



**Steven Abbott Associates LLP**  
Chartered Town Planners

## **PLANNING STATEMENT**

Adam and Alex Dugdale

Proposed Re-use of Former Farm Buildings as a Dwelling  
and related development

Moorcock Farm, Clitheroe Road, Moor Nook (Near  
Longridge)

March 2021



## REPORT DETAILS

**Contact:** **Steven H Abbott** BSc (Hons) MRTPI  
**Partner**

Tel: 01257 251177

E-mail: [stevena@abbott-associates.co.uk](mailto:stevena@abbott-associates.co.uk)

**Office address:** **Steven Abbott Associates LLP**

Balmoral House  
Ackhurst Business Park  
Foxhole Road  
Chorley  
PR7 1NY

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**Steven Abbott Associates LLP** - Chartered Town Planners

Offices in Lancashire, Cumbria and Cornwall

[www.abbott-associates.co.uk](http://www.abbott-associates.co.uk)

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1. LPA Email of 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
- Appendix 2. County Council's letter of 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- Appendix 3. Note of the pre-application meeting.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. We act for Adam and Alex Dugdale who own the property, which forms part of the Dutton Manor Estate.
- 1.2. A Planning Statement was written at the pre-application stage to assist Ribble Valley Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (AONB).
- 1.3. As with previous proposals of this type we provided a considerable amount of supporting information at the outset to assist the LPA and AONB.
- 1.4. The pre-application process culminated in a video conference call on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 which was attended by the following people:
  - John Macholc – Head of Planning Services for Ribble Valley Borough Council
  - Adam and Alexandra Dugdale – the Applicants and owners of the Dutton Manor Estate including the subject buildings
  - Richard Cater – Architect with John Coward Architects Ltd (JCA)
  - Steven Abbott – Planning Consultant of Steven Abbott Associates LLP

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- 1.5. The proposals were positively received by the Council through Mr Macholc. A copy of his Email of 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (following the pre-application meeting) is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.6. The only matters arising concerned detail which are addressed in the following section.
- 1.7. In parallel with the pre-application submission with Ribble valley Borough Council, one was made by WYG (now Tetrattech) on highways matters using Lancashire County Council's pre-application service. The reply received by them from LCC is attached as Appendix 2. The response is also addressed in the next section. LCC had no objections in principle.
- 1.8. With the forms and this Statement are the following items:
- JC Architects:
    - Amended Drawings:
      - 01 Rev C Site Plan + Garage
      - 02 Rev B First Floor Plan + Elevations
      - Design and Access Statement Revision D
    - Statement of Significance and Condition Report (Heritage aspects) Revision B
  - Drawings provided, as with the pre-application submission, by D2R Surveyors:

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- D2R-MRC-01            Topographical Survey
  - D2R-MRC-RT-02       Existing Plans
  - D2R-MRC-Rt-03       Existing Elevations and Sections
  - Visually Verified Photomontage (VVM) Report (Arcmedia), as provided at the pre-application stage and an Addendum document to show minor amendments to the elevations requested by Mr Macholc, the garage clad with fibre cement cladding instead of stone and hedge planting along the north east and south east boundaries.
  - Updated Ecological Assessment (ERAP) to take account of the amended elevations
  - Site Investigations – Phase 1 Desk Top Study (preliminary Risk Assessment) by GEO Environmental Engineering
  - The updated Drainage Strategy (R G Parkins) with details added and infiltration tests (with GEO Environmental's assistance) as recommended by Mr Macholc
  - A Structural Survey (R G Parkins), as at the pre-application stage
  - Tetrattech (formerly WYG) – Updated Transport Note

1.9. As with other re-use schemes we have been involved within the AONB we sought a site meeting with the Case Officer at RVBC and the Forest of Bowland AONB Manager, Elliott Lorimer. On his examination of the plans,

VVM report and technical information Mr Macholc decided that a site meeting with him or Elliott Lorimer was unnecessary.

- 1.10. However, we have copied Mr Lorimer into the planning application documents and welcome his input.

## **2. RESPONSE TO THE PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE OFFERED BY THE LOCAL PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS AUTHORITIES**

### **The Local Planning Authority (Ribble Valley B.C.)**

- 2.1. Mr Macholc had no objections to the proposals.
- 2.2. He suggested some amendments to design details, a screening fence on the north west boundary and reinforcing the hedgerow on the south east side of the site.
- 2.3. Appendix 3 is a note of the pre-application meeting. Mr Macholc's suggestions were taken on board by the Applicants and the application plans are amended versions of the pre-application versions accordingly. The original VVM Report is lodged but accompanied by an Addendum to demonstrate how the appearance has been affected.
- 2.4. The Drainage Strategy has been expanded, as requested and covers details of the surface water drainage scheme.

### **The Highway Authority (Lancashire County Council)**

- 2.5. In parallel with the pre-application submission made to Ribble Valley B.C., WYG (now Tetrattech) submitted the scheme to the Highway Authority for its pre-application advice. Appendix 2 is a copy of the County Council's letter (18<sup>th</sup> December 2020).



- 2.6. Mr Hardie indicated in his letter that LCC have no objections in principle to the development subject to conditions.
- 2.7. One of those involves moving the proposed altered existing access further south. Given the very significant improvements to visibility compared to the existing farmyard access (to be closed to vehicles) the Applicant would prefer to leave the proposals alone. To move the access south would mean placing it outside south of the existing hedge line which envelopes the farm buildings and using a small part of the field. Whilst with sensitive planting to create an adjustment to the hedge line would enable a satisfactory intervention into the local landscape it seems an unnecessary change.
- 2.8. We would be happy to discuss this with the Case Officer if it is deemed preferable when all material considerations are considered.

### **3. THE PROPOSED GARAGE BUILDING**

- 3.1. Since the pre-application discussion with Mr Macholc, it has been decided to amend the cladding of the proposed garages. Instead of stone as was shown it has been decided to propose a black coloured fibre cement cladding for the walls and roof. The idea is to create a building which is akin to an agricultural shed. It would contrast with the stone-faced buildings to be re-used and regress in the landscape. This (with the proposed hedge planting) should enhance an already highly quality development. We look forward to the Case Officer's response on this detail.

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

- 4.1. The landscape is predominantly undulating farmland interspersed with hedgerows and trees.
- 4.2. The group of buildings at Moorcock Farm are located on the east side of Clitheroe Road (B6243) near a hamlet called Moor Nook.
- 4.3. The group, as others are in the vicinity, is highly visible in the landscape.
- 4.4. It is an attractive element within the local landscape, but apart from the former farmhouse, the buildings are disused.
- 4.5. The group of buildings comprise six distinct elements as follows: –
- The former farmhouse.
  - A large traditional stone barn fronting Clitheroe Road (the ‘main’ barn).
  - A shippon which sits at 90° to the main barn.
  - A group of secondary buildings opposite the main barn.
  - A modern ‘Dutch’ barn to the south of the shippon but with a corner on its north west which abuts the main barn.
  - A former garage cum all-purpose single storey building of an industrial appearance behind the secondary group on the east of the whole.

- All are in a tight group around what was the farmyard, which forms an interesting space inside them.
- 4.6. The farmhouse is occupied and does not form part of the proposals – save for the fact that it will benefit from a much safer vehicular access (which is acknowledged by the local planning and highways authorities).
- 4.7. Except for the Dutch barn to the south of the group and the garage cum store, the buildings are all stone built with slate roofs. The main barn and shippon have flush roof lights.
- 4.8. Clitheroe Road is subject to the national (non-motorway) maximum single carriageway limited of 60mph.
- 4.9. The site is between a long sweeping bend on a hill from Moor Nook to the north west of it and a tighter one but well to the south east of it.
- 4.10. The existing vehicular access into the former farmyard (which is still used) has very poor visibility for egressing vehicles and is not wide enough for vehicles to pass one another and thus entering it is problematic too.
- 4.11. There is a second established vehicular access in the south of the site which has significantly better sight lines.

## **5. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 5.1. There is no planning history of relevance to the current proposals.

## 6. THE POLICY CONTEXT

### **The Development Plan – The Ribble Valley Local Plan (Core Strategy) (CS)**

6.1. The vision from the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) is reiterated in the CS under paragraph 3.3. The proposed development is consistent with that vision as:

- i. The exceptional quality of the environment (in the AONB in this case) is respected by what is a very carefully considered scheme where details have been chosen sensitively;
- ii. The quality of life ‘for all’ is enhanced in a small way by:
  - Demolishing prominent, unsightly modern buildings which could fall into disrepair and are discordant with the former farmstead.
  - Facilitating the sustainable re-use of the group of buildings and preventing their inevitable collapse into a ruinous condition. (It is not an appropriate location for a commercial use with the attendant side effects – given the proximity of the former farmhouse, the visibility of the site and the shared access).
  - Enabling another household to join the local community and help it to continue to be sustainable.
- iii. Regarding settlements with services and facilities, the site is approximately 3 miles from Longridge (7 minutes’ drive time) and 2

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from Hurst Green (5 minutes' drive time)<sup>1</sup> along the B6243 noting that the bus service connects to both places. The local community would be enhanced by a new household in terms of supporting services and facilities; Hurst Green has a primary school and basic services.

- iv. Whilst the subject buildings are not located within a settlement, they are a group relatively close to settlements and the spirit of paragraph 78 in the NPPF should be considered i.e., development in one smaller settlement may support services in a village nearby – in this case Hurst Green and the town of Longridge too. We will deal with the NPPF and CS policies on the re-use of buildings later.
- v. The proposed conversion would meet the needs of the Dutton Manor Estate and the residents of the former farmhouse. They will benefit from a much safer vehicular access from Clitheroe Road and see a sustainable re-use of the buildings next door.

6.2. With regard to the Vision in the CS we would comment as follows:

- i. The proposed scheme will enhance the 'unrivalled quality of place' by facilitating the retention of vernacular buildings in a group. They are part of the built heritage but would fall into disrepair if a new, realistic use is not found. JCA were chosen as they have the skills and experience to design a re-use scheme which respects the characteristics of the buildings and the countryside around them.

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<sup>1</sup> Google maps

- ii. We have explained that a new dwelling in these buildings will support local services and in turn help the chances of them surviving for future generations.
  - iii. As the narrative observes, managed growth is essential to enable communities to be sustained. It notes that a balance must be struck between the need for development and conservation of the quality of the environment.
  - iv. Opportunities for new homes in the Ribble Valley are limited because of its exceptional landscapes and heritage assets. Consequently, the re-use of redundant buildings (including, where appropriate, in the AONB) is important. Whilst not a matter we consider to be determinative per se, the continuing need for new homes makes the contribution of re-use schemes (where appropriate) even more important.
  - v. In terms of the need to provide what are described as 'decent houses', the buildings at Moorcock Farm provide a good opportunity for doing just that – subject to sensitive design details (including the curtilage) as is proposed.
- 6.3. Key Statement EN2 'Landscape' in the CS is also noteworthy as a material consideration. It echoes national policy and legislation affecting AONBs. The proposed scheme will enable the buildings, which are a heritage asset locally, to remain in a sustainable use. This future will maintain and enhance the natural beauty of the area. 'Maintain' because with no other



use appropriate or viable they will soon fall into disrepair. Change in AONBs is not contrary to their beauty it is how that change is enacted. The proposals are very carefully crafted and will be in keeping with the character of the landscape, local distinctiveness will be reflected and maintained, and they will maintain their vernacular style, scale, features and building materials. We add that great care has been taken over the extent, design and fine details of the external areas.

- 6.4. The proposed scheme is also in accordance with Key Statement EN3 'Sustainable Development and Climate Change.' The development would meet the highest sustainable design and construction standards. The fact that the project involves the re-use of substantially constructed existing buildings is a good start as the buildings are in fact being recycled whilst at the same time conserving a heritage asset in an AONB.
- 6.5. Given the location of the buildings and the space around them owned by the Applicant it is possible to provide a sustainable drainage system. Details of the whole drainage system have been worked up since the pre-application submission to assist the Council.
- 6.6. The site is not one which is affected by a biodiversity or geodiversity designation. However, in accordance with key Statement EN4 and as a matter of best practice anyway, the owners commissioned ERAP to undertake ecological assessments of the buildings. There are no matters which cannot be addressed by mitigation measures.

- 6.7. On a related matter, the creation of a sensitively designed garden curtilage will expand the biodiversity of the site.
- 6.8. If the buildings are allowed to decay and ultimately collapse and the valuable materials are removed that opportunity will be lost forever.
- 6.9. The proposed re-use of this local heritage asset, as proposed, is sustainable development. Key Statement DS2 states that the Council will take a positive approach to such a proposal which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. We note, and have experienced, the Council's aim to work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that the proposals will be approved wherever possible. In this case, and typically, a solution needs to be found to conserve the buildings by finding a re-use which is appropriate for the location and is viable. The location is unsuitable for a commercial use given the closeness of the existing house, access and the potential visual impact of vehicles.
- 6.10. The proposed use would have economic, social and environmental benefits for the area as follows:

**Economic**

- i. The occupation of the buildings will be beneficial in helping to sustain local services and facilities;
- ii. People visiting the residents will have the same positive impact;

- iii. People engaged in servicing the residents on site, e.g., with maintenance, cleaning or gardening will contribute to the local economy.

**Social**

- i. Even one additional household can make a significant contribution to a rural community.
- ii. This can be a supportive role or by direct contribution.

**Environmental**

- i. The re-use of the buildings would involve the carefully designed restoration scheme proposed and secure a future for these local heritage assets;
- ii. The proposed closure of the existing farmyard access would remove a dangerous access which is narrow and lacks sight lines – it cannot be improved because of the location of the buildings and the alignment of the road;
- iii. The removal of the modern buildings to reveal the original group of farm buildings will enhance the appearance of the site.

- 6.11. Finally, on Key Statement DS2 localised positive impacts would add to other benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole. This includes what the NPPF states about the national importance of AONBs, which we address below.

- 6.12. Key Statement EN2 'Landscape' is particularly important to this proposal as it expressly refers to the AONB. The proposals will contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the AONB by removing industrial style buildings and facilitating the conservation of the heritage assets. The new access has been carefully designed to minimise its impact on the AONB.
- 6.13. It is quite right that Policy EN2 protects and requires enhancement of the AONB. The subject scheme wholly accords with that approach.
- 6.14. The policy states that the Council expects development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflects local distinctiveness, has a vernacular style, scale, features and building materials. The sensitive re-use scheme and its external features wholly accord with those expectations.
- 6.15. Key Statement EN5 concerns heritage assets and so is also a material consideration. The proposals are consistent with this policy. Examined in the context of the proportionality described in the policy, the proposed scheme is more than satisfactory as it retains and restores with minimal impact on the appearance of the group.
- 6.16. Regarding the criteria under 5.5 we comment as follows: -
- The proposed scheme is a viable one and is an opportunity for sustaining and enhancing its significance.

- Benefits arise as a consequence of this scheme and more particularly the retention of the buildings, closure of a dangerous access, its replacement with a safer one, and the removal of unsightly buildings in a prominent location in the AONB.

6.17. With regard to general considerations the proposed scheme is compliant in all respects with Policy DMG1 as:

**Design**

- i. The design is of a high standard and has been very carefully considered in context. It has been further 'fine-tuned' because of the pre-application consultation with Mr Macholc.
- ii. The re-use is sympathetic to existing land uses, i.e., a mixture of residential and agriculture. There is little prospect of different future land uses nearby given the AONB context. The use of building materials would be sparing and appropriate.
- iii. Particular attention has been placed on visual appearance and the relationship with surroundings, including the impact on landscape character.
- iv. Re-using the buildings is a sustainable course of action in its own right. Sustainable construction will be used in the conversion where possible.
- v. The one element of new build (the garages) involves a very sensitive design approach using dark materials which give the appearance of

an agricultural shed which contrasts with the stone buildings being retained and regresses in the landscape.

### **Access**

- i. The potential traffic and car parking implications have been considered carefully.
- ii. A new access is proposed on the professional advice of a highways consultancy (i.e., for road safety reasons), the details of the new access drive have been designed to respect the AONB setting; and the garage has been positioned so that the visual impact of cars is minimised.

### **Amenity**

- i. There would be no impact on amenities in the surrounding area.
- ii. Given the layout no lighting or privacy issues arise for the existing residents of Moorcock Farmhouse or Stoneleigh which it adjoins.
- iii. A lighting scheme is not proposed at this stage but can form the subject of a condition on any planning permission.
- iv. The scheme takes account of public safety and secured by design principles.
- v. It does not raise any air quality issues.

### **Environment**

- i. An ecological assessment has been undertaken (see above) and mitigation is part of the scheme.
- ii. The proposals protect and enhance this local heritage asset and its setting.

6.18. With regard to Policy DMG2 'Strategic Considerations' the proposals are in accordance with this section which expressly refers to the AONB. More particularly: -

- The development involves the preferred option for new development, i.e., the re-use of an existing building.
- The minor design changes, re-use of materials and landscaping are in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the AONB.
- The AONB Management Plan has been considered and is referred to below.

6.19. In terms of Policy DMG3 'Transport and Mobility' the following comments are pertinent:

- i. The site is located on the locally important 'main' road, Clitheroe Road (B6243).
- ii. As stated above the proposed use would enable the local services and facilities to be supported by the additional household.

- iii. The site is one where trips would predominantly need to be made by the private car but that is an accepted part of rural life. However, more of us are buying fully electric vehicles or hybrids the impact of which is nil or significantly less in terms of emissions. Trips to filling stations are unnecessary for most charging sessions as EVs can be charged at home.
  - iv. The pandemic has accelerated the trend to work from home which reduces or removes commuting to workplaces in more congested places.
  - v. The design of the proposed dwelling enables the less mobile to reside in it or visit.
- 6.20. Turning to Policy DME2 (Landscape and Townscape Protection) the proposals are in accordance with it as:
- i. Traditional hedgerows are retained and reinforced.
  - ii. No ponds are affected;
  - iii. Herb rich meadows and pastures are not affected;
  - iv. No woodland is lost;
  - v. The external works have been sensitively designed to respect the context.



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- 6.21. The proposals do not affect species protection and conservation. As such policy DME3 does not engage. An ecological assessment concludes that there are no constraints.
- 6.22. The proposals are in accordance with Policy DME4 'Protecting Heritage Assets'. The buildings are not listed or on a 'local list' but have been recognised as local heritage assets by our client, us and his professional conservation architect at JC Architects. Policy DME4 states that the Council will make a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings. Such a presumption exists here.
- 6.23. The site is not liable to flooding and as such is in accordance with Policy DME6 'Water Management'. However, a sustainable drainage system would be provided as part of the development.
- 6.24. Policy DMH3 is highly material as it deals with dwellings in the open countryside and the AONB. It is a relatively permissive policy as it provides for the conversion of buildings to dwellings, provided they are suitably located (as these are), and their form and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. As the submitted documents show they are also structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction.
- 6.25. Policy DMH4 specifically refers to barn conversions. The proposals are in accordance with it too as: -

- i. The group of buildings are not 'isolated' in the landscape. They form part of a group of buildings including dwellings to the north (Stoneleigh and Moorcock Farmhouse) and beyond numerous buildings at Moor Nook – which are all very visible.
- ii. There would be no burden on public or utilities bodies on the provision of infrastructure; and
- iii. There would be no damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area or harm to nature conservation interests; and
- iv. There would be no detrimental effect on the rural economy – the opposite, in fact, for the reasons set out above; and
- v. The proposals are absolutely consistent with the conservation and natural beauty of the area; and
- vi. Nature conservation aspects of the structure have been properly surveyed and mitigation can be provided, as per the ecologist's assessment.

Regarding the second set of criteria: –

- i. The buildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use without the need for extensive building or major external alterations and thus the essential character of and appearance of the buildings is preserved. A structural survey supported the pre-application submissions to demonstrate that the proposed conversion is realistic. It is resubmitted for completeness.

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- ii. The buildings are of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for extensions which could harm the character and appearance of the buildings.
  - iii. The character of the buildings and their materials are appropriate to their surroundings and they are worthy of retention because of their contribution to the setting; and
  - iv. The buildings had a genuine history of use in agriculture.
- 6.26. The narrative under the policy is helpful as it notes that the re-use of existing rural buildings provides an important opportunity to preserve them which contributes to the character of an area and setting. It notes, as we have above, that such buildings can provide a housing resource and (as in this case) promote sustainability.
- 6.27. With regard to the rest of the passage – the conversion would clearly be of a high standard and in keeping with local traditions.
- 6.28. The impact of the development, including the creation of a relatively modest garden area and car parking is proposed in a very sensitive way which would not harm the appearance or function of the area in which Moorcock Farm is located.
- 6.29. Furthermore, in terms of the final part of the narrative, access would be far safer than now (it serves the farmhouse and yard) and has been carefully designed to blend into the landscape.

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- 6.30. We refer to the Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) Good Practice guidance on the conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings later.
- 6.31. We can conclude on the Core Strategy (Local Plan) that the proposed re-use scheme is in accordance with its policies.
- 6.32. We have been unable to locate the HELM Good Practice Guide referred to. However, we can comment on two Historic England (HE) documents on the same subject area as follows: -
- The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings – Historic England Advice Note 9 (2017)*
- 6.33. This document notes the importance of such buildings to the English landscape and their potential to accommodate viable new uses.
- 6.34. We, the owners and their architects (who were specifically instructed because of their expertise and experience) have taken account of the valid points raised in the Historic England guide even though the barns at Moorcock Farm are not designated heritage assets or in the local list. We happen to think they are attractive buildings, worthy of retention but needing the proposed use to make that possible.
- 6.35. Paragraph 1.5 advises that local planning authorities should consider the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- 6.36. In accordance with paragraph 3.2 in the Guidance the site and buildings were comprehensively assessed at the pre-application stage.

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- 6.37. What is proposed is as described in paragraph 3.5 – a high quality design which will make a positive contribution to the rural context based on a well-informed understanding of the buildings and their context.
- 6.38. In the document it is observed that traditional farmsteads and farm buildings make an important contribution to the remarkably varied character of England’s landscape. They are fundamental to its sense of place and local distinctiveness, but most are now redundant for modern agricultural purposes. Although they lack the agricultural income needed to keep them in good repair many nevertheless have the potential to accommodate a variety of economically viable new uses. This description wholly reflects the situation with the subject barns.
- 6.39. JCA have approached this project in accordance with Historic England’s (HE) guidance. They recognised the need to understand the significance of the building, its relationship to the wider landscape setting and its sensitivity to and capacity for change.
- 6.40. HE notes that sensitive adoption to residential use (and others) is appropriate in principle and can enhance their historic character and significance; and such schemes should be encouraged.
- 6.41. The work undertaken by JCA – including their conservation architect demonstrates:
- An understanding of the historic character and local significance of the buildings in their setting;

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- Proposes very sensitively crafted changes which are realistic in securing long-term survival;
  - The design retains the inherited significance reflecting an understanding which has informed the design process;
  - The approach is the lightest form of adaptive reuse for a residential scheme even though the building has no heritage status (i.e., listing or local listing or conservation area location).

6.42. Very significantly, paragraph 1.3 in the document states that

*"In future, the pace of change will accelerate in response to the restructuring and diversification of farm business and increasing demand for houses and workspaces in rural landscapes. Maintaining and reusing farm buildings, which no longer have a viable agricultural use is a sustainable option, considering the wide range of benefits they afford". (Our emphasis).*

6.43. In terms of the bullet points under that paragraph we can comment as follows: -

- The buildings, as part of an attractive group, make an essential contribution to the local landscape and its distinctiveness.
- It represents an historical investment in materials and energy which would be sustained through conservation and careful reuse.

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- It would provide an important economic asset for the Dugdale family who are significant landowners locally (the Dutton Manor Estate) and stewards of the environment.
  - The building is unsuitable for business uses given its location and access arrangements. The side effects (particularly vehicles, waste collection and servicing) of such uses would be too imposing on the appearance of the area.

*Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings –*

*Best Practice Guidance for Adoptive Reuse (2017)*

- 6.44. It is important to note that residential conversions more frequently support home-based entrepreneurial business than any other kind of rural property. So, there is a good prospect that at least one of the residents who could occupy the building will work from home for part or all the time – as many people do in what is a sustainable lifestyle. This is even more likely in view of the permanent social changes catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6.45. JCA's scheme has very carefully considered setting, boundaries and curtilage issues. The proposed access arrangement, car parking and gardens have been designed to minimise their impact on the locale and the dangerous farmyard access would be closed to vehicles.
- 6.46. Regarding Section 3 in the document – adapting farm buildings – these proposals follow the principles: –

- They understand the construction and condition;
- Respect the architectural and (local) historic interest of the buildings;
- Understand the setting;
- Achieve high standards of design;
- Minimise alterations and loss to historic fabric;
- Retain distinctive features;
- Consider how to introduce daylight (without undesirable fenestration changes);
- Considers how services and insulation would be incorporated;
- Takes account of wildlife interests.

6.47. With regard to landscaping, the revised access arrangements do not propose formal tarmac drives or edging materials. The new driveway is designed to be a 'soft' and yet a practical solution. The first section from the highway must be hard to accord with road safety considerations.

6.48. The Guidance acknowledged that access and car parking can have a minimal impact when the farm building is converted to a single dwelling with careful landscaping. This is exactly what the proposed scheme is about. As we have noted above, HE acknowledges that car parking for commercial uses can have a more significant impact on the setting than a residential one.

6.49. The buildings have sufficient openings to negate the need to punch new ones through their walls generally. Being able to mainly use the existing fenestration in this way is in the spirit of HE's advice.



- 6.50. The proposed scheme compares well with the barn conversions highlighted by HE advice document.
- 6.51. It can thus be seen that the proposals are in accordance with HE's guidance even though the buildings are not designated or locally listed heritage assets.

## **7. THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)**

- 7.1. The legal starting point for decision making on the proposed application is described in paragraph 2 and 47 of the NPPF. We have set out comprehensively (above) how the proposals are in accordance with the development plan. Given that fact and support in the recent pre-application consultation, we hope that the Council will grant planning permission as soon as possible. The buildings have been obsolete for a long time and are susceptible to decay or destruction.
- 7.2. The three roles of sustainable development referred to in policy have been addressed above in the context of the Local Plan, i.e., economic, social and environmental. The proposals perform all three as listed in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- 7.3. Paragraph 10 highlights the point that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed conversion is sustainable development. It follows in paragraph 11 that local planning authorities are bound to approve such proposals where (as here) they accord with an up-to-date development plan.
- 7.4. We know that the Council will approach this planning application in a positive and creative way as required by paragraph 38 in the NPPF and particularly following positive pre-application advice.

- 7.5. In accordance with paragraph 39, the pre-application submission was early engagement which improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.
- 7.6. The role of small sites in delivering new homes is recognised in paragraph 68 of the NPPF albeit this is a conversion scheme for 1 dwelling only.
- 7.7. Although Moorcock Farm is in a rural area between Longridge and Hurst Green, for practical purposes it is relatively close to both places. The spirit of paragraph 78 in the NPPF is important here as the development would support the vitality of the wider area – which as we have pointed out has a relatively good range of services and facilities close by.
- 7.8. The proposals are in accordance with paragraph 79 c) in the NPPF as they involve the re-use of redundant buildings and would enhance their immediate setting particularly with the demolition of the unattractive, modern buildings. In addition, the scheme is of exceptional design quality as per paragraph 79 e) as it reflects the highest standards in architecture and would help to set standards. It would also significantly enhance the immediate setting and is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- 7.9. The proposals make effective use of land in accordance with paragraph 117 of the NPPF. We appreciate that the site is not a ‘previously developed’ one, as its last use was agricultural, but the principle is valid in the circumstances.

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- 7.10. Regarding paragraph 118 the proposals would constitute a net environmental gain given the removal of the modern buildings, closure of the existing sub-standard access and there would be a net gain in biodiversity. This, because of new and reinforcement hedge planting and cultivation within the proposed garden.
- 7.11. In addition, paragraph 118 d) is pertinent as it urges local planning authorities to promote and support the development of under-utilised buildings.
- 7.12. Paragraph 122 highlights that proposals which make efficient use of land, as proposed, should be supported where (as in the Ribble Valley) there is a need for different types of housing – but the planning constraints are considerable because of the topography and character of the landscape.
- 7.13. In the same paragraph, also of relevance, is ‘b)’ which refers to the need to consider local market conditions and viability. Of course, there is a market for this form of development as for many people it represents a sustainable lifestyle choice particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. The supporting documents also show that a conversion scheme is viable.
- 7.14. In terms of paragraph 122 c), there are no infrastructure capacity or service issues. It is worth bearing in mind that there are currently two vehicular access points direct from Clitheroe Road. And this would reduce to one, safer point.

- 7.15. On paragraph 122 d) the proposals would ensure the restoration and conservation of local heritage assets and thus maintain the immediate local area's prevailing character and setting by regeneration and positive change.
- 7.16. Finally, on paragraph 122, 'e)' recognises the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places. The conversion of the barns would enhance the place in which it sits.
- 7.17. As the proposed development makes the optimum potential of the site it is in accordance with paragraph 123.
- 7.18. Section 12 in the NPPF is very important in the context of the proposals – 'achieving well-designed places'. The proposed scheme would enhance attractive buildings. The architects were chosen because of their design skills and knowledge of old buildings in sensitive countryside locations.
- 7.19. With regard to paragraph 127 a) the proposed design would ensure that the development would function well and add to the overall quality of the area for the long term.
- 7.20. On paragraph 127 b) the buildings would retain the attributes which make the group attractive because of good architecture, a very sensitive layout, appropriate and effective detailing in the external areas, i.e., the fine detail of the access, garden and yard areas.

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- 7.21. On paragraph 127 c) the scheme is sympathetic to local character and history, particularly the landscape setting. It is notable that paragraph 127 promotes appropriate innovation and change.
- 7.22. In terms of paragraph 127 d) the scheme would not only protect an existing strong sense of place but restore the group of vernacular farm buildings by removing ugly modern elements from their setting. The quality of the conversion work proposed would reinforce it by making it an attractive, welcoming place in which to live, work and visit.
- 7.23. As stated above, with regard to paragraph 127 e) – it would optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain a very appropriate small-scale development. The use of the buildings would make a worthwhile contribution to the social, economic and environmental facets of the locale; and support local services and facilities in particular.
- 7.24. Finally, on paragraph 127 – in accordance with f) the scheme would make a place which is safer, inclusive and accessible to all, whereas the existing buildings sit idle off a very poor access and do not currently contribute to the social or economic life of the community.
- 7.25. The proposals are wholly in accordance with paragraph 128 in that design quality has been considered throughout the evolution and assessment of the proposals.
- 7.26. In addition, we consulted the LPA and AONB unit prior to the submission of a planning application as the proposals involve the re-use of barns with modest changes to them. The Applicants have also contacted

Dutton Parish Council. We have copied this application and all the supporting documents to Mr Lorimer at the AONB Unit again and welcome his views.

- 7.27. Regarding paragraph 130 the design of the development accords with the clear expectations of the development plan and EH's guidance, so support for the development should be forthcoming.
- 7.28. The careful and sensitive design is outstanding, it will promote high levels of sustainability (re-using the building sensitively) and will help raise the standard of design more generally in the area; and it fits in with the overall form and layout of the surroundings. As a consequence, paragraph 131 is engaged in this case and great weight should be attached to the above factors.
- 7.29. Section 15 in the NPPF is significant as it refers to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 172 is very important. The site is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Great weight has been given to conserving and enhancing its landscape and scenic beauty through the detailed design of the proposals.
- 7.30. Similarly, the conservation and enhancement of wildlife issues has also been considered. It is right that the scale and extent of development should be limited in the AONB. However, this is not a 'major' development (by definition) and thus there is no presumption to refuse it on that basis.

7.31. The criteria set out under the preceding paragraph 170 are what should be considered, and we can observe as follows:

- i. The proposed development would protect and enhance the valued landscape;
- ii. It recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the local countryside and will provide wider economic and social benefits for the area ;
- iii. There would be a net gain for biodiversity as a result of the new garden space;
- iv. Remediating two old building which could fall rapidly into disrepair and ultimately dereliction;

7.32. In terms of paragraph 175 Biodiversity, adequate mitigation can be designed into the conversion scheme.

7.33. It is accepted that as former agricultural buildings the site may be contaminated in accordance with paragraph 178-180. A Site Investigation Report supports this submission. There are no matters which cannot be remediated as part of the development.

7.34. On paragraph 180 (the appropriateness of the location for the development) we can say that:

- i. There would be no noise impacts from the dwelling or affecting it, which would adversely affect health or the quality of life;



- ii. The location is not one which is undisturbed by noise – it is close to Clitheroe Road, but the layout means that the frontage wall of the main barn acts as a buffer.
- iii. It is not within an identified dark landscape area. However, it is not a location where excessive lighting should be uncontrolled as that could undermine all the good work which can be done with the architecture and proposed landscaping. A condition on any planning permission granted would ensure that a suitable lighting scheme could be agreed should any fixed external lighting be planned.

7.35. Section 16 in the NPPF is relevant to this case as it relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Whilst the buildings are not designated or non-designated heritage assets, the buildings and the group have value as part of the local heritage (as described earlier). As such, paragraph 184 is important. It states that heritage assets including those of 'local' historic value (as this group is), are an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The proposed scheme is appropriate for the building in that context.

7.36. The sub-section about proposals affecting heritage assets is relevant given that we have treated the buildings as one. With regard to paragraph 189 these submissions describe the significance of the buildings including the local setting contribution they make. The level of detail provided is proportionate given the AONB context and the

particulars of the attractive buildings. The historic environmental record has been consulted and an appraisal provided by JCA's conservation expert.

7.37. Regarding the determination of planning applications (as prescribed by paragraph 192) we can comment as follows: -

- i. There is an obvious need to sustain and enhance the significance of the buildings by putting them to a viable use which would be consistent with their conservation;
- ii. As we have pointed out above, the re-use of the buildings as proposed could make a positive contribution to sustaining the local community including the economic viability of services and facilities in Longridge and Hurst Green.
- iii. The re-use of the buildings as proposed would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness by facilitating the retention of the buildings which in local terms enhances the appearance of the landscape and settlement pattern.

7.38. The sub-section entitled 'Considering Potential Impacts' is also significant. The proposals are proportionate to the buildings' qualities. Our clients have placed great weight on the assets' conservation even though technically (in planning policy terms) the impact would be "*less than substantial harm to its significance.*" (Paragraph 193).

- 7.39. About paragraph 197, given the nature of the buildings and the quality of the conversion scheme a balanced judgment leads to the conclusion that planning permission should be granted.
- 7.40. Whilst not a designated heritage asset, paragraph 202 is also relevant as the proposed scheme would secure the future conservation of heritage assets and in this case, there are no dis-benefits concerning the various policies cited above – in the Development Plan, EH guidance and the NPPF.
- 7.41. We conclude that the proposals comply with the NPPF.

## **8. THE FOREST OF BOWLAND AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY – MANAGEMENT PLAN**

- 8.1. Our clients who own the Dutton Manor Estate are significant landowners/stakeholders in the AONB and are familiar with and support its broad objectives.
- 8.2. With regard to the overview in the Planning and Development section the proposals would certainly not have a materially adverse impact on the AONB. Indeed, it would not have any adverse impact but a very positive one given the removal of the modern buildings and the restoration of the group.
- 8.3. In accordance with the overview, the development conforms to a high standard of design, is in keeping with local landscape character and would conserve and enhance the AONB's natural beauty in this particular locality.
- 8.4. The proposals are in accordance with the Management Plan. We copied the pre-application submissions to the AONB Manager, Mr Lorimer to seek his input on the proposals. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented a planned site meeting with him. This application has been copied to him again and we welcome his comments.

## 9. NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

- 9.1. The guidance on rural housing reinforces the point made above about the way it supports the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements.
- 9.2. Very pertinent is the national advice that a thriving community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure the viable use of these local facilities and particularly in a COVID-19 World and after such long periods of lock downs. As indicated earlier the proposed dwelling would contribute to those facilities in rural areas.
- 9.3. Advice is also provided about the term 'public benefits' which is highly pertinent to conservation decision-making. In the context of the proposals, we can observe that they would: -
- Sustain and enhance the significance of the buildings and the contribution of their setting;
  - Remove risks to their loss;
  - Secure the optimum viable use in support of their long-term conservation.
- 9.4. The guidance notes that local planning authorities may identify non-designated heritage assets as having a degree of significance meriting

consideration in planning decisions. It is important to note that such buildings do not have to be recorded on a local list.

- 9.5. The advice in the national planning practice guidance thus supports the proposals.

## 10. AONB LANDSCAPE ASPECTS

### **The Forest of Bowland Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blanford Associates [CBA] 2009)**

- 10.1. The above assessment, hereinafter described as the LCA, appears to have identified the area in which the site is as 'New Row' Undulating Lowland Farmland (ULF) with Wooded Breaks. This is Landscape Character Area 'F3'. This is described as a small area which extends outside the southern edge of the AONB and encompasses several patches of mature mixed woodland, contributing to an intermittent sense of enclosure within views across the landscape. The proposals would not have any impacts on those features.
- 10.2. There is a section in the ULF part referred to from paragraph 4.7.15 entitled Guidelines for Managing Landscape Change. The Overall Strategy for the ULF is to manage the impact of changes in land and building use, conserve or restore neglected landscape features and encourage the retention and restoration of historic and vernacular building materials and details and the careful design of new buildings. The proposals are supportive to those aims.
- 10.3. The overall objective also seeks to conserve the network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees which contribute to a diverse landscape pattern. The proposals would not impact on the existing pattern locally but do include reinforcement of a hedgerow and new hedge plating on the site boundaries.

10.4. Similarly, the overall objective seeks to maintain and enhance the network of lanes together with rich roadside verges. The existing farmyard access on to Clitheroe Road would be closed off in favour of the much safer access proposed. The farmyard access would not lose its character as it would be retained as a gap but closed by a gate to prevent vehicular access.

10.5. In terms of the specific guidelines set out under 4.6.16 we can comment as follows: –

#### **Physical Character**

- The proposal is to conserve and enhance indigenous vegetation which is consistent with the locality.

#### **Ecological Character**

- The new garden will contribute towards biodiversity and the reversal of habitat fragmentation.

#### **Cultural and Historic Character**

- The proposals conserve what in local terms are historic buildings within a farmstead group which are worthy of conservation.
- The proposal meets the LCA's encouragement of a sympathetic new use for disused farm buildings which will ensure that they remain viable and are a contributory feature within the landscape.



- Other, modern buildings would be demolished so that the setting of the historic group is opened up from the south and east. Particular views are available from Clitheroe Road facing north and from public footpath 3-16 FP 16 which runs to the south east and east of the site. This would be a major planning and public benefit of the scheme.<sup>2</sup>
- Local building materials would be used.
- The access improvement scheme is 'low key' and respects and reflects local character. We would prefer to maintain the details proposed rather than relocate the access further south as per the County Council's technical preference as suggested at the pre-application stage by the authority. Given the road safety improvements secured by closing the existing farmyard access, the current proposals strike the correct planning balance when AONB sensitivities are factored in.
- Traditional boundary features are maintained and enhanced.

The figure on page 163 describes the area as a patchwork of pasture fields which are deeply incised by wooded troughs and gorges. The hedgerows and walls delineate field boundaries. In addition, significantly, there are scattered cottages and clustered settlements. The proposed use is wholly consistent with that description.

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<sup>2</sup> We are advised that the 'Path' shown on Lancashire County Council's MARIO mapping from the site north east to merge with Footpath 3-16 FP 16 is not a public or permitted footpath.

It can be seen from the above that the proposed development is in accordance with the objectives of the LCA.

## 11. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

11.1. This application is supported by the following documents and plans: -

### **John Coward Architects/D2R Surveyors**

- Conservation architects' Statement of Significance and Condition Report
- Design and Access Statement
- Drawings: survey and proposed development

### **Arcmedia**

- Visually Verified photomontages (VVMs)

### **Tetratech (formerly WYG)**

- Transport Note

### **R G Parkins and Co Ltd and Geo- environmental**

- Structural surveys
- Site investigations
- Drainage/flood risk

### **ERAP**

- Ecological Assessment – protect species

A considerable amount of work was done 'pre-application' to demonstrate the facts about the context in fine detail and to show how sensitive a conversion of the buildings is proposed. The various submissions and their detail demonstrate that no interests of acknowledged importance would be adversely affected.

## 12. WORKING FROM HOME

- 12.1. Many people now enjoy a very sustainable lifestyle by working from home (thus no commuting) and invest in a sustainable 'green' lifestyle – now being further enhanced by electric vehicles (EVs) so that their carbon footprint is often far better than many urban or suburban residents. It is partly for these reasons that planning policies had changed before the COVID-19 pandemic and such living is wholly appropriate for buildings like this – now seen as a sustainable and safe location in which to live and work etc.
- 12.2. The C-19 pandemic has revolutionised how we must live and, for those of us still fortunate enough to have jobs, work. A major outcome has been a global realisation that working from home with nil adverse effects can be viable. Consequently, this dreadful situation has reinforced the merit of working from home and adds weight to the merits of proposals such as this.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS

- 13.1. There is an opportunity to enhance this part of the AONB by being creative. This involves a plan to demolish modern buildings on the south and east side of the group and re-use the group of buildings which formed part of the original farmstead. In addition, a dangerous vehicular access can be closed.
- 13.2. We have demonstrated that the proposals are in accordance with the Development Plan – The Adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan (Core Strategy).
- 13.3. The proposals conform with Historic England’s advice for the re-use of such buildings.
- 13.4. The proposals are in accordance with the NPPF.
- 13.5. They are also in accordance with the AONB Management Plan.
- 13.6. They comply with National Planning Guidance.
- 13.7. Reference is made to the AONB Landscape Character Assessment which shows the site as being in the ‘New Row’ lowland location. This application does not involve a field barn but a distinct group of buildings which comprised the farmstead at Moorcock Farm.
- 13.8. This application is supported by a comprehensive array of information about matters important to address what are the material considerations.

- 13.9. Finally, we emphasise that rural dwellings as a re-use are normal and are not generally harmful if designed carefully. They support local economies, facilities, rural services and village centres.
- 13.10. We have highlighted that working from home is sustainable and the C-19 crisis has shown just how many people can do so. The wider ownership of electric vehicles by many of us makes it even more so.
- 13.11. In conclusion, we hope that this high-quality scheme will be supported by the Council as it was at the pre-application stage and we look forward to hearing from the case officer.
- 13.12. We will be pleased to discuss any draft conditions at the appropriate point.

## PLANNING STATEMENT

Adam and Alex Dugdale

Proposed Re-use of Former Farm Buildings as a Dwelling and related development  
Moorcock Farm, Clitheroe Road, Moor Nook (Near Longridge)

March 2021

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**Steven Abbott Associates LLP**

Offices in Lancashire, Cumbria and Cornwall

[www.abbott-associates.co.uk](http://www.abbott-associates.co.uk)