

2 October 2022

Ribble Valley Borough Council
Planning Department
Council Offices
Church Walk
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BB7 2RA
FAO Mark Waleczek

BY EMAIL:
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Dear Mark

RE: Planning Application 3/2022/0737 - Laneside Farm, Grindleton Road, West Bradford BB7 4QJ

I write in my capacity as Clerk to West Bradford Parish Council. As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council always seeks to balance the need for any development (especially in an agricultural or employment context) against the residential amenity of the village. This is particularly so in instances of claimed “agricultural” status, where relief from business rates may accrue; here, even greater scrutiny of a planning application is appropriate.

In terms of the consultation process, details of the above application were initially sent in error to Grindleton (rather than West Bradford) Parish Council; however, the application has now been considered at length in a meeting of West Bradford Parish Council held on 28 September, and as a result the Parish Council would wish to submit the following observations. These fall into two categories:

1) Intended use of the building

Members noted that the applicant clearly claims the use of the proposed building will be as a “multi use **agricultural** building” [my emphasis]. Further references to agricultural use are listed below:

- the application form states that the existing use of the land is for “agriculture”, and – significantly - the proposal does not involve the “carrying out of industrial or commercial activities and processes”; and
- the completed “additional information” form states that the enterprise consists of (*inter alia*) “Sheep (ewes) 450”; and the building is for agricultural purposes as it is intended as a “General purpose building to be used for the storage of farm machinery, equipment, and other agricultural items”.

However, members are under the impression that the main business operating from the site may not be of a traditional farming nature; whilst sheep are raised on the land surrounding the site, this activity is carried out by businesses separate to and independent of that of the applicant. It is believed that the applicant himself does not own or farm any sheep. In contrast, the applicant’s business of Horner Shearing would appear to be run on a commercial and manufacturing basis. This is evidenced by the following information published online by the applicant:

- a) The website page for Horner Shearing of Laneside Farm describes the company's activities as follows:

"Horner Shearing manufacture the Longhorn 12 volt shearing machines. Horner Shearing sell sheep shearing machines to shearers and farmers in all parts of UK, Europe and many countries overseas. Horner Shearing repair and service all types of sheep shearing machines, cattle clippers, and horse clippers. We offer a rapid despatch of all items."

This website can be viewed in full at the following address:

<https://west-bradford.cylex-uk.co.uk/company/horner-shearing-17723705.html>

- b) The Facebook page for Horner Shearing of Laneside Farm states:

"We started selling Sheep shearing machines and animal clippers, direct to farmers, over 30 years ago. This includes Lister, Supershear, Heiniger and Beiyuan. In 1990 we began manufacture of our own "Longhorn 12 volt" battery machines-- 100% Made in Britain. We now manufacture top-quality flexible driveshafts for most machines, and sell spares for most machines, and clothing and accessories under our own "Longhorn" brand."

The Facebook page can be viewed in full at the following address:

<https://www.facebook.com/hornershearing/>

If the applicant's business of Horner Shearing does indeed comprise the manufacture and repair of sheep shearing equipment (an industrial process), as well as the sale of such items (a commercial activity), then this could be considered as inconsistent with the claims submitted on the application form.

The Parish Council accepts that – from a technical Planning perspective – the definition of what is an "agricultural" use may extend beyond traditional farming and encompass ancillary activities (such as the commercial manufacture and supply of sheep shearing products). However, members would ask that members of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) – guided by their professional Planning officers - explore this issue further when determining the application.

2) Size of the existing business

Members also considered the scale of the existing business already operating from the site, which- although not situated within the Forest of Bowland AONB – is literally within yards of the AONB border and in a prime rural location. To illustrate its size, a photograph of the site (taken on 1 October 2022 from the adjacent Grindleton Rd) is enclosed at the end of this letter.

The recent planning history of the site is set out below:

- 3/2020/0256 – this most recent consent relates to the building on the eastern side of Laneside Farm and which is currently under construction. The LPA determined that planning consent for the "multi purpose agricultural building" was not required. The delegated report arising from the application stated that the building was:

"reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit. The proposal is described by the agent as a multipurpose building for the storage of animal food and agricultural equipment / machinery. It will not be used to house animals."

This building is 970.2 square metres in area and 8.5m in height;

- 3/2019/0534 – this consent relates to the erection of “One new building to provide farm office, workshop and store.” This is the office building situated at the Grindleton Rd end of the site; and
- 3/2017/0397 – this consent relates to the existing building on the western side of the site. The application related to a “Proposed extension to an existing agricultural machinery storage building.”

The area of this building is stated to be 663 square metres.

There are therefore 3 buildings already in situ, two of which are extremely large. If approved, the internal floorspace of the building in application 3/2022/0737 will cover a further 732 square metres, bringing the total area to be covered by 3 site buildings (excluding the office) to 2,365.2 square metres. Whilst members are always keen to support local businesses, and recognise the importance of providing appropriate employment opportunities within the parish, they would question whether the erection of a third large unit would be in keeping with the local environment. Indeed, members have expressed concerns as to whether the current rate of site expansion could continue and, if so, how large could the site become?

The Parish Council would suggest that, if members of the Planning and Development Committee are unfamiliar with the site, they undertake a site visit prior to determining the application. Alternatively, if the LPA should be minded to approve the application, then it would be helpful for conditions to be imposed on the consent which would minimise local impact (eg the requirement for trees to be grown in order to conceal the site when viewed from Grindleton Rd).

In summary, the Parish Council would ask the LPA to seriously consider the appropriateness of approving application 3/2022/0737, given the questions over its agricultural status and the already extensive buildings in use on the site.

I note that the last date for submission of comments is 3 October 2022. I would be grateful if the above comments could be considered when Planning Application 3/2022/0737 is determined.

Yours sincerely

A Glover
Clerk to West Bradford Parish Council

