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Planning Officer: Stephen Kilmartin

Planning Application Ref: 3/2019/0483

Description of Development: Temporary Equine Workers Dwelling & Equestrian Building (resubmission of application 3/2019/0229 & 3/2019/0222).

Site Address: Land Adjacent to Woodfold Hall, Further Lane, Mellor BB2 7QA

Dear Stephen,

Introduction

This is a revised response to the application following the applicant providing additional information to support the proposed development. The planning application has been submitted by Mrs Fiona Patterson of Gary Hoerty Associates on behalf of the applicant Mr Miles Pollard, for a temporary equine workers dwelling and equestrian building. The application is a resubmission of the applications 3/2019/0229 & 3/2019/0222, submitted earlier this year. These applications were withdrawn. ADAS have not undertaken a site visit.

Equestrian Consultants Assessment

The application is for the siting of a static caravan, in the form of a timber lodge, for a temporary three year period to provide on-site residential accommodation for the applicant with a view to establishing the financial viability of the applicant's business during this period. With the intention of submitting a further planning application for the permanent retention of the structure.

The application is also for the erection of a lean-to steel portal frame equestrian building to the rear of the existing structure, with a dimension of 6.7m x 30.5m with an eaves height of 2.3m and a maximum height of 3.5m where it will adjoin the existing stable building.

The applicant has stated that this building will accommodate 5 internal loose-boxes (14' x 14') and a work area for remedial farriery.

The holding extends to 4.45ha (11 acres) within a ring fence, the land is grassland being divided into several paddocks for grazing and turnout. There is an existing building (12m x 16m) providing stabling for 8 horses, an all-weather manege (20m x 40m) and car parking area.

The applicant has stated that he is a registered farrier and has established a remedial farriery business based at Woodfold Stables and Forge. It is proposed to expand the business and to grow the remedial farriery activities at Woodfold. In order to do this the applicant has stated that there is a need for additional stabling and for the applicant to reside in the immediate vicinity of the stables.

It is understood that the applicant currently resides in Burnley, a distance of some 42 miles from Mellor, and attends the site 4 or 5 times a day to attend to any resident horses.

The applicant has stated that they achieve a high occupancy rate, but this has not been stated in terms of % occupancy. With only 8 stables this must be limited to 8 horses at 100% plus any at grass. The additional stable building, if approved, will increase the number of stables to 13 (8 existing + 5 proposed).

It is understood that the applicant does not operate a 'normal livery yard' but a specialised service providing remedial farriery and care of horses and ponies with laminitis and other conditions of the feet requiring remedial farriery and specialised management in terms of feed and exercise.

This service is provided to both resident and visiting horses in addition to the applicant visiting clients at their premises. It is understood that as the remedial farriery business develops, the applicant wishes to confine his activities to on-site rather than attending horses off-site.

As such it is acknowledged that this type of horse will have a higher than normal demand for management in terms of feeding, controlled exercise, frequency and duration of turnout and are likely to be stabled for extended periods of time and thereby requiring a higher degree of supervision than normal.

In addition to the applicant who is full-time it is understood that there is also part-time help. The applicant has further stated that it is his intention as the business develops to focus his remedial farriery at the site rather than to travel to clients premises.

The applicant also states that there is an established functional need for him to reside in the immediate vicinity of the stable buildings, in order to attend to the welfare requirements of the horses that are stabled whilst undergoing daily treatment. It is understood that treatment can be over a period of 2 to 12 months.

It is understood that there are no residential buildings at the site or any buildings capable of conversion to residential use that are not already being occupied.

Further to this the applicant has stated that they are unaware of any affordable houses available to buy nearby and even if there were the dwelling is required on site to ensure the appropriate care is provided.

A property search on *Rightmove* (www.rightmove.co.uk) shows that within 1 mile of the site (BB2 7QA) there are 17 properties for sale, ranging from £240K to £1.1m and 1 property to rent, a 2 bedroom flat at £895pcm.

It is however acknowledged that none of these properties would provide for an on-site presence and therefore not meet the functional needs as stated by the applicant.

Functional Need

We are of the opinion that given the specialised nature of the activities and the type of horses accommodated at the site, with their particular needs, there would be an essential functional requirement for a suitably experienced and responsible person to be accommodated on-site or in close proximity to the stabled horses i.e. within 'sight and sound'.

This opinion is reached on the basis that there could be up to 13 horses stabled on the premises at any one time, requiring supervision and management on behalf of their owners.

It is also acknowledged that there is likely to be a reasonable expectation by owners that their horses will be adequately supervised whilst in the custody and care of the applicant, and receiving treatment, and failure to meet this expectation is likely to hinder the further development of the business.

An on-site residential presence also affords increased security to the premises and its occupants and is particularly beneficial in case of stable fire for early detection and evacuation of stabled horses.

It is acknowledged that whilst the use of CCTV can assist with monitoring horses and providing for additional security to the premises, its use has limitations and it is not considered to present a viable alternative to there being an on-site presence.

Financial Viability

The applicant has stated that he has invested significantly in the premises with further investment proposed for the additional stable building and stabling and the temporary dwelling. The cost of the additional building has been given as £30,000 but no figure for the temporary dwelling. It has however been stated that both are to be funded from cash reserves within the business.

The applicant has submitted three years trading accounts for the remedial farriery business, for the years ending 5th April 2018, 5th April 2017 and 5th April 2016. The accounts show that the business has been trading profitably during this period, providing sufficient profits to provide for personal drawings and a return on investment and/or reinvestment in the business.

The applicant has further stated that in his opinion the business is financially viable and will in due course pass a financial test if the Council allow the extension to the existing equestrian building, to enable the business to expand and grow in a sustainable way.

We are of the opinion that the business is trading profitably, is viable and sustainable and the additional 5 stable places, if granted planning permission, would increase the financial viability of the business and in our view would be necessary in order to justify the functional need for an on-site residential presence.

The applicant has calculated labour requirements using Standard Man Days (SMD's) assuming 13 horses (100% occupancy) at full-livery providing a forecast labour requirement of 8,580 hours which equates to 3.9 full-tie workers.

We consider that it is unrealistic to budget for a 100% occupancy and that for budgeting purposes an occupancy of 75-80% is more realistic. However, even at this reduced occupancy it is acknowledged that the labour requirement exceeds that of a full-time worker and on this basis the functional needs as previously identified is for a full-time equestrian worker.

Size and Location of the Temporary Dwelling

The proposed dwelling is a 2 bedroom retreat home lodge measuring 17.53m x 6.7m providing an internal floor area of slightly less than 117.5m². The accommodation comprising of living/dining/kitchen, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and utility room. This size of dwelling is considered appropriate for an agricultural/equestrian worker.

The proposed location is also considered suitable in terms of being located within reasonably close proximity to the stabled horses i.e. within 'sight and sound'.

Planning Appraisal and Policy Context

This planning appraisal has been undertaken to assess the site located at land adjacent to Woodfold Hall, Further Lane, Mellor, BB2 7QA, for a temporary equine workers dwelling and equestrian building. This application is a resubmission of applications 3/2019/0229 & 3/2019/0222.

The site falls within the administrative boundary of Ribble Valley Borough Council and this appraisal has taken into consideration the national and local planning policies listed within the following table:

National Planning Policy	Description
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)	
Paragraph 38	Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way.
Paragraph 79	Paragraph 79 states that: <i>“Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:</i> a) <i>There is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;”</i>
Paragraph 80	Paragraph 80 states that: <i>“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its own strengths, counter any weakness and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”</i>
Paragraph 83	Paragraph 83 states that: <i>“Planning policies and decisions should enable:</i> a) <i>The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;</i> b) <i>The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;”</i>
Paragraph 84	Paragraph 84 states that: <i>“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements.”</i>

Paragraph 143	Paragraph 143 states that: <i>"Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances."</i>
Paragraph 145	Paragraph 145 states that: <i>"A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:</i> <i>a) buildings for agriculture and forestry.</i> <i>b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"</i>

Local Planning Policy	Description
<i>Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008-2028: A Local Plan for Ribble Valley (Adopted in December 2014)</i>	
Key Statement DS2: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development	Key Statement DS2 of the core strategy states that: <i>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. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.</i> <i>Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</i>
Key Statement EN1: Green Belt	Key Statement EN1 states that: <i>"The overall extent of the green belt will be maintained to safeguard the surrounding countryside from inappropriate encroachment. The development of new buildings will be limited to the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of the designation."</i>

Key Statement EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change	Key Statement EN3 of the Core Strategy states that: <i>“The Council will seek to ensure that all development meets an appropriate recognised sustainable design and construction standard where viable to do so, in order to address both the causes and consequences of climate change. In particular, all development will be required to demonstrate how it will contribute towards reducing the Borough's carbon footprint.”</i>
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This assessment has been completed using the information that was sent to the Council by the applicant and their agent. This includes a completed application form, elevations, location and site plan, floor plan and planning statement. Further to this, following an initial response to the application by ADAS, the applicant has also provided financial records of the enterprise. Following this, from the results of the agricultural consultant’s assessment, it is considered that there is a level of evidential need for this development. Additionally, the site also falls within the Green Belt.

Within the Planning Statement, reference is made to the now out of date July 2018 NPPF. The relevant polices of the February 2019 NPPF have been discussed in this appraisal. Further to this, the relevant polices of the Local Plan for Ribble Valley have also been discussed.

Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that authorities should approach planning decisions in a positive way. This is built upon In the Ribble Valley Local Plan, in Key Statement DS2, which states that the council will take a positive approach in favour of sustainable development.

It is stated in planning statement that the applicant is a registered farrier with an established remedial farrier business located at the site. Both Paragraphs 80 and 83 of the NPPF argue that planning decisions should enable and support the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF also adds that sites to meet these needs may be found beyond existing settlements. Overall, it is considered that there is a justification for the workers dwelling. However, it is also worth noting that the presented need for a workers dwelling is reliant on the expansion of the business, which is included within a further application that has been submitted and is currently awaiting a decision.

Further to this, it is noted that the development site is within the Green Belt. As a result of this, it is considered that Paragraphs 143 and 145 are relevant to this development. Additionally, it is noted that Key Statement EN1 of the Local Plan in referring to development within the Green Belt is also considered to be relevant.

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, and should therefore be refused. Whilst Paragraph 145 of the NPPF provides examples of exceptions to this, it is noted that it does not explicitly reference the use outlined within this application. Additionally, Key Statement EN1 of the Local Plan states that only specific examples of development will be supported. These examples mirror that of the NPPF, however it is also stated that this can also include other uses of land which preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with this designation.

Conclusion

Following on from the equestrian consultant's assessment, it is considered that the application has presented a clear demonstrable need for the development. However, it is noted that the need for this development is reliant on a further expansion outlined within another application to expand the stable capacity, which has been submitted and is currently awaiting a decision.

Additionally, it is also noted that the site for this application falls within the Green Belt, therefore it is considered to be at the Local Planning Authorities discretion to evaluate the effect this development will have on the openness of the Green Belt, in addition to appropriateness of its use within the Green Belt.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Fairfoull & James Atkinson
Senior Consultant & Planning Consultant