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Email: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Planning Officer: Rebecca Halliwell

Planning Application Ref: 3/2016/0269

Description of Development: Proposed agricultural building

Site Address: New House Farm, Grunsagill Road, Bolton by Bowland, BD23 4SQ

Dear Rebecca,

Introduction

We have reviewed the above planning application that was submitted by Mr Anthony Flanagan on behalf of the applicant Mr David Heap for the erection of a 7.3m x 12.3m agricultural storage building at land at New House Farm, Grunsagill Road. This appraisal is based on written information received for the planning application and site photographs provided by Ribble Valley Council. ADAS has not conducted a separate site visit. The applicant's agent in their Planning Statement explains that the main need for the proposed building is to store a tractor and farm tools along with hay for winter animal feed that will be used on the farm.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that Planning Policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It further states that local plans should promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

Ribble Valley Council

Core Strategy (Adopted December 2014)

Key Statement EN2: Landscape- The landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.

As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.

Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development- Developments that contribute to farm diversification, strengthening of the wider rural and village economies or that promote town centre vitality and viability will be supported in principle.

Policy DMG1: General Considerations- In determining planning applications, all development must:

...

Design

1. Be of a high standard of building design which considers the 8 building in context principles (from the CABE/English heritage building in context toolkit).
2. Be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials.
3. Consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance, particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, as well as the effects of development on existing amenities....

Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations- Development should be in accordance with the Core Strategy Development Strategy and should support the spatial vision....

...Within the open countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting....

...In protecting the designated area of outstanding natural beauty the council will have regard to the economic and social well-being of the area. However the most important consideration in the assessment of any development proposals will be the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape and character of the area.... Development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the AONB by virtue of its size, design, use of material, landscaping and siting. The AONB management plan should be considered and will be used by the council in determining planning applications....

Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape protection -The Council will seek, wherever possible, to enhance the local landscape in line with its key statements and development strategy. In applying this policy reference will be made to a variety of guidance including the Lancashire County Council Landscape Character Assessment, the AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2010 and the AONB Management Plan.

Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy- Proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle. Development proposals will be determined in accord with the Core Strategy and detailed policies of the LDF as appropriate.

Agricultural Buildings and Roads (Supplementary Planning Guidance Adopted March 1997)

Permission will not be granted... for the erection of agricultural buildings where by reason of siting, design or external appearance of the building would have a seriously detrimental impact on the visual character of the areas (para 1.5).

Where the proposal is within the AONB it is consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area (para 3.1).

The buildings or development in terms of scale, design choice and colour of materials is sympathetic to meet the needs of the enterprise (para 3.3).

Maximum use shall have been made of all existing available buildings... (para 6.1).

Agricultural Consultants Assessment

Having studied the photographs of the site and considered the information provided in the Planning statement, I would agree with the points raised in the site visit note dated 26/05/2016 and concerns raised by the Case Officer, that there is a lack of evidence of agricultural activity at the farm and therefore a lack of evidence to support the need for a building. No evidence has been provided in the accompanying Planning Statement about how the building will be utilised by the applicant as part of the management of a viable farm.

Agricultural buildings should be built to British Standards. If a building is to house livestock, which is suggested in the Planning Statement, then I would also question if the building is appropriate in its design. The British Standards for livestock buildings require construction to exclude harsh weather and draughts but provide maximum ventilation. I am concerned that the building, as designed, would not meet this requirement because of the blockwork walling, clad with timber externally and the stoning of the front of the building.

Planning Consultants Assessment

Planning policy does not require that applicants carry out agricultural needs appraisals for farm buildings or provide particular evidence to substantiate the need for the building. However, to be in line with planning policies, Ribble Valley Council would need to be satisfied that the buildings would be for agricultural use as other uses would not be afforded the same support in this location.

The site is located within the open countryside and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), therefore consideration should be given to policy guidance that covers development in the countryside and AONB. Policies contained within the Core Strategy advise that development should protect and enhance the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of their size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting (Policies DMG1, DMG2 and DME2). Notwithstanding the concerns raised above regarding the 'need' for such a development, there are also concerns that the proposed building does not appear to be of an appropriate agricultural appearance or scale for its intended use. The building has a very shallow roof pitch and raised eaves, resulting in very large expanses of wall (using single materials and colours) which increases the massing and appearance of the walls. The height of the one opening on the front elevation also appears to be restricted for the use of storing agricultural machinery and does not sufficiently break up the massing on this elevation.

Given the location of the building within the AONB, the design of this building does not enhance the character of the wider landscape or respect the local vernacular. The principle of the development does not appear to be in line planning policies or guidance contained within the Agricultural Buildings and Roads, Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The evidence presented to date does not appear to present a robust case for the building actually needed for the purposes of agriculture on the applicant's farm holding. Furthermore the proposed building does not appear to be of an appropriate agricultural appearance and scale. This does not mean that there is no case to make, but the documentation and evidence before me does not clearly present such a case.

The lack of a robust case and design of the building should be taken into account when assessing compliance of the development with planning policies.

Summary

The following concerns are raised on the applicant's case for the need for the building:-

- There is a lack of evidence of agricultural activity at the farm (from the Case Officers site visit) and therefore a lack of evidence to support the need for a building.
- No evidence has been provided in the accompanying Planning Statement about how the building will be utilised by the applicant as part of the management of a viable farm.
- There are concerns that the design of the building provides appropriate ventilation to house livestock.
- There are concerns that the design of the agricultural building is not appropriate in terms of its scale, height and massing for its location within the AONB.

Given that there is no requirement for a formal agricultural needs appraisal for agricultural buildings, Ribble Valley Council would need to determine the weight attributed to the above and the extent to which the lack of a needs case would question compliance of the development with policies on development in rural areas as identified above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Morrall', with a stylized, cursive script.

Fiona Tweedie & Hannah Morrall
Senior Agricultural Consultant & Principal Town Planner