

Jane Tucker

From: Claire Booth
Sent: 19 March 2012 14:27
To: Jane Tucker
Subject: FW: Ramsgreave Hall Farm, Ramsgreave Road, Ramsgreave, Blackburn, BB1 9DS, application number: 3/2012/0033.
Attachments: Ramsgreave Hall Farm.pdf

From: Robertson, Ed [mailto:Ed.Robertson@lancashire.gov.uk]
Sent: 19 March 2012 12:46
To: Claire Booth
Subject: Ramsgreave Hall Farm, Ramsgreave Road, Ramsgreave, Blackburn, BB1 9DS, application number: 3/2012/0033.

Dear Claire,

Please find attached my comments for Ramsgreave Hall Farm, Ramsgreave Road, Ramsgreave, Blackburn, BB1 9DS, application number: 3/2012/0033.

I am sorry for the delay in getting this report to you.

Should you have any queries regarding my report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would be most grateful if you could please confirm that you have received the report.

Regards,

Ed.

Ed Robertson BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV
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19/03/2012

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Your ref 3/2012/0033
Our ref PG/EVP/ER/3/49/8384/LK
Date 19 March 2012

Dear Miss Booth

APPLICATION NUMBER 3/2012/0033
RAMSGREAVE HALL FARM, RAMSGREAVE ROAD, RAMSGREAVE,
BLACKBURN, BB1 9DS
GRID REFERENCE 367726 431896

I refer to your consultation letter concerning the above application and have the following comments to make.

Introduction

A planning application has been submitted by Mr Steven Bialecki of S J Bialecki Ltd on behalf of Mrs Mary Wade for the erection of an agricultural building and access track. A site visit was made on 27 February 2012 whilst the applicant's nephew and her agent were present. The information provided at this site meeting together with the written submissions, forms the basis of this appraisal.

Background Information

I understand that the applicant has owned Ramsgreave Hall Farm for a number of years with the applicant and her husband farming the land in hand. Upon the retirement of the applicant and her husband, I understand that the part of land was let out to a neighbouring farmer. This agreement lasted until approximately 12 months ago when the land was taken back in hand by the applicant to be farmed by her nephew, Mr D Orrell.

I was informed that it is Mr Orrell who will be utilising the new building in order to work the land, shelter his current stock/machinery and expand his livestock numbers. I understand that no formal agreement currently exists between the applicant and her nephew and he operates no formal agricultural business from the unit.

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It is my understanding that the applicant's nephew intends to farm all of the land situated at Ramsgreave Hall Farm as a mixed beef and sheep enterprise.

Agricultural Land

I was told that Ramsgreave Hall Farm extends to approximately 108 acres (43.7 hectares) of land, all of which is owned by the applicant and to be farmed by her nephew, Mr Orrell. I was informed that all of the land is currently down to grass although large areas of the land are in a poor condition and in need of improvement. Mr Orrell stated that it was intention to improve the grassland over the next few years with the future aim of taking a cut of hay from as much of the land as possible.

Agricultural Enterprise

The current agricultural enterprise undertaken at Ramsgreave Hall Farm is carried out solely by Mr Orrell and consists of a flock of some 80 breeding ewes.

I was informed by Mr Orrell that it is his intention to expand the agricultural operations undertaken from the unit, with the restoration of the land and the increase of livestock numbers upon the unit to approximately 150 head of sheep in addition to a beef herd consisting of some 20-30 head of cattle.

Whilst I understand that Mr Orrell has a background in agriculture, he recognised that he will need to build up both his livestock numbers in addition to agricultural tools, machinery and buildings to successfully operate the farm.

Existing Buildings

The agricultural buildings situated at Ramsgreave Hall Farm are mainly of a traditional type design.

I was told that of the three remaining agricultural type buildings, being a barn and two further agricultural outbuildings, two have been granted planning permission for conversion to residential use under applications 3/1993/0570 and 3/1993/0644. I was told by the applicant's agent that these planning permissions were still valid.

Proposed Development

The application is for the erection of a new agricultural storage building along with the formation of a new access track to serve the agricultural building as shown on the plans attached.

I was informed that the agricultural building will serve a dual purpose for the storage of the applicant's machinery, tools and agricultural equipment, in addition to providing accommodation for his livestock.

I was informed that the new building was necessary as the two existing agricultural buildings are no longer fit for agricultural purpose due to their design, dilapidated state and eventually conversion for residential purposes. I was told that Mr Orrell wished to erect a new purpose built facility to enable him to establish the business and expand the level of operations undertaken from the unit.

Assessment

The proposed development is within an area shown on the Ribble Valley Local Plan as being land in Open Countryside and land in Green Belt. Policy ENV 4 of the Local Plan provides guidance concerning development within the Green Belt and states that:

"Planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for erection of new buildings other than for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sports and recreation, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purpose of the designation."

With reference to this policy, I consider the following matters should be taken into account when assessing this application.

1. The development is needed for the purposes of agriculture.

The proposed development is to be used by the applicant's nephew to support his emerging agricultural enterprise. In my opinion, the present agricultural operations currently undertaken upon the unit are of a relatively small scale with moderately low livestock numbers and a limited amount of agricultural machinery and equipment owned by Mr Orrell. I do however acknowledge that it is Mr Orrell's intention to expand his operations undertaken at Ramsgreave Hall Farm and he believes the addition of the new building would enable him to improve the current situation whilst facilitating his expansion plans.

I understand that no written agreement currently exists between the applicant and her nephew, meaning that Mr Orrell, who will be undertaking the agricultural operations, has limited security over the land. This is an issue that I believe should be addressed, especially when considering the justification for the building is to aid Mr Orrell's operations.

Notwithstanding my comments above, it must be recognised that there is a significant acreage of agricultural land situated at Ramsgreave Hall Farm which could, in my opinion, if the improvement works and expansions plans are undertaken, support a larger commercial agricultural enterprise. In regards to the current situation, it is clear that agricultural operations, albeit on a relatively small scale, are being undertaken from the unit by Mr Orrell and it is my opinion, that there is a genuine need for an agricultural building upon the unit to support the existing operations and facilitate the future expansion of farm operations.

My comments above are made on the basis that two of the three existing agricultural buildings will not be available to the applicant due to the permissions for their conversion still being valid.

Notwithstanding my comments above, it is my opinion that, due to their traditional design and dilapidated state, the existing agricultural buildings are limited for modern agricultural operations, even if they were not to be converted.

2. The design and size are appropriate for the intended use.

The proposed building is to serve a dual purpose for the storage of the applicant's livestock in addition to his machinery and equipment. Whilst the current enterprise undertaken from the unit is of a small scale, it is my opinion that the size of the proposed building is acceptable and does provide for some expansion of operations.

The design of the proposed building is of a standard design with the materials suitable for the proposed use. Therefore, it is, in my opinion, that the design and size of the building is appropriate for its intended use.

3. Siting

The proposed siting of the building is away from the original farmstead and Ramsgreave Hall Farmhouse. I was informed by the applicant's nephew that the proposed siting of the building was chosen due to its proximity to the majority of the farm's grazing land. In addition, due to the proposed conversion of the farm buildings at Ramsgreave Hall Farm for residential purposes, and the existing use of the other buildings at the unit, such as

a nursery, it was considered that a new agricultural building would be better sited away from the main farmstead.

In my opinion, it is not typical for a new building to be sited in an isolated position away from the main farmstead. However, notwithstanding my comments above, it is clear, given the planning history of the unit, that the existing farmstead is no longer strictly a working agricultural unit, with all of the original farm buildings either converted or in a dilapidated state and due for conversion. On this basis, I do not believe that it is strictly essential, from an operational point of view, for the proposed development to be sited on the original farmstead, although a site close to the existing buildings could be chosen.

The proposed siting of the new building is in a central position upon the farm and, in my opinion, has a number of operational advantages; however, there are other positions upon the unit where the proposed development could be sited, including positions closer to the existing farmstead or the existing access track. Taking this into account, I consider the siting of any development should be determined by wider planning policy matter, eg. the visual impact, as opposed to operational aspects.

Should the council be mindful to grant planning permission in regards to this application, they should consider that with the re-introduction of farm operations at Ramsgreave Hall Farm in conjunction with the area of farm land available and the planning history of the unit, that the applicant may seek further development in the future. This may influence the siting of the proposed building.

The council should also note that the proposed position of the development is detached from the existing farmhouse and all the services that the farmhouse provides, although I note that the applicant, Mrs Wade, will have no day to day involvement in the farm operations.

I would be grateful to receive a copy of your Decision Notice in due course.

Yours sincerely



E P G Robertson BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV
Senior Assistant Land Agent
on behalf of the Director of Property