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Your ref 3/2012/0157P
Our ref OCE/EVP/ER/3/22/8453/LK
Date 6 July 2012

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

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION NUMBER 3/2012/0157P
LAND ADJACENT TO HOTHERSALL LANE, HOTHERSALL, PRESTON,
PR3 2XB
GRID REFERENCE 362101 436772

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 Mrs Julia Pye on behalf of Mr Tony Kieran for the erection of a multi-purpose agricultural building for the accommodation of his livestock and the storage of hay, straw and general agricultural items. A site inspection was undertaken on 28 June 2012, whilst the applicant, his agent and his cousin, who is also his landlord were present. The information provided at the meeting together with the written submissions, forms the basis of this appraisal.

Background Information

I understand that the applicant started operating as an agricultural sole trader approximately two years ago, although he still maintains a full time job as an agricultural contractor. I was told that the applicant manages his flock during his own time, working around his full time job.

Land

I was informed that the applicant farms a total of approximately 96 acres (38.85 hectares), all of which is rented. I understand that approximately 74 acres (29.95 hectares) of the applicant's total farmed area is located off Hothersall Lane with the remaining 22 acres (8.90 hectares) of land being situated around Longridge in three separate parcels. The applicant informed me that he currently lives in

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Longridge with his partner and her parent in their property. I understand that there is approximately 2 acres (0.81 hectares) of land situated at this address

All of the above land is rented by the applicant and I was informed that currently no formal written agreements are in place for any land, although I understand that the 22 acres (8.9 hectares) of land situated at the application site belong to the applicant's cousin, who was present at our site meeting and stated that she intended to let the land to the applicant for the long term future. In addition, I was told that the remaining 52 acres (21.04 hectares) of land situated off Hothersall Lane was going to be put onto a formal written agreement in the near future.

As well as the land above, I understand that the applicant takes approximately 140 acres (56.66 hectares) of winter grazing in two plots situated in Hoghton and Inglewhite.

I was told that all of the applicant's land is down to grass, with a crop of hay taken from approximately 20 acres (8.09 hectares) and a cut of silage also taken.

Agricultural Enterprise

I understand that the applicant has a flock of approximately 140 breeding ewes along with some 160 lambs and approximately 250 store lambs, although I was informed that the store lambs have recently been sold.

The applicant told me that he lambs his flock in two cycles, starting in March for approximately two months. I was told that currently, much of the lambing has to take place outside due to no building being available at the application site.

Existing Buildings

There are no buildings situated at the application site at the current time.

I understand that the applicant has, during the past year, used a building in Bilsborrow for the purposes of lambing his flock; however, I was informed that the use of this building was a one-off occurrence and the future use of this building was not a viable long term option due to its position in relation to his land in addition to the owners continued need for the building.

Proposed Development

It is proposed to construct a multi-purpose building for the accommodation of the applicant's livestock and the storage of hay, straw and general agricultural items.

The applicant informed me that he required the building for a number of reasons. Firstly, the applicant stated that he needed a facility to provide undercover accommodation for his flock, enabling him to undertake lambing earlier in the year and providing shelter for finishing off his store lambs.

Secondly, the applicant stated that the facility would help improve the welfare of his flock whilst reducing his losses by providing shelter, especially during the lambing period.

Thirdly, the applicant stated that the building would provide a facility for handling and sorting his flock during various husbandry activities such as worming and clipping.

Finally, the applicant stated that the building would provide a storage facility for hay and straw needed for his flock in addition to various agricultural items such as fertiliser, feed etc.

The applicant stated that the proposed building would support the existing business in addition to facilitating the planned expansion of his operations.

Assessment

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

"outside the main settlement boundaries and the village boundaries, planning consent will only be granted for a small scale development, which are:

- ii) needed for the purposes of agriculture or forestry"**

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.

Having discussed and considered the agricultural operations of the applicant, it is clear that he farms a reasonable acreage of land and runs a genuine agricultural business that has operated for approximately two years, albeit it on a fairly small scale basis. In order to support this business, it is my opinion that there is a need for a building to facilitate the current operations undertaken by the applicant in addition to helping to expand the business. It is my opinion that the building proposed would provide the applicant with a purpose built undercover facility which would improve welfare conditions upon the unit.

In addition to the need for the building in connection to the applicant's livestock, it is my opinion that a storage facility for the storage of hay taken from the applicants land and used in connection to his livestock operations is also required.

Notwithstanding my comments above, the Council should consider that the applicant currently has no formal written agreements in place and therefore no long term security of tenure over any of the land, including that land where the building would be situated. Whilst I acknowledge that the land, where the building is to be situated, belongs to the applicant's cousin and she informed me that she intends to let the land to the applicant for the long term future, there is a risk, with the current situation, that the applicant's occupation could be terminated at any time with only a short notice required. This would therefore leave a building which is larger than necessary to serve the needs of the land (22 acres) upon which it stands. The lack of formal agreements is an issue that I believe should be addressed, especially when considering that the justification for the building is solely based on the requirements of the applicant.

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

The design of the building is in accordance with the intended agricultural use and is a purpose built building. The materials proposed to be used are typical for this type of agricultural building and are in my opinion acceptable.

The open fronted elevation would allow for easy access to and from the building whilst providing good ventilation to livestock and forage kept within.

In my opinion, whilst the size of the proposed structure is slightly larger than necessary in terms of the current operations undertaken, I do not consider the size to be unacceptable and believe that it is in proportionate when considering the acreage available to the applicant and the proposed expansion of the flock.

3 Siting

In my opinion, it is not typical for a new building to be sited in an isolated position away from a main farmstead; however, in considering the applicant's circumstance, it is apparent that he has no existing unit on which to place the proposed building.

Whilst the proposed site of the building is not unacceptable and the position benefits from the presence of the adjacent woodland, in regards to the screening and shelter, the proposed position would require a track in excess of 100m to be created to serve it and there are no operational reasons for the proposed site. In my opinion, there are other positions within the field, including positions nearer to the existing field access, where the proposed development could be sited and which the Council may consider to be more appropriate.

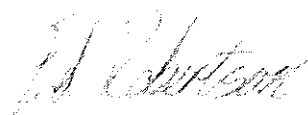
Taking the above into account, I consider the siting of any development should be determined by wider planning policy matters, eg. the visual impact, as opposed to operational aspects.

Please note that when on site, the applicant informed me that the proposed application may include a new access adjacent to the proposed location of the building.

Should the council be mindful to grant planning permission in regards to this application, they should consider that they will be creating a new centre of farming operations at the proposed site. When considering the type of agricultural operation undertaken by the applicant in conjunction with the area of farm land potentially available to him, it is my opinion that there is a real possibility that his agricultural operations could increase and further development may be sought.

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

Yours sincerely



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Senior Assistant Land Agent
on behalf of the Director of Property