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Your ref 3/2013/0214
Our ref CPG/EST/ER/3/12/8608
Date 2 April 2013

Dear Miss Booth

**APPLICATION NUMBER 3/2013/0214
OVER HACKING FARM, STONYHURST, CLITHEROE, BB7 9PY
GRID REFERENCE 369228 439810**

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 of J Pye Planning on behalf of Mr Andy Collinge for the erection of a new earth banked slurry store/lagoon. A site visit was made on 27 March 2013 whilst the applicant and his agent were present. The information provided at this meeting, together with the written submissions forms the basis of this appraisal.

Background Information

I understand that the applicant and his family have been farming Over Hacking Farm for approximately 45 years and currently operate under the name of J & M & A Collinge, a partnership consisting of the applicant and his two parents. The application is for the erection of a new earth bank slurry store/lagoon.

The applicant informed me that the current slurry storage facilities at Over Hacking Farm are insufficient to cope with the volume of slurry produced upon the unit during the winter housing period which has led to the applicant having to regularly empty the lagoon and spread his manure at the wrong time of year. The applicant informed me that he requires the proposed development to provide himself with a greater degree of storage upon the unit, allowing him to spread his slurry at appropriate times.

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Agricultural Land

I was informed that the applicant farms a total of 210 acres (85 hectares) of which approximately 190 acres (77 hectares) of land, including the farmstead is rented by the applicant on 1986 Act succession tenancy and the remaining 20 acres (8.09 hectares) is taken as summer grazing.

I understand that all of the land, other than 20 acres (8.09 hectares) of winter wheat, is down to grass with the applicant taking two cuts of silage from approximately 150 acres (60.70).

Agricultural Enterprise

The principal enterprise of the unit is that of a commercial dairy herd consisting of approximately 94 milking cows with a further 80 followers on site. The applicant informed me that he aims to increase the milking herd to approximately 120 cows within the next few years

Existing Buildings

The buildings situated on Over Hacking Farm consist of a range of traditional and modern type buildings.

Proposed Development

The application is for the erection of a new earth banked slurry lagoon as shown on the plans submitted. The applicant informed me that the proposed lagoon is required to provide a greater degree of storage to cope with current and proposed expansion of his herd, providing for a longer period of slurry storage upon the unit. The applicant stated that a purpose built facility providing a longer storage period would allow him to avoid spreading his slurry until appropriate times of the year, enabling him to take full advantage of the product. The applicant states that the spreading of slurry at appropriate times would reduce his reliance on costly chemical fertilisers in addition to reducing any negative environmental impact from spreading at the wrong time of year. In addition, the applicant informed me that a greater degree of storage upon the unit would reduce the amount of management time taken up in the regular emptying of the existing lagoons.

Assessment

The proposed development is within areas shown on the Ribble Valley Local Plan as being land outside main settlement/village boundaries and within an area of outstanding natural beauty. Policy G5 of the adopted Local Plan provides guidance concerning development outside the main settlement boundaries and the village boundaries and states that:

'planning consent will only be granted for small scale developments 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. Development is essential for the purposes of agriculture.

The existing slurry storage facilities upon the unit consist of an above ground concrete lagoon and an underground lagoon situated beneath the main cubicle building. Based on the number of cattle kept by the applicant, the existing slurry storage facilities available upon the unit do not provide a level of storage for a full 5/6 months worth of slurry (winter housing period). It is my opinion that the existing facilities can only hold between 1 to 2 months worth of slurry.

I understand that the farm is currently not within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) and therefore does not have to meet mandatory storage requirement of 5 months under the Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2008 (Statutory Instrument 2008/2349), however it is my opinion that the ability to provide sufficient storage for a large proportion of the slurry produced upon such a unit during a housing period is beneficial in terms of management of the holding and effective use of the slurry.

The applicant's ability to store a greater volume of slurry for longer, within a purpose built facility, would, in my opinion, permit him to spread manure at appropriate times of year, therefore possibly reducing fertiliser costs upon the unit and improving the effective use of his slurry. In addition, it would reduce the number of occasions that the applicant had to empty and spread his slurry.

Taking the above into consideration, whilst there are no statutory obligations to provide a facility that can hold 5/6 months worth of storage upon the unit, it is my opinion that the provision of a purpose built facility at Over Hacking Farm would provide many environmental, financial and

managerial benefits to the unit being and as such, I consider that a storage facility is justified.

In addition to the above, it is also evident that the applicant's justification for the scale of facility being proposed is to both add extra capacity to that which exists, as well as replace his existing concrete lagoon located within the farmstead, which is clearly an aged facility. As such, I feel it would be reasonable to plan towards replacing the existing facility.

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

I understand that the existing slurry facilities hold approximately 145,000 gallons of slurry whilst the proposed lagoon, according to the supporting statement, will hold approximately 1,000,000 gallons. When taking into consideration the size of the applicant's herd, the level of slurry that could be produced and government guideline for calculating storage requirements, on the information I have been provided with, I consider that a facility that can store between 515,000 to 615,000 gallons would be sufficient based on whether the lagoon held either 5 or 6 months worth of slurry. Should the applicant's herd increase to 120 milking cows, it is my opinion that the storage required would increase to between 620,000 to 720,000 gallons.

Taking the above into account, I am of the opinion that the proposed lagoon is larger than required to meet the storage requirements, even when taking into consideration the replacement of the existing concrete lagoon and an increase in the size of the herd.

In terms of the design, a slurry lagoon is one type of facility suitable for the storage of slurry. Other facilities include slurry tower, underground lagoons and concrete lagoons.

In considering other alternative storage facilities, in view of the storage capacity required by the applicant, I consider that an earth banked slurry lagoon is the most economically viable method for the storage of slurry upon the unit.

In my opinion, consultation should be held 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 the membrane is required, although I understand that contact with the EA has been made in this respect.

3. **Siting**

The proposed slurry lagoon is situated away from the main farmstead as shown on the plans submitted. The applicant informed me that the proposed location was due to its centralised position to the majority of his land. The applicant believes that the proposed position will allow him to access his land easily whilst also allowing him to use an umbilical system to spread the manure. The applicant believes that the siting of the proposed lagoon would better facilitate this method of spreading.

Due to the design of an earth banked slurry lagoon, having wide banking and a fairly shallow depth, a large area is required to site such a facility, limiting its ability to be sited upon the main farmstead, unlike a slurry tower or small concrete lagoon. This therefore means that the proposed development would have to be sited upon a greenfield site.

Whilst not operationally inappropriate, the proposed development, in my opinion, is not restricted to the position put forward and there are alternative greenfield sites upon the unit, including some nearer to the main farmstead, where the proposed lagoon could be sited and which are equally well serviced by existing farm tracks, although such sites may be less desirable due to their proximity to the other residential properties located upon the farmstead.

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 Assistant Director of Property

