



Gary Hoerty Associates

Suite 9  
Grindleton Business Centre  
The Spinney  
Grindleton  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 4DH

Tel: 01200 449700  
[www.ghaonline.co.uk](http://www.ghaonline.co.uk)  
email: [info@ghaonline.co.uk](mailto:info@ghaonline.co.uk)

## PLANNING STATEMENT

# IN RESPECT OF A FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO A CAMPING FACILITY INCLUDING AN AREA FOR TENTS AND THE SITING OF FIVE CAMPING PODS AND A FACILITIES BUILDING WITH ASSOCIATED VEHICULAR ACCESS TRACKS AND PEDESTRIAN PATHS

ON

LAND AT FOXFIELDS FARM, WHALLEY ROAD,  
STONYHURST, CLITHEROE BB7 9PN.

Prepared by: Colin Sharpe  
Our Client: Mr J Wilkinson  
Our Ref: Wil/150/2373/CS  
Date: October 2017



Chartered Surveyors ■■■ Planning & Development ■■■ Land Agents  
Valuers ■■■ Property Agency ■■■ Property Management



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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 Gary Hoerty Associates has been instructed by Mr J. Wilkinson to submit a planning application on his behalf for the change of use of agricultural land to a camping facility including an area for tents and the siting of five camping pods and a facilities building with associated vehicular access tracks and pedestrian paths on land to the north east of the group of farm buildings at Foxfields Farm, Whalley Road, Stonyhurst.
- 1.2 It is the applicant's intention to provide a sustainable form of accommodation to the public visiting the Ribble Valley by supplying a tent and camping pod facility with a facilities building including male and female toilets and a shower. This is a small scale development which will benefit the Ribble Valley by attracting families to stay in the area and visit other tourism attractions, shops, restaurants, public houses etc in the local area thereby strengthening the visitor economy.
- 1.3 The camping pods and the facilities building are of timber construction with wood shingle tiled roofs such that they will blend into the landscape and look in keeping with the local area therefore not causing an unacceptable visual impact.
- 1.4 In this Planning Statement, we will refer to the planning history of the application site, we will describe the proposed development and will review the relevant planning policies and guidance and set out why we believe that the proposal conforms to national planning guidance and local planning policies and why the application should therefore be looked upon favourably.
- 1.5 We have also submitted with the application an Ecological Appraisal by Envirotech Ecological Consultants (Report Reference 4167 dated 07/09/2017) which concludes that, subject to compliance with a number of mitigation measures, the proposed development would have no detrimental effects upon any protected species or the general ecology of the locality.
- 1.6 We request that the contents of **both** this Planning Statement and the Ecological Appraisal are fully considered by the Council in the determination of this planning application.

## 2. PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 We list below the most recent planning applications at Foxfields Farm. However, as they do not relate to the field that is the subject of the current proposal, none are considered to be of any particular relevance to the consideration of this current application:
  - (1) 3/2009/0824 – Prior Notification application for the construction of a roof over a manure store – Prior Approval Not Required.

- (2) 3/2011/0833 – Prior Notification application for the construction of a roof over sheep handling facilities – Prior Approval Not Required.
- (3) 3/2012/0026 – Full Planning Application for the construction of a wooden building to provide a meeting room for the Stonyhurst Shoot – Approved with conditions.
- (4) 3/2014/0992 – Prior Notification Application for the construction of a lambing barn for newborns – Prior Approval Not Required.
- (5) 3/2016/0127 – Prior Approval Application under Class Q (Parts A & B) for the conversion of an agricultural building to a dwelling – Refused.
- (6) 3/2016/0335 – Full Planning Application for the conversion of a barn to a dwelling – Approved with conditions.

### **3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises an area for tents, five camping pods, a facilities building and associated vehicular access tracks and pedestrian paths. The vehicular tracks will be in the form of two shale wheel tracks with a grass centre and the pedestrian paths will also be shale surfaced. The camping pods and facilities building are to be sited close to the northern boundary of the site. They are all of timber construction, and they do not require a solid base and are easily transported as whole units and put into place in the required position on the site. Whilst there will not be a specifically designated area for the pitching of tents, it is likely that they will generally be sited on the higher ground at the eastern end of the site. Vehicular access into the site will be from the track that serves the farm buildings complex and will utilise an existing track that passes through the trees at the western end of the site.
- 3.2 There will be a designated area for the parking of cars on the lower ground at the western end of the site that will be screened by existing woodland to the north and west. To further reduce the visual impact of the parking area it will be retained with a grass surface. As no surfaced and marked out parking area is to be formed it is not possible to state categorically how many parking spaces will be provided. The number of cars parked at any one time will be dependent upon how many of the pods are occupied and how many tents are pitched. To enable us to complete the form on the planning portal, we have stated that there will be 30 spaces, but we consider this to be an absolute maximum with 10-12 cars at any one time being an estimated average.
- 3.3 There are two different sizes of camping pod but, internally, they are both basically the same. All of the pods comprise a single room with no internal walls or partitions. They are supplied with electricity, but no water or gas. There is no sink or cooking equipment, but they do have a kettle, a toaster and a refrigerator. Two of the pods contain a double bed for occupation by two people, whilst the other three contain two bunk beds for occupation by a family of four.

- 3.4 Units 1 and 2, as indicated on the submitted plans, are of the slightly larger (in area) and higher of the two types; although these are the units that contain only one double bed. These have external dimensions of 5.35m x 3.79m and they have a steeply sloping roof with an eaves height of just 1.3m and a ridge height of 4.0m. Due to their greater height, these units have been placed on the lower ground towards the western end of the site.
- 3.5 To the east of Unit 2 is the facilities' building. This has dimensions of 6.1m x 2.6m with an eaves height of 2m and a ridge height of 3.15m. This contains female toilets at its southern end, a shower with changing area in the centre and male toilets at the northern end. The doors to each of these three parts of the building are in its eastern elevation. There is an external tap providing drinking water at the centre of its western elevation.
- 3.6 Units 3, 4 and 5 are located to the east of the facilities' building. These three units are smaller in area and lower in overall height than Units 1 and 2 but, due to their higher eaves heights, these are the units that are able to accommodate two sets of bunk beds. These units have dimensions of 5.35m x 2.97m with an eaves height of 2m and a ridge height of 3.15m.

#### **4. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 4.1 The group of buildings at Foxfields Farm are located on an access road (that is also Public Footpath 3-3-FP-44) approximately 700m. south of the junction of the access road with the eastern side of Whalley Road (B6243) Stonyhurst. To the south of the buildings at Foxfields Farm, the access road continues in a southerly direction as Public Footpath 3-3-FP-43 which eventually joins 3-3-FP- 41 that follows an east-west route close to the northern bank of the River Ribble.
- 4.2 The application site, as outlined in red on the submitted plans, comprises a sloping field that has its own access track off the eastern side of the main access road approximately 220m to the north of the buildings at Foxfield Farm. The site has an area of approximately 1.38 Ha. The field is surrounded to the west, north and east by a belt of dense woodland; and there is also a separate woodland adjoining the south eastern corner of the site. The field itself generally rises from south west to north east. Beyond the site to the south (the only direction from where it is visible as it is not screened by woodland) the land slopes downwards to the valley of the River Ribble.
- 4.3 The site is approximately 4 miles away from Whalley, 4.5 miles from Clitheroe and 7 miles from Longridge. The site is therefore accessible to the range of services within these settlements as well as to the villages and other rural attractions of the Ribble Valley.

4.4 With regards to planning policy considerations the site is within the Open Countryside but it is not within the AONB.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### 5.1 General

5.1.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. If it is to be approved, a development must satisfy as far as possible guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the relevant policies of the Council's adopted Core Strategy.

5.1.2 Core Strategy Key Statements and Policies which are relevant to this application are therefore:

Key Statement DS2 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Key Statement EN2 - Landscape

Key Statement EC1 – Business and Employment Development

Key Statement EC3 – Visitor Economy

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations

Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations

Policy DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection

Policy DMB 1 – Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy

Policy DMB 3 – Recreation and Tourism Development

5.1.3 We set out below extracts from the relevant documents to facilitate the assessment of the application proposal against the principal appropriate policies and guidance.

### 5.2 National Planning Policy Guidance

5.2.1 The main national planning policy guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

#### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

5.2.2 The adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 means that it is now the main national planning policy guidance influencing planning decision making and replaces a substantial number of documents previously in place. *“The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, it sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so.”*

5.2.3 Paragraphs 11 – 16 of the NPPF highlight the presumption in favour of sustainable development confirming that “*planning law requires that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making and therefore proposed development that accords with an up to date local plan should be approved, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2.4 Importantly, paragraph 14 of the NPPF states:

*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 **plan-making** this means that:*

- *local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;*
- *Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, 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.*

*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.*

5.2.5 Paragraph 14 clearly spells out the Government’s presumption in favour of allowing sustainable development unless the adverse impacts of doing so would be very significant. The approval of this application would allow sustainable

development to proceed. The proposed camping pods represent a small scale development that will be in keeping with the local area and the materials proposed are appropriate for the locality.

5.2.6 Paragraph 15 states:

*“Policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay. All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally.”*

5.2.7 Paragraph 17 says that one of the core principles of planning is to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. It also says planning should encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed; promote mixed use developments; and actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

5.2.8 Section three of the NPPF highlights the Government’s commitment to ‘Supporting a prosperous rural economy’ and paragraph 28 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. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:*

- *support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;*
- *promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- *support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and*

- *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

5.2.9 The approval of this application will support the development of a sustainable rural tourism business which will provide an attractive location for visitors to the Ribble Valley to stay. The NPPF clearly supports sustainable rural tourism and leisure development provided that it respects the character of the countryside, which this development does.

### **5.3 Council's Core Strategy 2008/2028 – A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adoption Version**

5.3.1 There are a number of policies within the Adopted Core Strategy that are relevant to the proposal and we comment on these policies below.

#### **Key Statement DS2: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development.**

5.3.2 Key Statement DS2 identifies that the Council when considering development proposals should take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in NPPF. The policy states that where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in NPPF taken as a whole; or specific policies in that framework indicate that development should be restricted. The camping pods and tents offer a sustainable form of accommodation and it is anticipated that visitors will explore the area on foot or bike.

#### **Key Statement EN2: Landscape**

5.3.3 Key statement EN2 identifies that as a principle the Council expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials. We consider that the proposed development adequately addresses all of these principles, providing a high quality visitor attraction development using the best quality camping pods in a sympathetic location that is very well screened by existing mature and dense woodland.

#### **Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development**

5.3.4 Key statement EC1 states “*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*”. Foxfields Farm

extends to about 135 acres that is still actively farmed by the applicant, who presently has 500 sheep. The proposed development does therefore represent farm diversification; and the proposed camping pods will provide extra custom for local businesses thereby strengthening the rural and village economies.

### **Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy**

- 5.3.4 This Key Statement relates specifically to the visitor economy stating that proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged; and that significant new attractions will be supported in circumstances where they will deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to the local communities and employment opportunities.
- 5.3.5 Although not a significant new attraction, we consider that this proposed small scale tourism development will be very beneficial to the local economy and the social well-being of the area because it will assist in benefiting the local economy and contributing to tourism within the local area which will have benefits to the local attractions and facilities of the Ribble Valley. For reasons that will be explained later in this Statement, we do not consider that the proposal would be harmful to the environment. Therefore, we consider the proposal to be fully compliant with the intentions of Key Statement EC3.

### **Policy DMG1: General considerations**

- 5.3.6. This is a general development management policy which states that, in determining planning applications, all development must satisfy a total of 20 criteria relating to the matters of design, access, amenity, environment and infrastructure. We consider only the following criteria to be of particular relevance to the consideration of this application:
- The development must 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.
  - The development must 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.
  - The development must consider the potential traffic and car parking implications.
  - The development must ensure safe access can be provided which is suitable to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated.

- The development must not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.
- All development must protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.

5.3.7 With regards to those criteria, we consider, firstly, that the development is sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale and massing. It is a small scale development for a tourism use appropriate to the locality and the proposed buildings are of appropriate design and external materials. The appearance of the buildings is entirely appropriate for the locality. Although there will be a small increase in traffic on the access road as a result of the proposed development, we consider that road and its junction with the main road (B6243) to be more than capable of safely accommodating the limited amount of extra traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development; and there would only be a negligible impact on the wider highway network. As confirmed in the separate Ecological Appraisal, there are no adverse ecological implications; and there would be no adverse impact on public rights of way or any heritage assets.

5.3.8 The proposed development will be sympathetic to the existing land use and will not be an intensive camp site as it will provide a total of only 6 relatively small timber buildings with the remainder of the site available for the pitching of tents. We consider that the site is more than adequately screened by existing woodlands, such that we do not consider any additional landscaping/screen planting to be necessary. However, should the Council consider there to be a need for further natural screening, we would appreciate the opportunity to address this prior to a decision being made on the application.

5.3.9 With regards to the general consideration of ‘visual amenity’, the proposed buildings and tents would be screened from view from some directions by the existing mature and dense woodland; and from other directions the development would be viewed against the background of the woodland. Additionally, the topography in the vicinity of the site is also such that the buildings would only be clearly visible in relatively short distance views. When viewed from the ‘medium distance’ of the lower ground to the south, the proposed buildings will be hardly visible and certainly not over-prominent or in any way obtrusive. The buildings will, however, be visible in more long distance views on higher ground to the south on the opposite side of the river valley. Due, however, to the distance of such views, the relatively small size and timber exterior of the buildings, and the background of the woodland, it is not considered that these views of the development would be in any way harmful to the appearance/character of the local landscape. Overall, therefore, the development would not adversely affect the amenity of the surrounding area. Additionally, the proposal would not prejudice significant environmental and amenity improvements and would not result in the loss of any important local space, or public or private playing fields.

5.3.10 We are firmly of the opinion that this relatively small tourism development is entirely appropriate for the locality and would not be detrimental to the appearance and character of the countryside. Whilst the proposal would be visible to users of the footpaths in the vicinity of the site, we consider camping pods and tents to represent features that are entirely appropriate to the rural locality. As such, they would be a point of interest to walkers as opposed to representing inappropriate or discordant features. The development, in our opinion, therefore, undoubtedly complies with the requirements of Policy DMG 1.

### **Policy DMG 2: Strategic considerations**

5.3.12 Policy DMG2 requires development to be in accordance with the Core Strategy Development Strategy and to support spatial vision and identifies certain forms of development that are acceptable outside of the settlement areas, three of which are as follows:

1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social well-being of the area.
4. The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area.
5. Development is for small scale uses appropriate to a rural area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated.

5.3.13 The Policy also states that ‘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.’

5.3.14 The proposed development is of a small scale and there is no requirement for the applicant to show a need for the camping pods however we do consider there to be a need for this sustainable form of accommodation which has become very popular over the last few years. We consider the proposal to be fully compliant with Policy DMG2

### **Policy DME 2: Landscape and Townscape**

5.3.15 This policy identifies that development proposals will be refused which significantly harm important landscape features and sets out a list of relevant landscape features. For reasons already given in relation to EN2 and DMG1 we

do not consider that the proposal would have any adverse impact on any of the criteria specified in the Policy.

**Policy DME 3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation.**

- 5.3.16 As confirmed in the separate Ecological Appraisal, the proposal would have no detrimental effects upon any protected species or any other ecological considerations and would therefore fully comply with Policy DME3.

**Policy DMB 1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy**

- 5.3.17 Policy DMB1 indicates that the Council will support proposals that are intended to support business growth in the local economy provided such proposals are in conformity with other relevant policies of the local plan. The proposed development is in full conformity with all of the relevant policies and policy DMB1 clearly supports the proposed development.

**Policy DMB 3: Recreation and Tourism Development**

- 5.3.18 Policy DMB3 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the Borough subject to a number of criteria being met. As far as the criteria are concerned the proposed development does not conflict with other policies of the plan. The proposal does not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design. The proposal is well related to the highway network and would not create any adverse traffic problems.
- 5.3.19 The proposed development will support the development of tourism in the Ribble Valley by providing a camp site for visitors to use for holiday occupation purposes throughout the year when they wish to visit the Ribble Valley.

**6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The proposed development includes the change of use of land for the creation of a camping site to include an area for tents and 5 camping pods with a separate facilities building. The applicant is keen to provide a tourism facility in the Ribble Valley through providing a sustainable form of accommodation to the public. The site is in a sustainable area with relatively easy access to Whalley and Clitheroe in particular. The existing public houses and cafes in Mitton and Hurst Green would also benefit from increased custom from people staying at the camp site.
- 6.2 The NPPF and adopted Core Strategy are both supportive of rural tourism and strengthening the visitor economy in the Borough. We believe this new camp site development will be a popular location for tourists due to its easily accessible location and the outstanding views of the Ribble Valley to the south. We consider

that the site will be attractive to walkers who would take advantage of the numerous footpaths in this very attractive rural locality.

6.3 Whilst the proposed development is modest in size, intensity and nature as there will only be 5 camping pods and a relatively small area available for tents, the services, facilities, businesses and amenities of nearby villages and towns will all benefit from increased trade as a result of the development.

6.4 Within this Planning Statement and the supporting Ecological Appraisal we have provided a reasoned justification explaining how the proposed development conforms to the adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF. In order to satisfy the statement at paragraph 14 of NPPF, we therefore consider that permission should be granted without delay subject to any reasonable and necessary conditions.

Signed..........Date..........  
Colin Sharpe DipTP MRTPI  
For and on behalf of Gary Hoerty Associates