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Email: Adam.Birkett@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Planning Officer: Adam Birkett

Planning Application Ref: 3/2017/0020

Description of Development: Application for outline planning permission with all matters reserved for a new farm worker's dwelling

Site Address: Mason House Farm, Clitheroe Road, Bashall Eaves, BB7 3DD

Dear Adam,

We have reviewed the above planning application that was submitted by Mr Gary Hoerty of Gary Hoerty Associates on behalf of the applicant Mr & Mrs Hartley for outline planning permission with all matters reserved for a new farm worker's dwelling on land at Mason House Farm, Clitheroe Road, Bashall Eaves, BB7 3DD. This response is based on written information received for the planning application and provided by Ribble Valley Borough Council. ADAS has not conducted a separate site visit nor have any site photos been reviewed. The applicant's agent in their Planning Statement explains that the main need for the proposed building is to support the functional requirements for at least two full time workers to be readily available at all times of day and night to attend to the welfare requirements of the livestock enterprises operated at Mason House Farm.

Agricultural Consultants Response:

The case has been made for a second dwelling at Mason House Farm, although I note that the proposed dwelling is not within the existing farmstead. I understand that the existing dwelling is occupied by the applicant, who rents the farm on an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy. I believe that the applicant is the first successor to the farm. The applicant's son is now working on the farm and therefore is expected to be the second successor subject to him meeting the qualifying conditions.

Standard Man Days calculations have been provided to show the labour required by the farm enterprises and the agent has highlighted the factors which increase and reduce these overall labour requirements. I broadly agree with the calculations as shown.

As I see it, the functional need for the additional dwelling is to meet out of hours demands for farm labour, namely responding to alerts generated by the robotic milking equipment and to oversee calving.

I note that the robots can incur faults at least a couple of nights a week (Paragraph 4.5.7 Planning Statement and Agricultural Appraisal). It would be useful to know the potential impact that these faults could have on

the farm business as Paragraph 4.5.6 of the Planning Statement and Agricultural Appraisal mentions the need to avoid harm to the cows and the robots. If a fault has the ability to harm the cows then this is clearly an animal welfare argument, I'm keen for you to describe the other impacts. Is it also possible to describe the frequency of night time calvings, on average? Many dairy farms operate a night shift rota to carry out routine checks on groups of cows expected to calve – does anything like that exist on this farm? Is it possible to comment on the number of calvings that require both key farm workers to be present? It would be hoped there aren't many but it adds to the description of the scale of the out of hours work.

It would also be useful to understand the amount of time that the out of hours work takes up during the night, both responding to the robot faults and calving/carrying out routine checks on calvers. I appreciate that this is not an exact science but the duration of the out of hours duties would be helpful as well as the frequency.

In terms of the viability of the farm business, which is considered when looking at new dwellings. From the 2 years of accounts provided, I can see that the business has been profitable in the last three years (2014 figures are shown in 2015 year end accounts) and looks to be a viable business. The business appears to be able to meet short term liabilities without selling assets, certainly in the accounts for 2016. Net worth which is the amount of capital left over if all assets are sold and all debts repaid declines but then recovers somewhat through the years which are shown in the accounts which have been submitted. The business appears to be a viable concern on a sound financial footing. However, no details of how the dwelling will be financed have been given. The impact of the cost of the dwelling on the business does need to be considered at some point.

Planning Consultants Response

My colleague has raised a number of questions which we would like the applicant to provide a response on in order to assess the functional need of the agricultural workers dwelling. Can the Council please request this additional information from the applicant:-

- 1) Further information on the potential impact of robot faults could have on the farm business;
- 2) A description on the frequency of night time calvings, on average;
- 3) Further information on the number of calvings that require both key farm workers to be present?
- 4) It would also be useful to understand the amount of time that the out of hours work takes up during the night, both responding to the robot faults and calving/carrying out routine checks on calvers. This should include the duration of the out of hour's duties as well as the frequency.
- 5) Further details of the proposed financing of the proposed dwelling and commentary on any financial impact this may have on the farm enterprise.

This information would be useful to demonstrate the functional need for this proposed dwelling and to give further and proper context to the background to this requirement.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Tweedie & Kenny Dhillon
Senior Agricultural Consultant and Principal Town Planner