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Your ref 3/2012/0137
Our ref PG/EVP/ER/3/12/8403/LK
Date 11 April 2012

Mr Graham Thorpe
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA

11 APR 2012

Dear Mr Thorpe

**APPLICATIONS NUMBER 3/2012/0137, 0138 & 0139
FISHES AND PEGGY HILL FARM, HENTHORNE ROAD, CLITHEROE,
BB7 3BY
GRID REFERENCE 372653 439551**

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

Introduction

Three planning applications have been submitted by Mr Andrew Coney of P Wilson & Company on behalf of Mr Mark Ashworth for the construction of a new 100 cow cubicle building with associated yard and access in addition to a new silage clamp, machinery shed and slurry lagoon. A site visit was made on 26 March 2012 whilst the agent and the applicant were present. The information provided at this meeting, together with written submissions, forms the basis of this appraisal.

Background Information

I understand that Fishes and Peggy Hill Farm has been occupied by the applicant and his family for a significant period of time. I was informed that the applicant currently operates a dairy enterprise under the name of M D B & J Ashworth. I was told by the applicant that the proposed development is necessary to enable him to increase the scale of operations undertaken from the farm in order to provide a living for both him and his son, who has recently joined the family business. In addition, the applicant believes that the proposed development will help create a more economically viable business, which can benefit from economies of scale. Finally the applicant believes the proposals will facilitate a higher level of management of both his stock and grassland.

E P G Robertson BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV
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Agricultural Land

I was informed that the applicant farms approximately 262 acres (106 hectares) of which approximately 174 acres (70 hectares) of land is owned by the applicant and the remaining 80 acres (35.6 hectares) of land is taken on a Farm Business Tenancy, which has been held by the applicant for a number of years.

Agricultural Enterprise

The principal enterprise of the unit is that of a commercial dairy herd consisting of approximately 135 cows. I understand that the applicant operates a 'flying herd' system with the calves sold on soon after birth. In addition, I was told that the applicant allows sheep to graze his land over the winter months.

Existing Buildings

A range of traditional and modern type buildings are situated at the application site.

Proposed Development

The applications submitted are for the erection of a new dairy cubicle building, silage clamp, machinery shed, slurry lagoon and new yard/track layout, all of which are shown on the plans submitted.

The applicants informed me that all of the development proposed is required to facilitate the expansion of operations at Fishes and Peggy Hill Farm in order that the business can support both the applicant and his son, in addition to making the business more economically viable, improving the layout of the farmstead and enabling better management of the applicant's land and stock.

Assessment

The proposed development is within an area shown on the Ribble Valley Local Plan as being outside the main settlement/village boundaries in addition to being classified as open countryside. Policy G5 provides guidance for development in land outside the main settlement/village boundaries and states:

'outside the main settlement boundaries and the village boundaries, planning permission will only be granted for small scale developments, which are:

- ii) needs for the purposes of agriculture or forestry**

With reference to this policy, I consider the following matters should be taken into account when assessing the application for each of the proposed structures to be erected by the applicant.

1. **The development is needed for the purpose of agriculture.**
2. **The design, scale and materials used for the building are appropriate.**
3. **Siting.**

I intend to address all three of the above issues for each part of the proposed application in turn.

a) Cubicle Building

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

When considering the proposed expansion, it is important to consider the amount of land available to the applicant to support the increase in dairy cow numbers. In my opinion, whilst the stocking rates of the unit would be significantly increased by the proposed expansion of the applicant's herd, I believe that the applicant has a sufficient acreage to support the proposed expansion.

I was informed that the additional cattle accommodation building would facilitate the expansion of the applicant's herd to approximately 250 dairy cows whilst improving overcrowding upon the unit.

Having inspected the existing buildings and discussed the current and future plans for the enterprise with the applicant and his agent, it is my opinion that the existing accommodation is near to full capacity and would not be able to accommodate any large expansion of the herd.

The proposed building would provide a purpose built facility for the expansion of the herd whilst, in my opinion, alleviate any problems of overcrowding within the current and expanded herd.

I therefore consider the building to be necessary for the purpose of agriculture upon the unit.

2. **The design, scale and materials used for the building are appropriate.**

The design of the building is in accordance with the intended agricultural use and is a purpose built building. The inclusion of a ventilated ridge and cable driven curtain wall system on the east and west elevation would provide good ventilation through the building. The cubicle type accommodation proposed is typical for this type of farming enterprise and is, in my opinion, suitable.

The size of the proposed building is in proportion to the proposed increase in cow numbers within the tenant's herd, providing an appropriate area for cows to rest and feed.

3. Siting

The proposed building would be situated to the west of the existing cubicle buildings on the western side of the existing slurry tank

It is my opinion, due to the limitations of the farmstead, that the proposed building is situated in the most appropriate position relative to the existing accommodation and dairy/parlour.

b) Silage Clamp

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

Should the Council consider the proposal to increase the applicant's herd size as acceptable, then in my opinion, further development would be necessary to meet the requirements of an increased herd. In my opinion, a further silage clamp would be necessary to provide storage for the silage needed to feed the applicant's expanded herd.

2. The design, scale and materials used for the building are appropriate.

The proposed structure is of a standard design and would, in my opinion, provide a suitable storage facility for the applicant's silage.

In my opinion, the size of the silage clamp is in proportion to the demands of the increased number of dairy cows proposed to be kept by the applicant

Although the applicant informed me that it would be the case, as with every new silage clamp, the proposed development must have perimeter effluent channels leading to an effluent tank with suitable storage capabilities.

3. Siting

The new silage clamp will be situated next to the existing silage clamp and in my opinion, is in a suitable position from operational point of view.

c. Machinery Shed

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

As a result of the proposed expansion of the herd, the applicant intends to re-organise the use of his existing farm buildings with the present machinery shed proposed to be used for the accommodation of the herd's dry cows. The erection of a new machinery building would provide for the loss of storage incurred through the re-organisation of the existing farm buildings.

Whilst, in my opinion, the keeping of items of machinery undercover is not strictly essential, I acknowledge that the storage of machinery undercover is beneficial from the point of view of security and maintenance.

2. **The design, scale and materials used for the building are appropriate.**

The design of the building is in accordance with the intended agricultural use and is a purpose built building. The open elevation on one side will allow for easy access to and from the building.

The size of the proposed building is, in my opinion, proportionate to the levels of machinery that the applicant owns and proposes to store.

3. **Siting**

The proposed siting of the machinery shed is at the south end of the farm, adjacent to the proposed new silage clamp. As with the proposed cubicle shed, due to the location and layout of the farm, possible positions for the proposed building are, in my opinion, limited. It is my opinion that the proposed position of the building is suitable from an operational point of view when considering the existing and proposed farm buildings.

d) Slurry Lagoon

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

With the proposed expansion of the dairy herd upon the unit, a greater amount of slurry storage will be required. In addition, the applicant would like to increase the length of storage available upon the unit to provide for up to six months worth of slurry storage. It is proposed that the new lagoon will provide slurry storage in conjunction with the existing slurry tower, providing the necessary levels of storage for a six month period. I was told that the existing tower will act as an initial storage facility, before the slurry is pumped into the lagoon. The applicant informed me that the additional slurry storage

will enable him to spread his slurry at appropriate times of the year whilst alleviate the problems caused by a lack of storage.

In assessing the current storage facilities in addition to considering the potential increase in stock numbers, it is my opinion that the current facilities are limited and should the number of cows upon the unit increase, additional storage will be required.

2 The design, scale and materials used for the building are appropriate.

The use of slurry lagoons is one type of facility suitable for the storage of slurry. Other facilities include above ground circular stores.

Consultation should be made with the Environment Agency on matters such as the siting and design of the lagoon, e.g. in connection to the soil permeability and whether a membrane is required.

One concern I have in relation to the lagoon relates to the depth and width of the earth embankment in connection to the volume of slurry being stored. Embankment walls typically slope and the depth of a lagoon is usually two metres plus the height of the embankment.

3 Siting

The proposed slurry lagoon is situated away from the main farmstead. The applicant informed me that the proposed location was chosen due to its proximity to the majority of his land. The applicant intends to use umbilical system to spread the manure and believes that the siting of the proposed lagoon will better facilitate this method of spreading.

Whilst I do not believe that the proposed siting of the lagoon is inappropriate, and consider the position to have benefits, especially when considering the proposed spreading methods of the applicant, the slurry lagoon does not have to be situated at the proposed location and there are other positions upon the unit which the Council may find more appropriate.

e) Concrete Yard and Stone Road.

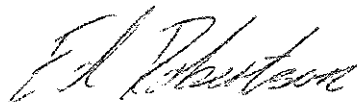
The additional farm yard and stone tracks would be required serve the new facilities proposed within Mr Ashworth's three applications. Should the council be mindful to grant permission for the cubicle building, machinery shed and silage clamp proposed above, it is my opinion that the additional yard and farm tracks would be necessary to serve the new facilities and improve access around the farmyard.

Mr Graham Thorpe

11 April 2012

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'E P G Robertson'.

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