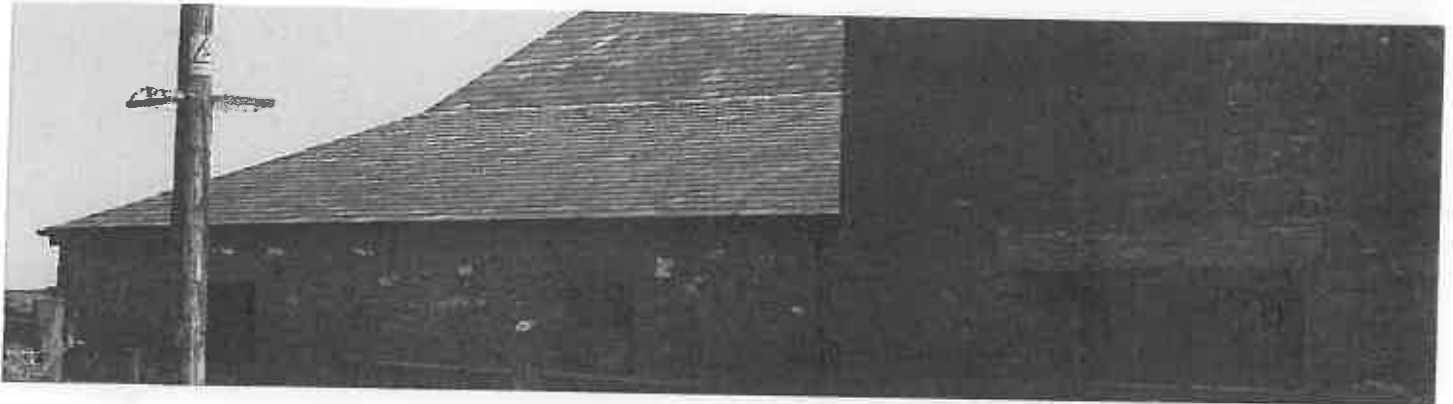


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## **Planning Statement**

**Location: Leagram Hall Barns, Chipping**

**Proposal: Conversion of barns to 3.No Dwellings**

**Applicant: Mr J Weld-Blundell**

**Prepared by: Rural Solutions Ltd**

## Planning Justification Statement

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning justification statement has been produced to support this planning application which seeks planning permission for the conversion of a group of three barns into three dwellings at Leagram Hall, Chipping.
- 1.2 Section two of the statement provides more details on the application site and the proposed development.
- 1.3 Section three includes an appraisal of relevant Local Plan policy.
- 1.4 Section four includes an appraisal of relevant National Planning Policy.
- 1.5 A summary of the sustainability of the development is included at section five.
- 1.6 Conclusions to the planning statement are provided at section six.

## 2 Site Description and Development Proposal

### The Site

- 2.1 The Leagram Hall Estate is located approximately 700 metres to the North East of the village of Chipping.
- 2.2 Leagram Hall is identified as one of three notable grand halls within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan, and is believed to have been central to the historic Leagram Deer Park, a medieval deer park. Records indicate that a manor house or grand hall has been present on the site since circa 1400.
- 2.3 The application site is a collection of traditional stone barns set around a courtyard to the north of the main house, Leagram Hall. To the west of the barns are a collection of further buildings including a large L – shaped range of brick built stables, a modern steel portal agricultural storage building and a detached cottage.



### The Proposal

- 2.4 The farm land of the estate is no longer farmed in hand and as such the barns are now surplus to requirements. In order to ensure their future retention it is proposed to convert the barns to a residential use.
- 2.5 The large L-shaped range which sits to the north and western edges of the site will be divided to form two dwellings, a three bedroom, two storey dwelling (dwelling 1) and a smaller single storey two bedroom unit (dwelling 2). The detached barn to the east of the site will be converted into a three bedroom dwelling (dwelling 3).
- 2.6 The approach to the conversion has been led by the desire to work with the existing volumes and openings and retain the existing external appearance and character. Minimal new openings are proposed and internal spaces left open to the rafters to expose existing beams and details where possible. This approach to work with the existing fabric has dictated the number and size of the units proposed. In addition, the applicant wishes to provide a mix of dwellings sizes to meet local needs, and as such the scheme includes a smaller single storey two bedroom unit which provides for single storey living, as well as two modestly sized three bedroom homes.
- 2.7 Externally, the courtyard between the buildings will form amenity space for dwellings 1 and 2 with a change of surfacing showing the delineation between the two and allowing the space to remain physically undivided to retain the historical integrity of this yard area. Dwellings 2 and 3 have private gardens to the rear following existing field and yard boundaries and in addition dwelling 3 has a small garden to the front, contained within an existing stone wall. Parking for all three dwellings will be via allocated parking spaces to the front of the



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courtyard, contained within an existing curved stone wall and will be supplemented by new native tree planting and grassed areas to soften the appearance of the parking area.

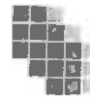


### 3 Appraisal of Local Planning Policy

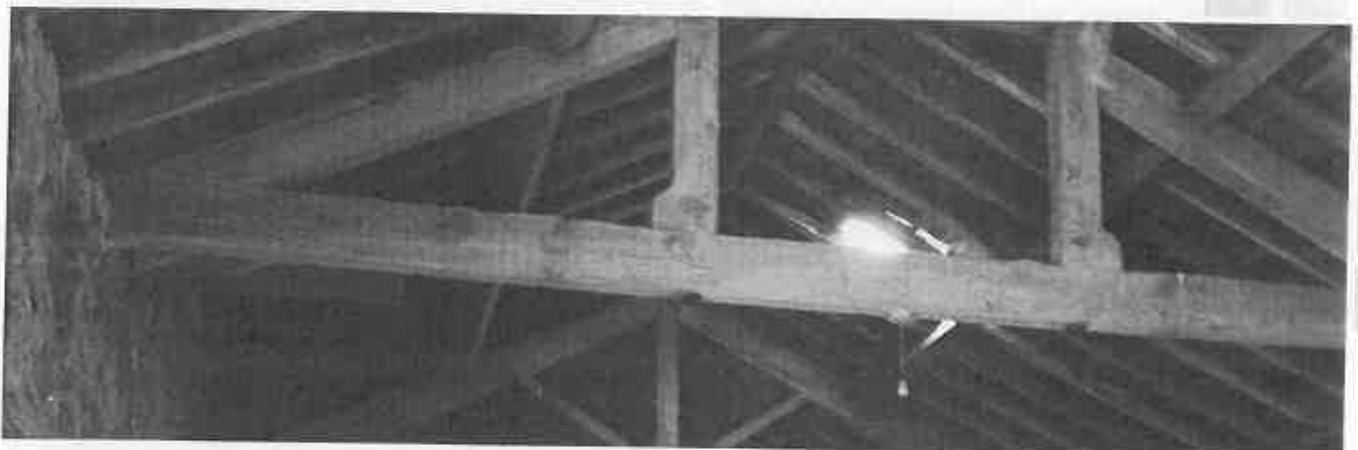
- 3.1 The current Ribble Valley Development Plan is made up of the Local Plan adopted in 1998 whose policies were 'saved' in 2007 as part of preparation of a replacement local plan (Local Development Framework) under the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

#### Residential Barn Conversions

- 3.2 The policies considered most relevant to this application are those concerning residential barn conversions (H2, H15, H16 and H17) as well as more general policies concerning development in the AONB (ENV1), design (G1) and access / transport (T1).
- 3.3 Policy H2 states that outside of settlement boundaries, new residential development will be limited, but it does allow for the appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings, providing they are suitably located and their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. Buildings must also be structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction.
- 3.4 Policies H15, 16 and 17 develop this theme further. In the preamble to these policies it states that *"traditionally constructed buildings...are very much a part of the Ribble Valley's character and heritage. The objective of allowing conversions or alternative uses is to keep these buildings well maintained and protect them as a feature within the landscape for future generations. In addition the conversion of properties to dwellings adds to the number of homes to be provided in the Borough under the plan period. This helps to safeguard undeveloped greenfield sites from development"*
- 3.5 Policy H15 contains caveats to the overall approach, adding locational criteria to the consideration of whether a barn may be appropriate for a residential conversion. The policy states that the scheme must result in no unnecessary infrastructure costs by public authorities, have no materially damaging effect on landscape quality or to nature conservation interests and have no detrimental effect on the rural economy. Furthermore, within the AONB, the proposal should be consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. In providing clarity, the supporting explanation adds that the conversion of appropriate buildings which form part of an already defined group is acceptable.
- 3.6 The proposed development accords with these provisions. The buildings lie within a larger group of buildings, including the hall itself and the ancillary buildings of the Leagram Hall Estate, with associated existing infrastructure. Services are already present on the site and a private package waste treatment plant will deal with foul water drainage, as per existing arrangements. The development would be accessed via the existing estate driveway and no new road, driveway or hardstanding will be required in this respect.
- 3.7 There are limited garden areas proposed in association with the proposed dwellings and where they are proposed, they are retained within existing boundary walls and fences. The parking of vehicles and storage of bins etc can be contained to the front of the buildings within an existing courtyard, and will hence not be visible in the wider landscape. From any public vantage points, for example the public footpaths to the north of the site, the evidence of any change in use of the barns will be limited, and seen within the existing built context of the wider estate buildings and activities, which already includes residential uses.
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- 3.8 Policy H16 requires that buildings proposed for conversion must be structurally sound without the need for extensive rebuilding or major alteration, and be of a suitable size to provide for habitable accommodation without the need for extension. The buildings must also be of a construction and appearance to justify its retention by virtue of its character and intrinsic qualities and its contribution to its setting.
- 3.9 A Structural Survey has been completed and submitted with the application. The survey concludes that the barns are in very good structural condition and that there are no significant factors affecting implementation of the proposed conversion scheme. The barns are of a considerable size and suitable for conversion to provide living accommodation without the need for extension. The barns are of traditional stone and slate construction typical of the area and their architecture as well as their relationship with, and contribution to the setting of, a locally important historic estate justify their retention.
- 3.10 Policy H17 gives more detailed design guidance to ensure a proposed scheme delivers a sensitive conversion. It requires careful consideration of the design details e.g. openings, materials etc, the external landscaping e.g. impacts of garden and parking areas, and have a safe access or be capable of providing one without harming the character of the area.
- 3.11 The scheme utilises existing openings with only minimal alterations or additional openings proposed. Dwelling 3 has a single additional small window proposed to the north east elevation, of a size and design to reflect existing openings. The scheme for dwelling 1 proposes to reopen two existing openings and insert a small additional opening to the ground floor, all on the south elevation which faces into the estate. In addition a small number of conservation style flush fitting rooflights are proposed to the roofs to provide additional light to first floor accommodation without the need to create additional openings in the elevations, thereby not interrupting the existing fenestration or agricultural character; the majority of these rooflights replace existing glazed roof openings, and it is considered that the introduction of a small additional number will not materially change the appearance or character of the roofscape.
- 3.12 Internally, existing features such as roof trusses are to be retained and exposed. In dwelling 2 a single storey dwelling is proposed and a full height space will be open to the roof, respecting the single volume space



of the existing barn. In dwellings 1 and 3, the first floor rooms will have the benefit of rooms open to the trusses and beams, retaining the character of the barns.

- 3.13 As already discussed, the parking area and some garden areas are contained to the internal courtyard area and so therefore not visible in the wider landscape. The central courtyard will remain open and undivided in the main, except for a low boundary wall to delineate the parking area from the front courtyard garden area in the interests of amenity and safety. The proposed rear gardens to the north of dwellings 2 and 3 are contained within existing field boundaries and these simple boundaries will be retained and supplemented by native hedgerow planting to retain a suitable rural appearance and junction with the surrounding countryside. Access will be via the existing lane and estate driveway down to the road.
- 3.14 In addition to the specific barn conversion design requirements contained in Policy H17, Policy G1 contains general design principles that all new development should comply with to deliver a high standard of building design and landscape quality. Of relevance to this proposed scheme is the need for a proposed development to be appropriate for its setting in terms of type, scale, intensity etc, to provide for appropriate traffic, access and parking and other services, to not impact on nature conservation and be appropriate in design in terms of layouts, materials etc and also having regard to providing adequate levels of daylighting and privacy.
- 3.15 The proposed development complies with the general spirit of Policy G1. It delivers a well-considered design which responds to the site and its location in providing a suitable type and scale of accommodation for the site and buildings, has an existing access arrangement which can accommodate the new development, is development of an existing developed site and has no impact on areas of nature conservation. The proposed scheme for conversion provides for adequate levels of daylighting and privacy for both the proposed occupants and the existing occupiers of the existing dwellings on the estate. Overall, the scheme meets the objective of Policy G1 by providing a high standard of development with no adverse impacts on the surrounding area.

#### Development in the AONB

- 3.16 With regards to potential impacts on the surrounding area, the site lies within the Forest of Bowland AONB. As such, proposals also need to be considered against the relevant AONB policies.
- 3.17 Policy ENVI states that the landscape and character of the AONB will be protected, enhanced and conserved and that the environmental effects of proposals with regards to design, materials, scale, massing and landscaping of development will be important factors in deciding planning applications.
- 3.18 Further policies guiding the management of the AONB are contained within the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan, a document produced and overseen by the AONB Management Board.
- 3.19 The Plan identifies a key issue for the AONB as the *"pressure for new development and building conversion in open, exposed landscape, which can be visually intrusive"* (Pg 29). Overall, it states that the vision for the AONB is that *"the Forest of Bowland retains its sense of local distinctiveness, notably the large scale open moorland character of the Bowland Fells, traditional buildings and settlement patterns of villages, hamlets and farmsteads"* (Pg 32). There is further recognition of the role that the built heritage plays to the value and character of the AONB. In response to this it identified a future vision that *"Traditional buildings and settlement patterns of villages, hamlets and farmsteads have been retained"*.
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- 3.20 The proposed scheme has been carefully designed to minimise any impact on the AONB. The site is well contained by mature woodland and the gardens of the Estate to three sides and so the sites visibility in the landscape is limited to views from the due north, from public footpaths and bridleways that cross fields to the north of the site. Alterations to these most visible elevations have been limited and where they are necessary have been carefully designed to reflect the existing architectural character and features of the buildings. Garden areas are minimal and reflect existing boundaries and feature no additional encroachment into the countryside. Boundary treatments are proposed to remain as is to retain the rural and agricultural heritage of the site but will be improved and maintained to enhance the junction of the site with the landscape and the landscape character. The scheme therefore, as a conversion involving no new building or hardstanding and minimal external alteration will therefore represent no harm to the AONB. Furthermore, it protects an important heritage feature of the Estate's farmstead by bringing it into a viable, long term use ensuring the future of the buildings and their contribution to the estate and its setting in the wider AONB.



### Accessibility

- 3.21 In addition to the access and traffic considerations highlighted above in Policy GI, Policy TI covers general accessibility and transport issues connected with a proposed development. The proposed development has good access onto the local road network via the existing estate access, which is located approximately 750m east of Chipping. Here, within walking or cycling distance, a bus service can be accessed with direct access to Longridge, Clitheroe and Blackburn, with services at 1-2 hourly intervals between the hours of 7am – 7pm. From Clitheroe or Blackburn direct trains to Manchester and/or the West Coast mainline can be reached. Whilst the frequency of such services is limited compared to urban areas, the NPPF advises that rural developments which comply with the NPPF in all other respects should not be considered unsustainable because their rural location means that sustainable transport options such as public transport are not as widely available as in urban areas. It is considered that for a rural village, Chipping is reasonably well serviced by public transport. The site is well linked to the village and overall can therefore be considered a sustainable location. In terms of impact on the road network, the scale of development is small and can be easily accommodated within the existing estate access and local road network.

## 4 Appraisal of National Planning Policy

- 4.1 On 23rd March 2012 the Government introduced the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This document has now replaced all previously existing national planning policy in the form of PPGs and PPSs. The following section summarises the main points of the document as relevant to this planning application.

### Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes

- 4.2 The NPPF calls upon local authorities to *"boost significantly the supply of housing"* (para 47). This is to be realised via a number of different planning policy mechanisms in the document, which in addition have been latterly submitted by proposed changes to permitted development rights to allow the conversion of many types of buildings to residential use, so as to realise an increased supply.
- 4.3 One of these policy mechanisms is a fundamental change in the way that the conversion of rural buildings to residential dwellings should be appraised.
- 4.4 Of relevance to this application, Paragraph 55 sets out that'  
*"Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:*
- ....where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting*
  - .....where the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets"*
- 4.5 Reading paragraph 55 of the NPPF as a whole it is clear that even conversions of 'isolated' barns to new homes is permissible, although it is not possible to classify the barns at Leagram Hall as isolated due to their close relationship to the existing estate dwellings. They are however redundant barns which contribute to the character of their setting and which may fall into disrepair should a viable future use not be found for them. The proposed scheme allows their sensitive repair and conversion and in doing so preserves and enhances their setting for the future.
- 4.6 Leagram Hall and associated buildings are not nationally listed and are therefore not designated heritage assets. However given the general age of the estate, its history as part of an historic hunting estate and its location relative to the historic village of Chipping it could be argued that the site is of some significance in terms of being a non-designated local heritage asset. The NPPF would therefore supports the building's conversion to a residential use where this is considered the most appropriate use and where this would support its repair and ensure its long term retention. It is considered given the sites location and adjacent residential uses that a residential use would be most appropriate. The applicants intend to retain ownership of the properties and make them available for rent and in doing so it will provide an additional income to contribute to the up keep of the wider historic estate.
- 4.7 English Heritage supports the conversion of barns where appropriate; with guidance set out in the guidance
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document 'The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice'. This document states how *"Historic farmsteads and their buildings make a fundamental contribution to the richly varied character of the English countryside. They illustrate the long history of farming and settlement in the landscape and exemplify the crafts and skills associated with local building materials and techniques"* (Pg 2).

- 4.8 They also support the position of the NPPF regarding the sustainability of the reuse of buildings: *"Reuse is inherently sustainable. These buildings represent a historical investment in materials and energy, and contribute to environmentally benign and sustainable rural development"*. Furthermore they identify how *"The concept of reuse of not a new one. Farm buildings have often been adapted over a long period..."* (Pg2).
- 4.9 The proposal to convert and reuse existing traditional vernacular buildings should be supported and seen as the next step in the history of the buildings and the Estate, reflecting the changing rural environment and farming practices. A sensitive scheme for conversion, as proposed here, will have no negative impact on the heritage value of the buildings and will instead ensure a future for these buildings, now redundant from farming practices.
- 4.10 It is important that such proposals are also considered, as advised by para. 49, in the context of the presumption in favour of development. In the case of RVBC, the local plan is considered out of date and it is not considered by the Council's own Officer's<sup>1</sup> that a robust and defensible five year housing supply exists. These matters should carry considerable weight in the decision making process and subject to other material considerations, a positive approach to the residential conversions should be adopted.

## Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 4.11 Paragraph 115 states that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
- 4.12 Natural England advises that *"AONBs are designated solely for their landscape qualities, for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty (which includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries)"*.
- 4.13 As already discussed earlier in Section 4 of this statement, the proposed development is considered to conserve the AONB setting of the site by it's limited intervention into the landscape and importantly securing the future of the buildings which are considered to have local heritage and landscape value.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning application reference 3/2012/1011 for a seven dwelling scheme in Chipping approved earlier this year.

## 5 Summary of Sustainable Development

- 5.1 Prior to the publication of the NPPF there was no national definition of sustainable development in relation to planning. The Government's definition of sustainable development is now included at paragraph 6 of the Framework, which states that
- 5.2 *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system"*
- 5.3 On the basis that the proposed development fully accords with the policies of NPPF it may be considered sustainable with reference to the NPPF.

### The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 5.4 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development:

*14. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking....*

*..For decision-taking this means:*

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:*

*—any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or—specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

- 5.5 Furthermore, section 186-7 of the NPPF summarises that local authorities should approach decision taking in a positive way:

*"Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible".*

- 5.6 The above extract qualifies that the planning process should facilitate the delivery of sustainable development. The conversion of an existing rural building to a residential use is in accordance with the NPPF and therefore sustainable, as per the Government definition in paragraph 6.
- 5.7 The NPPF goes on to state how there are 3 'pillars' of sustainable development; environmental, social and economic. These 3 issues are considered in more detail below in relation to this current proposal.
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## Environmental Sustainability

- 5.8 With regards to environmental sustainability, there is inherent sustainability in the reuse of existing buildings and the material and embedded energy in such buildings. The buildings will be converted with minimal alteration and no demolition or loss and as such start from a sustainable position of reuse. The resulting dwellings will be finished to current energy efficiency standards as regards insulation, double glazing and energy efficient boilers, thus minimising the energy use of the completed dwellings.
- 5.9 The other main environmental sustainability issue for new development is often its location and the environmental impact resulting from travel needs. The NPPF recognises that *“different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas”* (Para.29); When reading the NPPF as a whole therefore it seems to suggest that rural developments which comply with the NPPF in all other respects should not be considered unsustainable because their rural locations means that sustainable transport options such as public transport are not as widely available as in urban areas. As already discussed, public transport is available from Chipping and Chipping is recognised in both adopted and emerging local planning policy as a suitable location for development due to its level of services and relative accessibility. Due to the sites close relationship with Chipping, and in the context of the inherent sustainability of the reuse of existing buildings, the development has to be considered to represent a sustainable development option.

## Social Sustainability

- 5.10 The proposed development would contribute to the social sustainability of Chipping and this rural area of the Ribble Valley by making a contribution to the local housing supply, to meet the needs of both present and future generations. The development offers a mix of house types and sizes to provide for a balanced population ensuring the future sustainability as a thriving village by introducing new customers to village services, pupils to local schools etc.
- 5.11 The NPPF imposes a duty to ensure delivery of sufficient homes to meet local need. Ribble Valley BC cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply of housing and as such is not fulfilling its social objective in meeting the housing needs of its population. The proposed development would contribute to addressing this shortfall, is deliverable in the short term, and will reduce the number of new green field developments in the AONB, which would otherwise be required.

## Economic Sustainability

- 5.12 In addition to the positive contribution that new households can have to the economic sustainability of a village, the development will also bring benefits to the local economy directly via the construction industry.
- 5.13 A study<sup>1</sup> undertaken on behalf of the UK Contractors Group found that a £1 investment in construction results in £2.84 in terms of benefits to the wider economy
- 5.14 Planning Inspectors have highlighted in appeal decisions<sup>2</sup> the significant weight to be attributed to the need

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2. Construction in the UK economy; LEK for UK Contractors Group (2010)

3. APP/G1630/A/11/2146206, APP/G1630/A/11/2148635

to support economic growth through the planning system and the contribution that housing development can make to economic growth. This follows a ministerial statement entitled 'Planning for Growth' which was issued by the Decentralised Minister Greg Clark, post the March 2011 budget. It set out the steps the Government expects local planning authorities to take to ensure that the sustainable development needed to support economic growth (including housing) was able to proceed as easily as possible. It recognises the contribution that the delivery of housing can make to providing a sustainable economy.



## 6 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1 This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of three traditional stone barns to residential properties. The barns provide an important contribution to the history and setting of the Leagram Hall Estate and its setting within the Forest of Bowland AONB. The proposed development ensures their future by bringing them into a viable long term use.
- 6.2 The proposed scheme consists of a sensitive scheme for conversion, minimising alterations to the existing fabric with the limited alterations taking reference from existing features to retain the character of the buildings. Domestic curtilage outside of the internal courtyard draws from existing yard boundaries and proposes boundary repair and enhancement to protect and enhance the visual junction with the wider AONB countryside. The scheme utilises an existing access driveway and so has no impact on the wider countryside. In summary therefore the reuse of the existing building forms within their existing footprints and the creation of minimal curtilages within existing boundaries and internal courtyards ensures the visual and environmental impacts of the development are minimal and the landscape and character of the AONB is sufficiently conserved and enhanced.
- 6.3 The site is well located in relation to the village of Chipping, an accepted location for new development due to the services and connectivity it offers for a rural area. The development will help contribute to the continuing viability and vitality of this rural settlement, which acts as a hub for the rural hinterland of this area of the AONB.
- 6.4 The proposed development will make a modest contribution to delivering housing in this rural area of the Ribble Valley and AONB where opportunities for development can be limited due to the need to conserve the character of the landscape. It represents an effective use of land and buildings, thus reducing the need for green field development in the area.
- 6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework drives for increased housing delivery and supports the reuse of redundant agricultural buildings for residential purposes. As demonstrated in this statement the development represents sustainable development contributing both environmental, economic and social benefits to the area. It thereby wholly accords with the Governments planning agenda, as well as local planning policies on barn conversions and development in the AONB, and therefore there are no planning reasons why the application should not be approved.



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