</p> <p>The application is in breach of the following policies:</p> <p>LP5 - The site is located in flood zone 3</p> <p>LP10 - The site is located in the countryside.</p>
-----------	---

Kind regards

Dear Mr Simpson.

Ref Application 25/00069/ful – The Barn, Overcote Lane Needingworth.

The Parish Council has asked me to contact you to confirm that they support the application in full.

Should you require any further clarification please do come back to me.

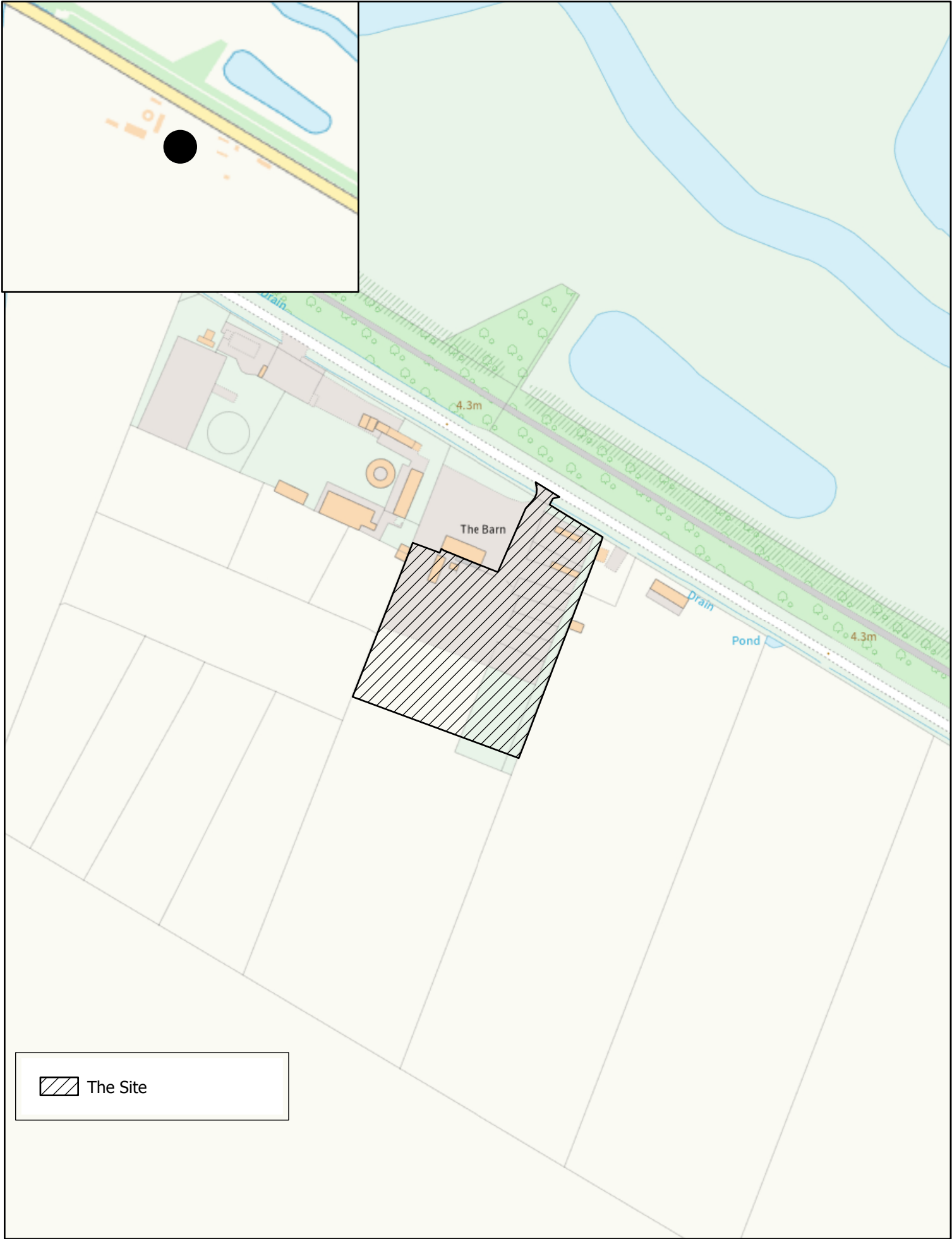
Please accept my apologies for the inconvenience.

Kind regards

Jane

Jane Bowd, Parish Clerk

Holywell-cum-Needingworth Parish Council



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Revision		Drawn	Check
P1	First Issue	PL	AD
		09.01.25	

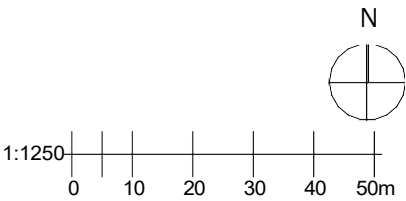
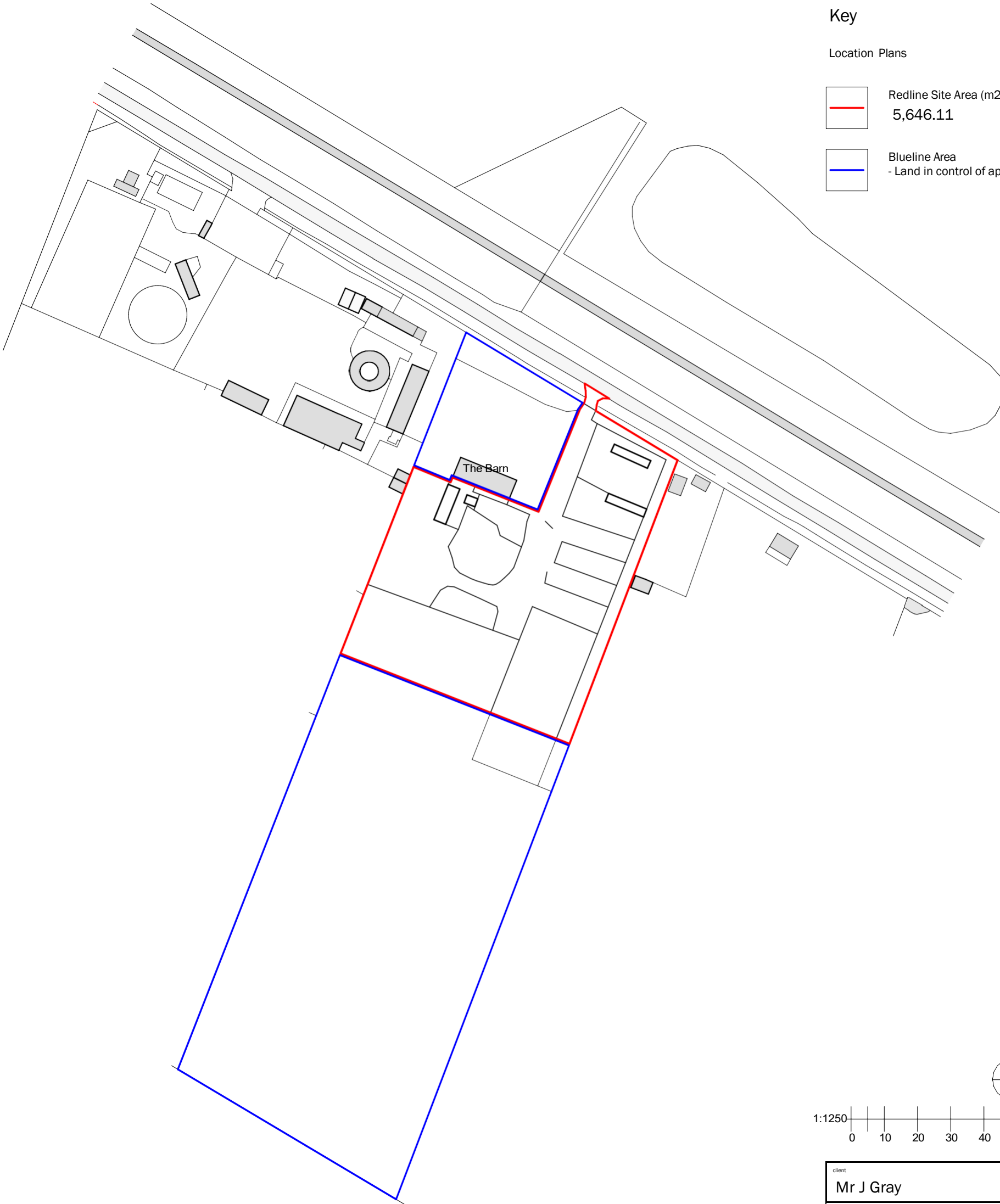
Key

Location Plans

- Redline Site Area (m2)

5,646.11
- Blueline Area

- Land in control of applicant



client		
Mr J Gray		
project		
3 Overcote Lane, Needingworth, St Ives Proposed Open Storage and the Siting of Containers		
drawing		
Location Plan		
date	15.10.24	scale
drawn	PL	1:1250 @ A3
check	AD	

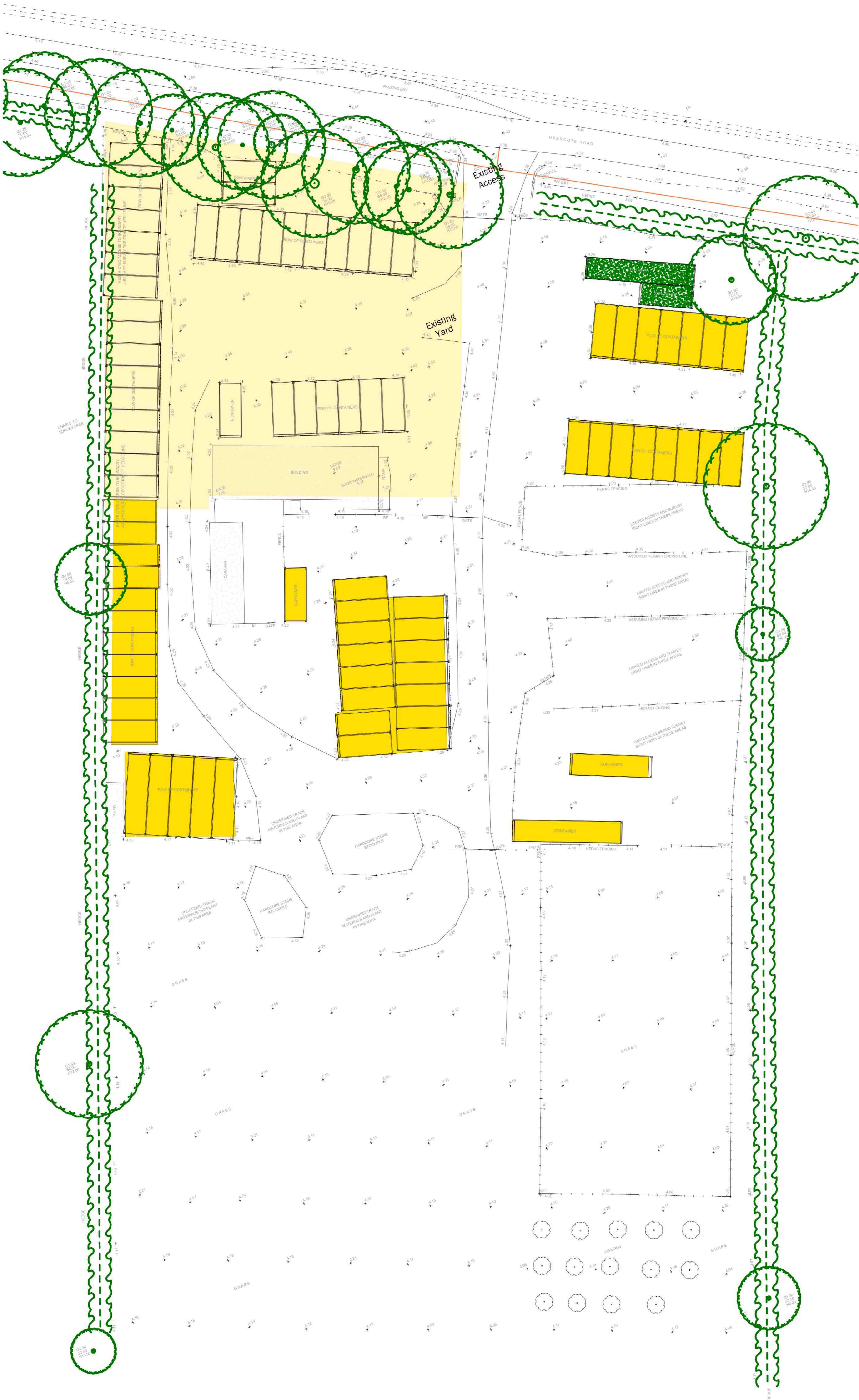


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Planning			
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Revision		Drawn	Check
P1	First Issue	PL	AD
P2	Amended as comments - visibility splays added	AD	AD
P3	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD
P4	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD
P5	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD

Highways

Key

- Visibility Splays  
- Vehicular / Pedestrian
- Vehicle Turning
- Vehicle Parking  
- Cars, Lorries, Cycles

Planning

Key

- Lawful Development Area  
LPA: 21/01528/CLED
- Consented
- Existing - On Site

client

Mr J Gray

project

3 Overcote Lane, Needingworth, St Ives  
Proposed Open Storage and the Siting of Containers

drawing

Site Plan As Existing Detail

date

15.10.24

scale

1:200

@ A1

drawn

PL

checked

AD

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P5



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P2	Amended as comments - visibility splays added, container key added	AD	AD
P3	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD
P4	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD
P5	Amendments to Comments	AD	AD

Highways

Key

- Visibility Splays - Vehicular / Pedestrian
- Vehicle Turning
- Vehicle Parking - Cars, Lorries, Cycles

Planning

Key

- Lawful Development Area LPA: 21/01528/CLED

Containers

- Consented
- Existing - On Site
- Proposed - Additional

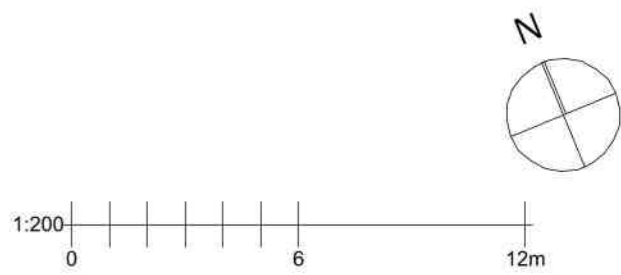
Landscaping

Planting

- Hedge with Tree Planting
- Tree Planting

Planting Information

Hedges to consist of - 70% hawthorn, 15% hazel, 10% blackthorn and 5% dog rose. Planting should be in a double staggered row - 500mm between plants, 500mm between rows.

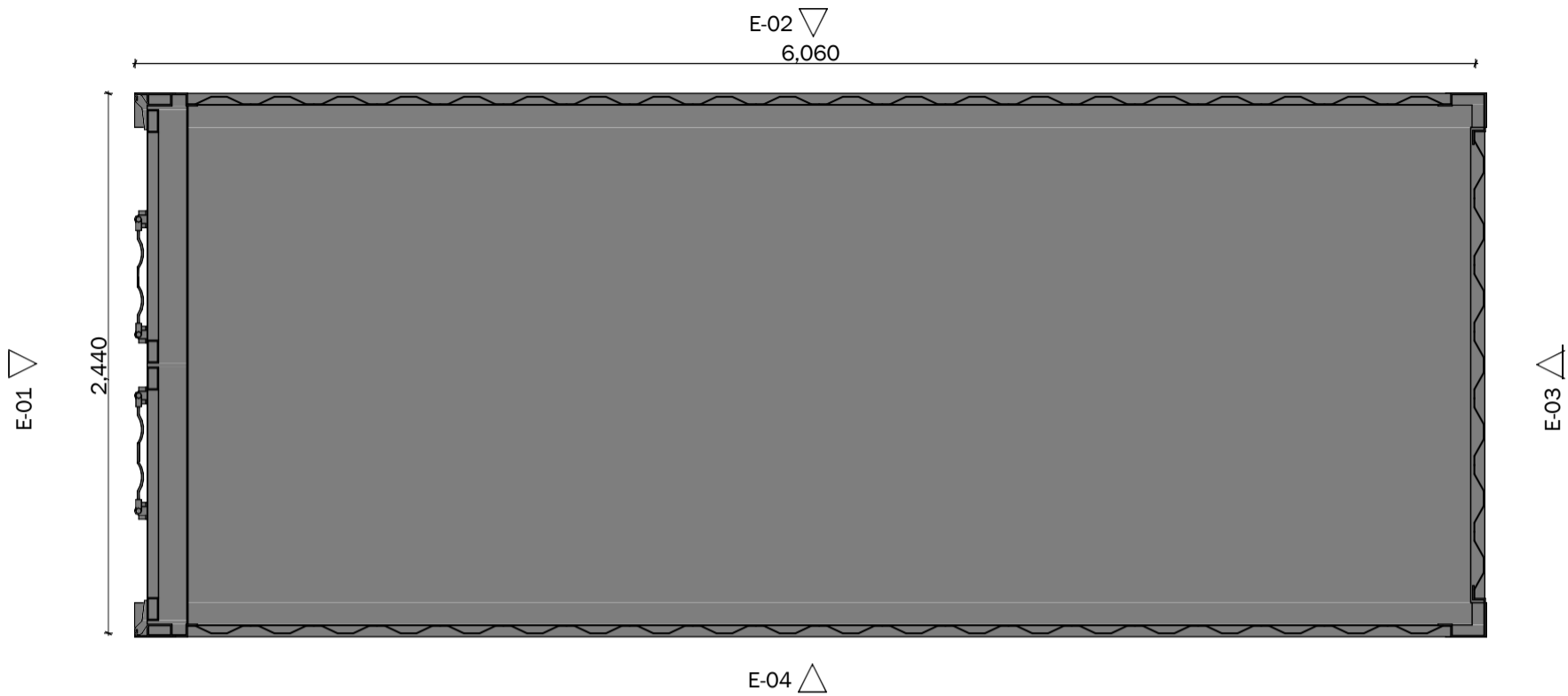


client		
Mr J Gray		
project		
3 Overcote Lane, Needingworth, St Ives Proposed Open Storage and the Siting of Containers		
drawing		
Site Plan As Proposed Detail		
date	scale	@ A1
15.10.24	1:200	
drawn	checked	
PL	AD	

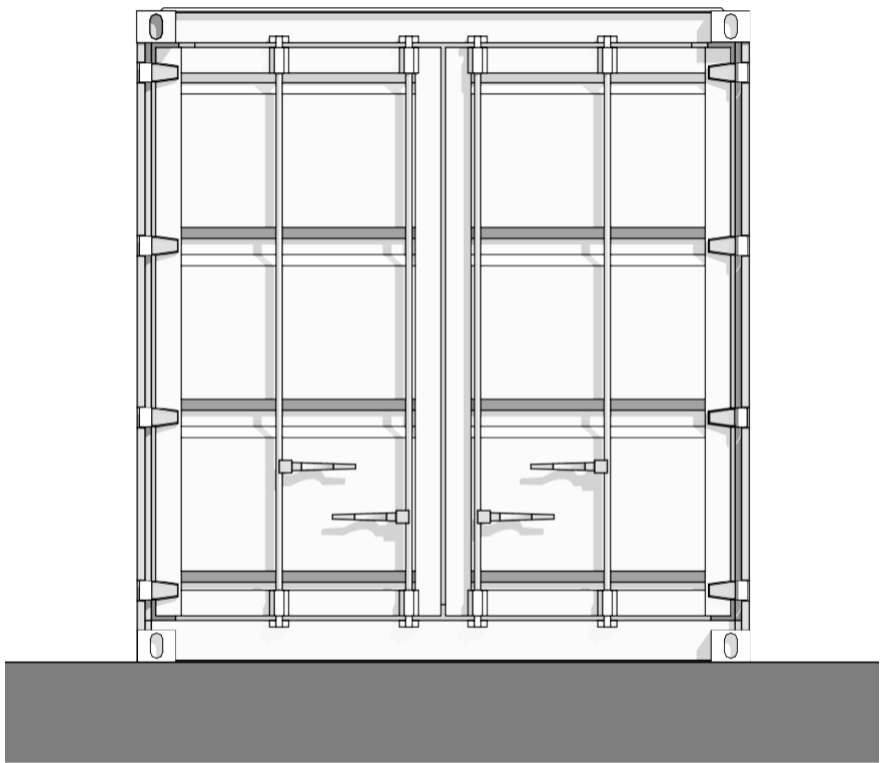
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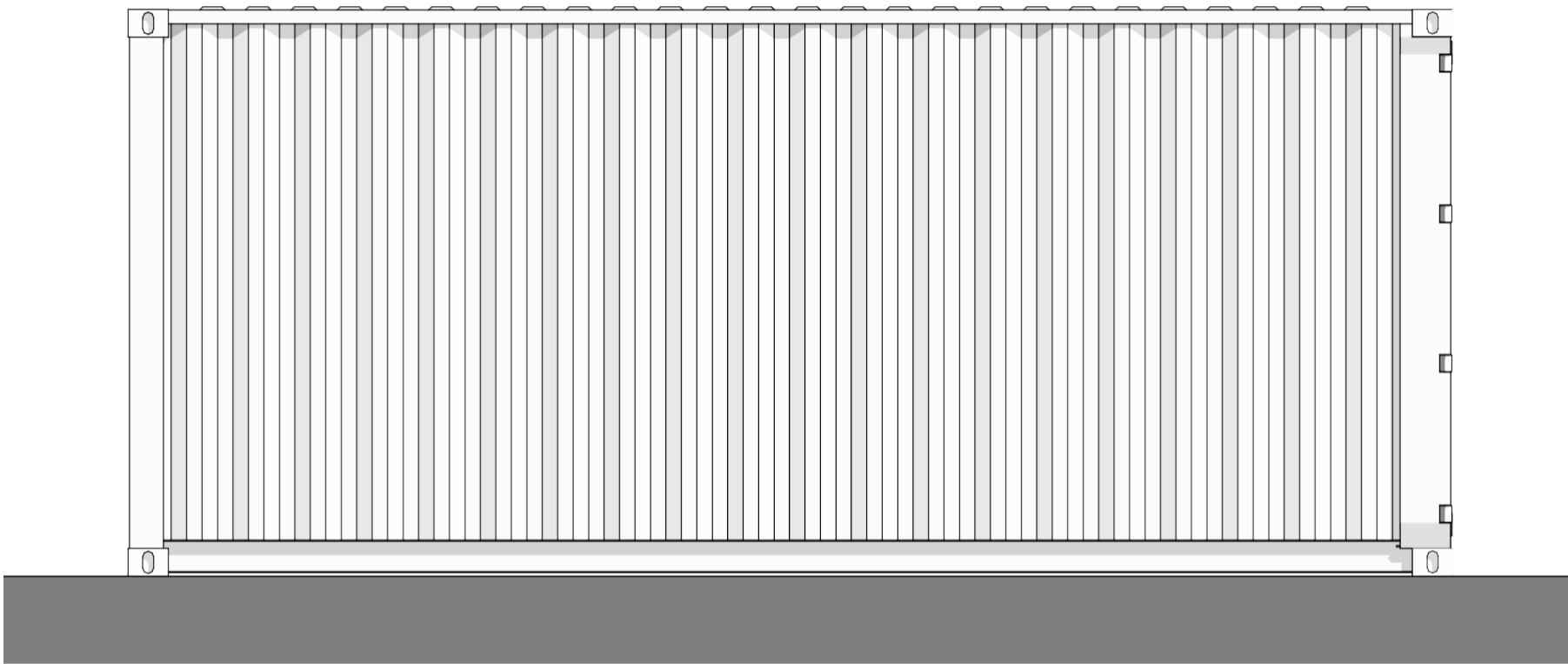
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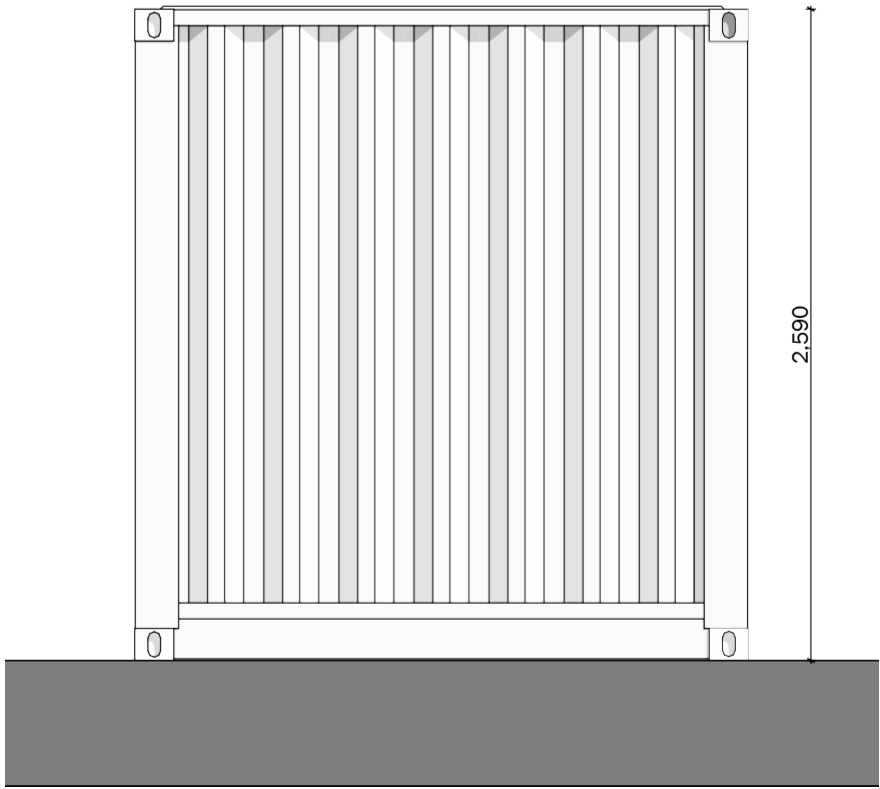
Ground Floor



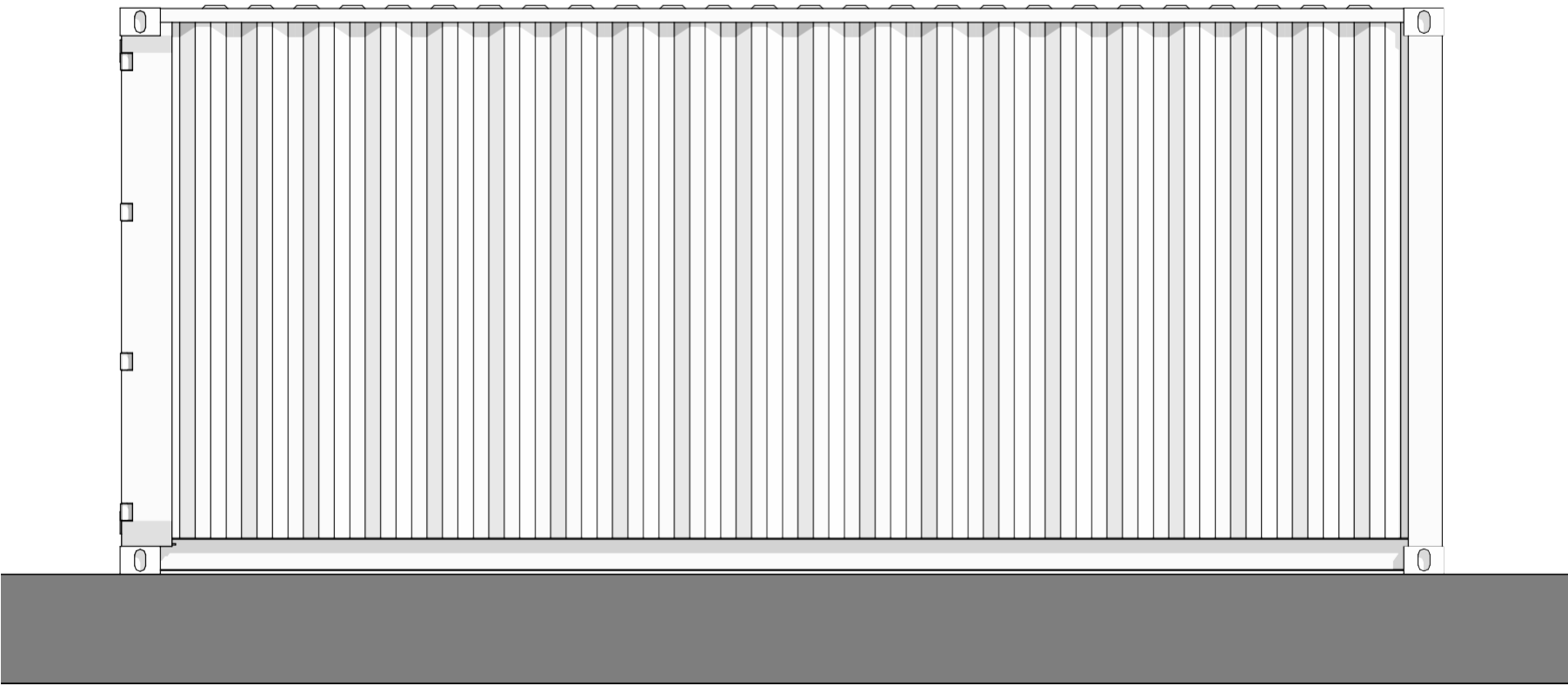
E-01 Elevation to Front



E-02 Elevation to Side



E-03 Elevation to Rear



E-04 Elevation to Side