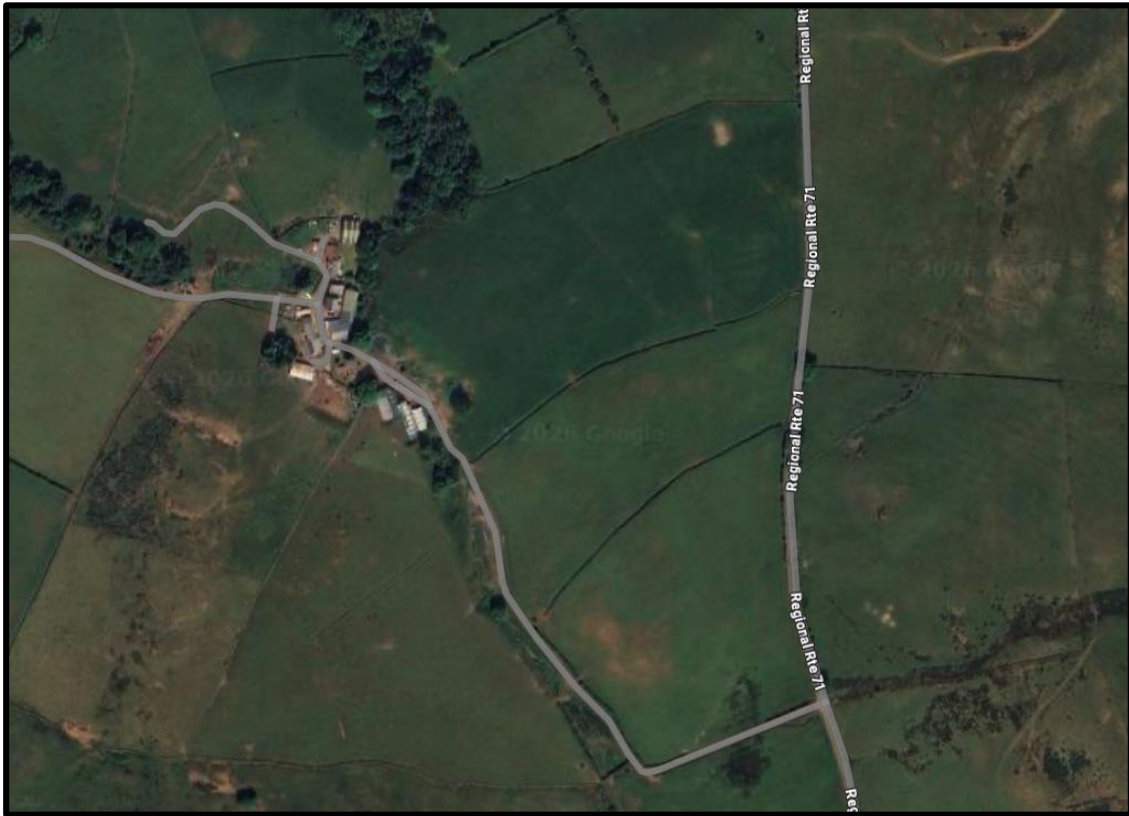


Planning Statement – Barn, Smaithwaite Farm, Lamplugh

Proposal: Change of use from a barn to a gym



Mr J Benn

March 2026

SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy

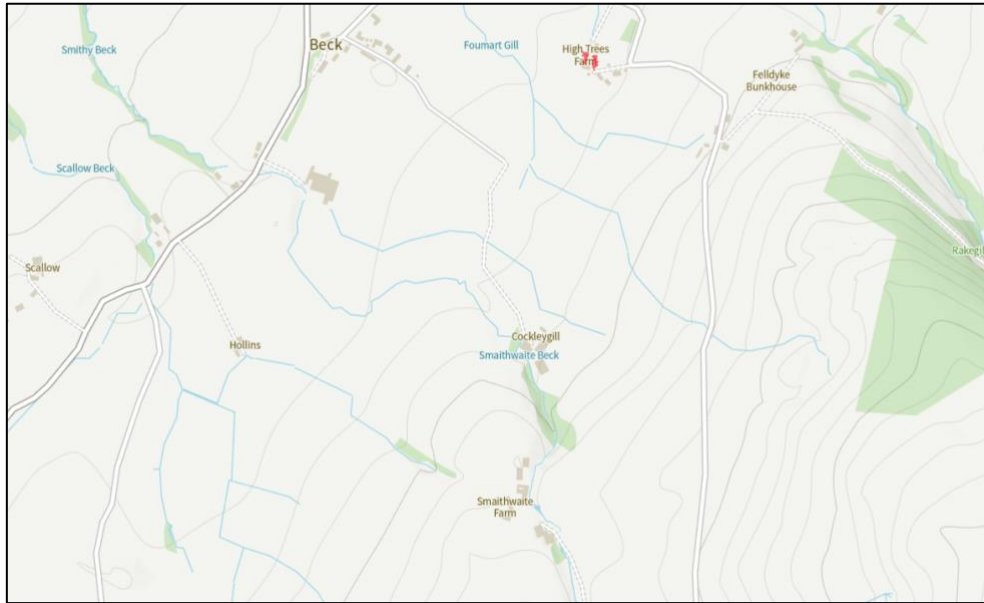


1.0 Introduction

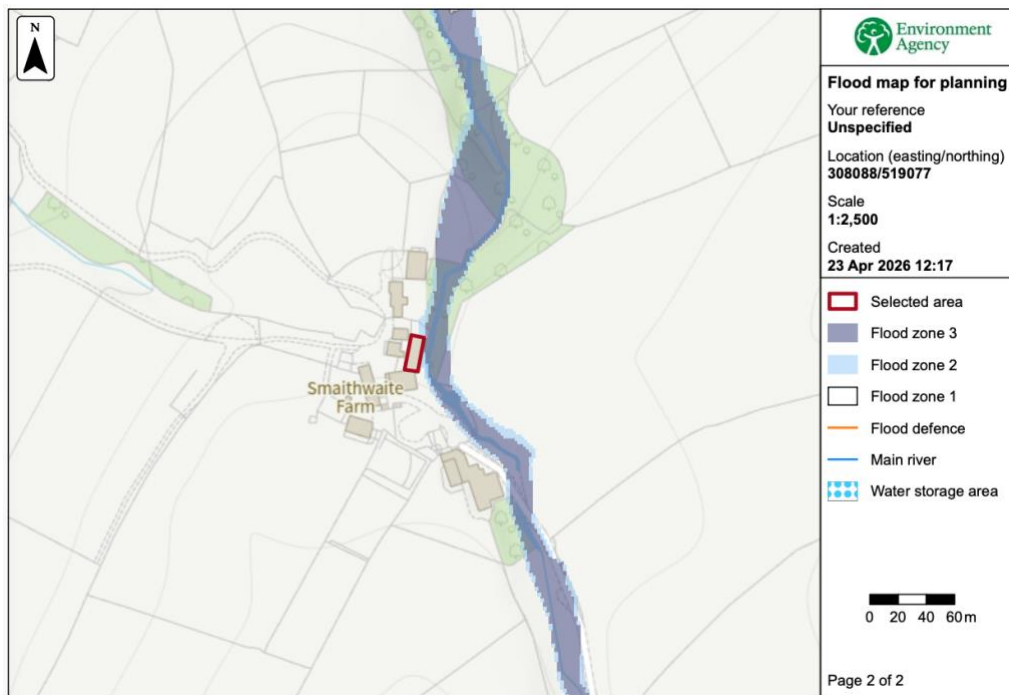
- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant in support of a planning application for a change of use from an agricultural barn to a gym at Smaithwaite Farm, Lamplugh.
- 1.2 The application is submitted in full, covering the principle of the development and all matters. The purpose of this statement is to set out the planning case in support of the development of the site, and it should be read in conjunction with the plans submitted.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this Statement will set out the site's context, Section 3 covers the proposed development, Section 4 relates to the planning history of the site and surroundings, Section 5 will set out the planning policy context against which the application must be considered and undertakes a planning assessment of the proposed development and Section 6 will draw together the conclusions.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The application related to modern barn building which lies to the east of the building group at Smaithwaite. The development adjoins further agricultural land to the east and north, to the west it adjoins the applicants dwelling, and to the south it adjoins a further agricultural building and the farmyard area.
- 2.2 The site was previously an agricultural building, but has previously been cleared out, and gym equipment put in the building. The topography is generally flat around the site, and it is contained by hedgerows and post and wire fence to the sides of the land. To the eastern boundary it adjoins Smaithwaite Beck.
- 2.3 The application site is situated to the south of the village of Lamplugh, and which has a settlement boundary for the village within the Local Plan. It is located less than a mile from the A5086 which is the secondary road through the Copeland area of Cumberland.
- 2.4 There are no Conservation Areas or Tree Preservation Order's on or directly adjacent to the site.
- 2.5 There are no Listed Building's on or near to the site. The nearest Listed Buildings are in the High Trees farm group of buildings to the north in Lamplugh, as detailed on the Copeland GIS map below. The development is however not visible from the above site and does not impact it in anyway.



2.8 The site is located in an area that the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning has noted as Flood Zone 1, and as such have a low probability of flooding.



3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The application is a full planning application therefore covering the principle of development and all details regarding access, scale, layout, landscaping and appearance of the development proposed on the site and all associated infrastructure.
- 3.2 For access, the proposed development would utilise the existing point of access from the adopted highway to the farm unit along the existing farm track. No new access, parking or access tracks would be created or necessary for the development. The existing access has passing places along the length.
- 3.3 The proposed scale of the development is the change of use of the 18.0m x 11.0m single storey modern agricultural building.
- 3.4 The layout of the proposed development would see no external changes to the building, and the installation the gym equipment internally. The building retains the feel of a barn building, with no additional insulation or boarding out being undertaken, or additional doors and windows.
- 3.5 The barn has an external area to the frontage, adjacent to the applicants dwelling which is suitable for parking 6 cars. Additional parking is also located within the farmyard.
- 3.6 The gym is not used for public use, insofar as the applicant runs small scale fitness classes from the location. The classes usually have no more than 6/7 people in at a time and are predominantly female classes. The classes are generally run during the day, starting no earlier than 8.30am and finishing no later 19.30pm.
- 3.7 The applicant's wife (Louise Benn) runs the gym class use as a farm diversification scheme. This particular barn was redundant from the farm use on the site, and she identified this as a potential suitable additional business to run from the site, and provide a rural business serving the locality, as there is no similar in Lamplugh or nearby.
- 3.8 The application site is considered well related to the existing group of buildings, the road network and it is considered that the development of the site in the proposed form is possible without having any adverse impact on residential amenity to the surrounding properties.

4.0 Planning history

- 4.1 Below is the only previous application on the site:
- 4/88/0371/0F1 – Erection of an agricultural building - Approved
- 4.2 Below are the previous planning applications on the farm unit:
- 4/03/0747/0 - EMERGENCY SERVICES TELECOMMUNICATIONS, INSTALLATION COMPRISING 12.5m HIGH TIMBER, MONOPOLE AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT - Approved
 - 4/05/2032/0 – Barn conversion to a dwelling – Approved
 - 4/10/2170/0F1 – Extension to existing agricultural building - Approved

SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy



5.0 Planning Policy and its application to the proposed development

- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Local Development Plan consists of policies within the Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2039, adopted in November 2024. The policies in the following paragraphs are considered relevant to the proposed development.
- 5.3 The Local Plan sets out a long-term spatial vision which is that it *“will be a key driver for change over the period 2021-2039 identifying opportunities to enhance Copeland’s strengths, address its weaknesses and ensure that Copeland is a place where people and business can thrive”*. It was adopted before the recently updated NPPF (December 2024) but it is considered to generally follows the principles of NPPF and in particular, sustainable development, as defined by national policy and delivering sustainable housing in accordance with that policy.

Strategic Policies

- 5.4 **Policy DS4** is regarding Design and Development standards.

“The Council will expect all new development to meet high-quality design standards which contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of residents. This means that developments must:

- a) Make use of existing buildings on site wherever practicable and deliverable, unless they have a negative impact upon the street scene;*
- b) Create and enhance locally distinctive places which are sympathetic to the surrounding context of the built, historic and natural environment and local landscape character;*
- c) Use good quality building materials that reflects local character and vernacular and are sourced locally where possible;*
- d) Incorporate high quality, inclusive and useful open spaces;*
- e) Create layouts that provide safe, accessible and convenient pedestrian and cycling routes that encourage walking and cycling based on Active Design principles and provide connections to existing walking and cycling routes where possible;*
- f) Not give rise to severe impacts on highway safety and/or a severe impact on the capacity of the highway network and allow for the safe access and manoeuvring of refuse and recycling vehicles. Should a development create such an impact then mitigation measures will be sought;*
- g) Take the needs of people with mental and physical disabilities into consideration, including through adopting dementia friendly principles;*
- h) Create opportunities that encourage social interaction;*

- i) Be built to an appropriate density that enables effective use of land, whilst maintaining high levels of amenity;*
- j) Be of flexible and adaptable design where appropriate;*
- k) Incorporate measures to design out crime and reduce the fear of crime, taking into consideration secured by design principles;*
- l) Be laid out in a way that maximises solar gain to internal spaces to promote energy efficiency and sustainable solutions;*
- m) Use appropriate levels and types of external lighting that does not create light pollution and helps maintain dark skies in line with up-to-date good lighting guidance;*
- n) Mitigate noise pollution through good layout, design and appropriate screening;*
- o) Address land contamination and land stability issues with appropriate remediation measures;*
- p) Include water efficiency measures such as rainwater recycling measures, green roofs and water butts where possible and appropriate; and*
- q) Ensure there is appropriate provision to allow residents to recycle household waste.”*

5.5 With regards to the above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with this policy. The proposed finishes to the existing building are retained, which are considered appropriate for an agricultural building, and were previously approved by the former Copeland area Planning Team of Cumberland.

There are no highway issues or safety problems that arise from the proposed development, and the site has a suitable access onto the adopted road within a short distance. The development is of a suitable size for the site and is not considered to impact upon the existing housing outside of the site boundary. There are no external lights on the building and no land contamination issues.

5.6 **Policy DS6** sets out the Councils position in relation to flood risk. This states:

The Council will ensure that flood risk is reduced and mitigated in Copeland through:

- a) Directing development to allocated sites outside areas of flood risk where possible, unless it can be demonstrated that it would provide wider sustainable benefits outweighing the flood risk and that the development would be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
- b) Only permitting wind fall development in areas of flood risk where applicants have carried out the flood risk sequential and exception tests to the satisfaction of the Council and appropriate mitigation is provided;
- c) Supporting measures to address the constraints of existing drainage infrastructure capacity;
- d) Avoiding development in areas where the existing drainage infrastructure is inadequate, unless appropriate mitigation is provided;

SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy



- e) Supporting new flood defence measures to protect against both tidal and fluvial flooding in the Plan area, including appropriate land management as part of a catchment wide approach;
 - f) Ensuring that any development that incorporates flood mitigation strategies does not have adverse effects on water quality;
 - g) Requiring the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems where appropriate; and
 - h) Working with partners to manage the risk associated with coastal erosion and flooding and ensure that all new development is located outside areas identified as being at risk either now or in future revisions of the Shoreline Management Plan.
- 5.7 The application is adjacent to Smaithwaite Beck, but it is not in a higher category flood zone, has not had any issues with flooding previously and will not cause any further flooding problems.

5.8 **Policy E1** is regarding Economic Growth in Copeland. This states as follows:

'The economy of Copeland will be strengthened and broadened to provide a diverse range of employment and economic opportunities that will attract new key industries and provide the flexibility to accommodate existing businesses and new initiatives by:

- *Maintaining, enhancing, regenerating and where appropriate extending the employment base in our towns and settlements in accordance with the Development Strategy, and supporting the economies of our rural communities;*
- *Developing a positive brand for the area, building on the 'Energy Coast' to attract inward investment and drive exports;*
- *Maximising Copeland's expertise and innovation in energy, nuclear decommissioning and clean growth through innovative businesses, and supporting the clustering of such businesses;*
- *Prioritising high-quality office provision within Whitehaven and the Key Service Centres to meet inward investment needs;*
- *Supporting flexible workspace, collaborative spaces and touch down zones;*
- *Creating a broader based and resilient economy, that encourages a skilled work force to remain in or relocate to Copeland;*
- *Placing digital and data at the heart of Copeland's economy;*
- *Promoting investment in the public realm of employment sites and working with owners to achieve improvement and regeneration of appropriate sites;*
- *Supporting the establishment and success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with the inclusion of provision for starter units, start-up businesses, collaborative space for business to grow, live-work units on new and regenerated employment sites and offices;*
- *Working with learning and training bodies, job centres and higher education providers to develop a skilled workforce and improve employability;*

SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy



- *Supporting economic development associated with learning and training centres;*
- *Helping the economy in rural areas by supporting rural enterprises and rural diversification that will encourage, tourism, recreation, rural regeneration, and farm diversification, and complement new appropriate agriculture and forestry development where appropriate.'*

5.9 The above policy is considered important in the consideration of the application. Firstly, this is an application to help the economy in a rural area and is a farm diversification scheme. The barn was no longer required for agricultural purposes, and the gym use will provide additional income into the farm business.

By approving this application, the development will be supporting the success of a local Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) rural farming business.

5.10 **Policy N3** is regarding biodiversity net gain (BNG). This details that all development, with the exception of that listed in the Environment Act 2021 and any documents which may supersede it must provide at least 10% biodiversity net gain over and above existing site levels, following the application of the mitigation hierarchy set out in Policy N1 above. This is in addition to any compensatory habitat provided under Policy N1. Net gain should be delivered on site where possible.

5.11 The application is exempt from the BNG regulations, given that no habitat land will be lost in the proposal.

5.12 **Policy RE3** is the local plan policy regarding the Conversion of rural buildings to commercial or community use. This states as follows:

'The conversion and re-use of buildings in the open countryside for commercial or community use will be supported where:

a) The building is redundant or disused, is of a traditional design and construction and the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the historic environment, the character of the local landscape or its setting;

b) The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for significant extension, alteration or reconstruction;

c) The development conserves the essential character of the building and enhances the immediate surroundings;

d) Safe road access is in place or can be created without damaging the rural character of the surrounding area;

e) The proposed curtilage area is appropriate in scale to the character of the building and will not result in adverse visual impacts; and

f) Conversion would not have a significant negative impact on the natural environment and appropriate ecological surveys are carried out where necessary.

When granting permission under this policy the Council will remove permitted development rights where necessary to protect the character of the building and landscape.'

- 5.13 The above policy is the key consideration in the determination of the planning application. The barn was redundant, partly due to its location adjacent to the farmhouse, and partly due to the detachment from other existing buildings. It is sound and is capable of conversion given that no additional works are required. The development retains the character and surroundings of the site. The road access is suitable for the additional small use this will create and has good visibility onto the adopted highway.

Principle – National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (as revised December 2024)

- 5.14 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that sustainable development has three objectives social, economic and environmental.

- 5.15 The social and economic are as follows:

*“a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being. “*

It is noted in the above that a central aim of the NPPF is to ensure that the right type of land is available in the right areas.

- 5.16 Paragraph 11 covers the issue of the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

*“For **decision-taking** this means:*

Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

- 5.17 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF regarding the rural economy, states as follows:

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;

- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”*

5.18 As detailed previously in this statement, this is an application to diversify a long-standing existing farm business.

By approving this application, the development will be supporting the income of the farm business by diversification to help the rural economy in this area.

5.19 The proposed development is considered appropriate to the size, character and role of the location and immediate site. The submitted application will not cause any significant increase in terms of traffic within the locality from the development. The proposed development is situated adjacent to existing development and is therefore an appropriate use on the site.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed application provides the opportunity for diversification to this farm business in the Borough.

6.2 The proposed development has been carefully considered to take into account the site characteristics, surroundings, wider location and separation distances to residential properties.

6.3 It is contended therefore that the proposed development is acceptable and is in accordance with both national and local planning policy, and therefore should be approved.

Simon Blacker MRTPI