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PLANNING STATEMENT

IN RESPECT OF TWO FULL PLANNING APPLICATIONS, AS FOLLOWS:

- (I) THE SUB DIVISION OF THE EXISTING DWELLING (THE ORIGINAL FARMHOUSE) INTO TWO DWELLINGS.**
- (II) THE CONVERSION OF THE EXISTING APPROVED RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IN THE ATTACHED FORMER BARN INTO A SEPARATE DWELLING.**

AT

**MERE SYKE FARM, WIGGLESWORTH,
SKIPTON, BD23 4SN**

Prepared by: Colin Sharpe DipTP MRTPI
Applicants: Mr & Mrs M Drake
Our Ref: Dra/867/2478 & 2482/CS
Date: March 2018



Chartered Surveyors ■■■ Planning & Development ■■■ Land Agents
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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 Gary Hoerty Associates has been instructed by Mr & Mrs M Drake to submit two planning applications on their behalf relating to their property at Mere Syke Farm, Wigglesworth. The first application seeks full planning permission for the sub-division of the original dwelling into two dwellings; and the second application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the approved residential accommodation in the attached former agricultural barn into a separate dwelling. This Planning Statement is written in support of both applications.
- 1.2 In this Statement we will describe the application site and surroundings and we will explain the recent planning history of the property and the circumstances that have resulted in the submission of the two planning applications. We will then consider the applications against the relevant policies and guidance and set out why we believe that both applications comply with national planning guidance and local planning policies and why the applications should therefore be looked upon favourably by the Local Planning Authority.

2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The property known as Mere Syke Farm is located in an open countryside location on the east side of Forest Becks Brow close to the northern boundary of the Borough and south of Wigglesworth. The property is not within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB) and the general character of the locality is agricultural land with scattered dwellings and farmsteads.
- 2.2 The property originally comprised a farmhouse with an attached barn. The building is set back from the edge of the road with the area between the building and the road presently forming a lawned garden. There is a vehicular access from Forest Becks Brow that runs down the south side of the building giving access to a hard-surfaced parking area at the rear of the former barn part of the building. There is a second gated vehicular access, within the applicant's ownership, approximately 65m to the south of the first access. The second access leads to a hard-surfaced parking area at the end of the lawned rear garden of the farmhouse.
- 2.3 The property is immediately adjoined to the north by a detached dwelling and to the south, just beyond the second access, by a further detached dwelling. There is no other built development to the west on the opposite side of Forest Becks Brow.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 As previously stated, the property originally comprised a farmhouse occupying the northern part of the building with an attached barn to the

south. From a document on the Council's website in respect of planning application 3/2009/0381 (see below) it would appear that, prior to the purchase of the property by Mr & Mrs Drake, part of the former barn had been converted to form additional living accommodation comprising ground floor dining, study and utility/storage areas with two bedrooms and a void area above. This additional accommodation was linked internally to the farmhouse. A search on the Council's website does not reveal any planning applications relating to this initial phase in the conversion of the attached barn into living accommodation. There are just two previous applications on the website as follows:

3/2009/0381 – Proposed internal re-modelling of previously converted residential store adjoining house at Mere Syke Farm, including associated external fenestration alterations and improvements; and partial demolition and alterations to existing residential garage/workshop and store outbuilding. This application sought permission to utilise the void area at first floor level as living accommodation as well as the re-modelling of those areas already in use. The application was approved subject to conditions on 3 July 2009.

3/2010/0736 – Proposed partial demolition and alterations to existing outbuildings to form a self-contained annex residential unit and workshop. The application was approved subject to conditions 15 October 2010.

- 3.2 Planning permission 3/2009/0381 therefore authorised the conversion of the whole of the former barn into additional residential accommodation in the form of an extension to the existing dwelling. Since that permission, the whole of the attached barn has been converted for residential use but it is presently occupied by the applicants as their main residence. This permission also authorised alterations to a separate detached single storey outbuilding, but this aspect of the permission was effectively superseded by the later permission as described below.
- 3.3 In accordance with permission 3/2010/0736 the detached outbuilding has been converted into a self-contained residential annex that is occupied by Mr Drake's father. The Council's Enforcement Officer has recently confirmed to the applicants that the Council does not have any issues relating to this detached annex accommodation. The annex, therefore, does not form any part of the two planning applications to which this Statement relates. However in the event that the planning application for the use of what was originally the barn as a standalone dwelling is approved then the annex will form part of this residential unit of accommodation and not the original farmhouse.
- 3.4 As previously stated, the applicants occupy the converted former barn as their main dwelling. The original farmhouse has been altered internally to form two self-contained units that are connected to the applicants' dwelling by two sets of lockable double interconnecting doors on the ground floor. The two units have been used as holiday lets. The middle

unit (known as Gradon Cottage) has been let for a limited number of nights since it was first advertised in October 2017 and has also been used by visiting family members. The unit at the northern end of the building (known as Adair Cottage) has not yet been advertised as a holiday let as the conversion works on this unit have only recently been completed.

- 3.5 In December 2017, the Council's Enforcement Officer contacted our clients with regard to an alleged breach of planning control in the form of *"use as two or more separate dwelling houses of a building previously used as a single dwelling house and/or changed the use of an agricultural building to use for residential purposes."* Upon being advised of the actual works that had been carried out and the current uses/occupation of the three parts of the building (as described above) and having discussed the position with the Council's Senior Enforcement Planner, the Enforcement Officer advised our clients that the Council considered that it would be appropriate to submit an application for change of use of the property from use as one residential unit to be used as one residential unit and two holiday cottages.
- 3.6 On behalf of our client we have chosen to submit two planning applications as described on the title page of this Statement. We will explain our reasons and justification for submitting the two applications in this form in the remainder of this Statement.

4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 **The first application** relates to the former farmhouse. As existing, this part of the building comprises two self-contained cottages which each contain a lounge and kitchen on the ground floor and two bedrooms (both with en-suite shower rooms) on the first floor. There is an interconnecting door between the two lounges. Each of the two cottages has its own, separately fenced, private rear garden. Permission is sought for the sub-division of the farmhouse to form two separate and independent dwellings (that are not to be restricted to holiday let use). Internally the proposal involves only the closure of the existing doorway between the lounges of the two cottages. No external alterations are proposed to the building itself or to the garden areas as they are presently defined and fenced.
- 4.2 At the end of the two rear gardens there is a hard-surfaced area that facilitates the parking of two cars for each of the proposed independent dwellings. Although we do not consider it necessary for these spaces to be physically marked out on the ground, we have shown the position of the four spaces on the submitted plans in order to illustrate that the proposed conversion to form two dwellings, each with two bedrooms, would be in compliance with the Council's usual requirements with regards to off-road parking provision. Access to the parking areas for

these two dwellings would be provided by the existing track leading from the second access that is described above in paragraph 2.2.

- 4.3 **The second application** relates to the former attached agricultural building. As we have previously stated this part of the building has been converted in such a manner that it provides everything required in a self-contained dwelling and is presently occupied by the applicants as their main residence. It is, however, linked at ground floor level by a door in its study to the lounge of the middle cottage. Permission is sought for the use of the barn as a separate and self-contained dwelling. The proposal does not involve any external alterations to the building or its curtilage. In the event that permission is granted, the internal door connecting the house to the adjoining cottage would be closed. The existing hard-surfaced area at the rear of the former barn will continue to be used for parking spaces. Again, in order to demonstrate compliance with parking standards, we have indicated two parking spaces on the submitted plans. Access to the parking area for this proposed dwelling would continue to be provided by the access from Forest Becks Brow that runs along the southern end elevation of the former barn part of the building.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In order for this planning application to be approved it must satisfy, as far as possible, the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Adopted March 2012) and the relevant Policies of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (Adopted December 2014).
- 5.2 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."*
- 5.3 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 and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. It also highlights

the desirability of local planning authorities having an up to date local plan in place. Ribble Valley does have an up to date local plan in place.

5.4 Paragraph 55 of NPPF states:

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances.

5.5 Four examples of special circumstances are then stated in the paragraph and while none specifically refer to examples that are the same as the proposals put forward in these applications they do promote the conversion of heritage assets where this represents the optimal viable use and the re-use of redundant or disused buildings.

5.6 However we do not consider that either of the proposals needs to satisfy any of the special circumstances in order to represent acceptable and sustainable development in compliance with the core intentions of NPPF. The reason for this is that the special circumstances only need to be applied where the proposal would, if approved, result in new isolated homes in the countryside. The applications relate to an existing building that is adjoined to the north and south by other residential properties. The increase in the number of dwellings in the building from one to three would not, therefore, in our opinion result in the creation of any new isolated homes in the countryside.

5.7 The combined proposals would, however, result in two additional households, without any new-build development, thereby helping to enhance and maintain the vitality of the rural community in accordance with the stated aim of paragraph 55. We therefore contend that both applications are fully compliant with the principal aims and intentions of NPPF. We will, however, amplify upon this contention below through an examination of the proposals against the Council's relevant planning policies.

5.8 The Key Statements and Policies of the adopted Core Strategy that we consider to be relevant to the consideration of these applications are as follows:

Key Statement DS1 – Settlement Strategy
Key Statement DS2 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
Key Statement EN2 – Landscape
Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations
Policy DMH3 – Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB
Policy DMH4 – The Conversion of Barns and other Buildings to Dwellings
Policy DMG1 – General Considerations

- 5.9 We will comment below on each of the Key Statements and Policies in the order that they are listed above stating why, in our opinion, they are satisfied, as applicable, by both applications.
- 5.10 **Key Statement DS1** defines the Council's Development Strategy that directs development in the first instance to the strategic site and Standen and the three principle settlements in the Borough with lesser levels of development proposed in the smaller settlements and countryside locations. We will explain below why we consider that both applications are permissible under other policies of the Core Strategy, but we would contend, in any event, that the provision of two additional small dwellings within this existing building would not cause any harm to the Development Strategy sufficient to justify refusal of the applications. We would add that we consider that any perceived harm to the Development Strategy would be outweighed by the benefits of providing two small dwellings in this location.
- 5.11 **Key Statement DS2** states that, when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework; and will work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible. It also states that applications that accord with the policies of the Local Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. We consider that, for reasons that will be explained in this Statement, the proposal represents sustainable development as defined by NPPF, and fully accords with the relevant policies of the Local Plan such that permission should be granted.
- 5.12 **Key Statement EN2** relates to landscape considerations but with specific relevance to developments that are within the AONB. Although this site is not within AONB we still consider it appropriate to consider both applications with regards to the general intentions of this Key Statement to protect and enhance the landscape character of the Borough. The Key Statement states that the landscape and character of the AONB will be protected, conserved and enhanced and that developments will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. Additionally, it is stated that 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.
- 5.13 Whilst the applications relate to a property in the Open Countryside, we consider that both proposals satisfy the higher standards that are applicable to AONB locations. The proposals relate to the use of an existing building as three dwellings as opposed to its original use as one dwelling (the farmhouse) with an attached barn. The building has recently been improved and modernised both internally and externally to a very high standard in both cases. Externally, the original facing

materials of part render with stone quoins, part natural stone and natural slates have been retained throughout. The building has therefore retained its original appearance and character that is in keeping with the local vernacular and style. Two separate rear garden areas have been formed for the proposed two smaller cottages but this has not involved any extension of the original curtilage of the farmhouse. No new-build development is proposed in either application. Therefore, we consider that, overall, the improvement works that have been carried out actually result in an improvement to the appearance of the locality thereby satisfying the higher standards that would be applicable if the site was in the AONB

5.14 **Policy DMG2** defines the Council's overall development strategy. With regards to proposals in the open countryside, developments are expected to meet at least one of six specified requirements including the following:

1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social well being of the area.
2. The development is for local needs housing that meets an identified need and is secured as such.
3. The development is for small-scale uses appropriate to a local area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated.

5.15 The policy goes on to state 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. Where possible new development should be accommodated through the re-use of existing buildings, which in most cases is more appropriate than new build."* The two applications both involve the re-use of existing buildings and are in keeping with the character of the landscape.

5.16 We will consider the two applications with respect to the overall intentions of the three requirements of Policy DMG2 that are stated above. The existing authorised use of the whole of this building (originally a farmhouse with attached barn) is as one relatively large dwelling. As there are doorways between the three parts of the building, we contend that the present situation is that the building is still in use as one dwelling.

5.17 With no need for any extensions or external alterations, the approval of both applications would enable the provision within the building of a medium sized house (currently the applicants' home) and two small two bedroom cottages. Whilst we do not intend the cottages to be secured as "affordable houses" they would, of course, in reality be two attractive small dwellings that would be more affordable to young or elderly local

people wishing to remain in the local area. We consider there to be a shortage of such properties in rural areas and it is a common complaint of families living in rural locations that their children need to move out of the area in order to find houses that they can afford. Also forming three dwellings within the existing building would result in two extra households using local services and facilities to the benefit of the rural economy and social well being of the area. As such, we consider the combined proposals to be in accordance with the general intentions of Policy DMG2.

- 5.18 **Policy DH3** specifies the types of residential development that are permissible in open countryside locations, one of which is:

"The appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings providing they are suitably located and their form and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. Buildings must be structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction."

- 5.19 If the barn part of the building had not been converted to provide additional living accommodation in accordance with a previous permission, and we were now submitting an application to convert the barn into a separate dwelling, we contend that such an application would satisfy the requirements of Policy DMH3 such that, with respect to that policy, permission should be granted. Importantly, in view of the two applications to which this Statement relates, we would contend that the conversion of the barn part of the building to form two dwellings would also be acceptable in principle. We can, therefore, see no objections whatsoever with respect to Policy DMH3, to the application relating to the conversion of the barn into a separate dwelling.

- 5.20 The conversion of the barn into two dwellings (which we contend would be acceptable in policy terms) and the retention of the former farmhouse as one dwelling would result in the provision of three dwellings within the building. We, therefore, contend that there should be no objections in principle to the formation of three dwellings from the combined property but with two in the farmhouse and one in the former barn as proposed by a combination of the two current applications.

- 5.20 **Policy DMH4** specifies the criteria that must be satisfied in order for permission to be granted for the conversion of barns and other buildings into dwellings. We will comment on each of those criteria with regards to the two applications in the order that they appear in the Policy as follows:

1. The building is not isolated in the landscape but is within an already group of buildings.
2. There is no necessity for any expenditure by public authorities and utilities.

3. For reasons already stated, the proposals do not involve any new-build development and would have no harmful effects upon the landscape or conservation interests.
4. The proposals would have a beneficial effect on the rural economy.
5. The proposals respect and enhance the natural beauty of the area.
6. The building is already in residential use. Its use as three separate residential units would have no effect upon any conservation interests.
7. The building was and still is structurally sound and the barn has been converted for residential use without any building work or major alterations.
8. The building is of sufficient size to accommodate three dwellings and no extensions are either required or proposed.
9. The works to enable the residential occupation of the whole of the building have already been completed and have respected the character of the building and its surroundings. No external alterations to the building are proposed in either application.
10. Prior to its conversion, the barn part of the building had a genuine history of use for agricultural purposes.

Overall, we therefore consider that both applications fully satisfy the requirements of Policy DMH4.

- 5.21 **Policy DMG1** defines the general criteria that proposals must satisfy in order for planning permission to be granted, in respect of which we will comment below using the “headings” within the Policy.
- 5.22 **Design.** The proposals do not involve any external alterations.
- 5.23 **Access.** The existing access adjoining the southern side of the building will continue to serve one of the dwellings. The other two dwellings will be served by the second existing access further to the south. We consider both accesses to be safe and appropriate for the level and type of vehicular movements that will be generated by the residential occupation of the three dwellings. We do not, therefore, consider that the proposals would have any detrimental effects upon highway safety.
- 5.24 **Amenity.** The effects of the proposals on the visual amenities of the locality have been previously discussed. The proposals will not have any detrimental effects upon the amenities of any nearby residents.
- 5.24 Overall we consider that both proposals fully satisfy the requirements of Policy DMG1.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 We consider that we have demonstrated in this Planning Statement that the proposal represents sustainable development that is in compliance with NPPF and the relevant Policies of the Council's adopted Core Strategy.
- 6.2 Therefore, overall, we consider the development as proposed in the two applications to be in accordance with the Development Plan. In order to comply with paragraph 14 of NPPF and Core Strategy Key Statement DS2 we accordingly consider that permission should be granted in respect of both applications without delay subject to any reasonable conditions that the Council considers to be necessary.
- 6.3 If, however, the Council requires any amendments to the proposals, and/or the submission of any additional information in order for permission to be granted, we would ask that you give us the opportunity to address the same (in accordance with NPPF paragraph 187) prior to the determination of the applications.

Signed..........Date 3.4.2018.....
PS Colin Sharpe DipTP MRTPI
For and on behalf of Gary Hoerty Associates