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REGISTERED IN ENGLAND NO. 6839914 VAT REGISTRATION NO. 972 8082 90

14th April 2021

Mr Adrian Dowd
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Development Department
Council Offices, Church Walk
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA

Via Planning Portal Online Submission

Dear Mr Dowd,

PLANNING APPLICATION AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT RELATING TO THE EXTENSION AND CONVERSION OF EXISTING OUTBUILDINGS AT BLACKHOUSE FARM, SLAIDBURN, TO RESIDENTIAL USE

This planning application is submitted on behalf of the owners of Blackhouse Farm, Ms Anita King and Mr Alistair McEntyre and follows on from the recent refusal of planning application LPA ref: 3/2020/0328 and Listed Building Consent LPA ref: 3/2020/0355.

The above application sought a range of development at Blackhouse Farm, a Grade II listed farmhouse, including the conversion and extension of the outbuildings to enlarge the existing house, construction of an annexe, construction of a home office and plant room with mower store. These applications were refused on 20th July 2020.

This revised planning application focuses only on the extension and conversion of the outbuildings to extend the living accommodation of the existing house.

A detailed review of the previous applications has been undertaken along with the reasons for refusal and this scheme has sought to respond with a revised scheme which is reduced in scale and that is deemed to be entirely acceptable in heritage terms, whilst delivering a range of benefits to the site and safeguarding the heritage asset in the longer term.

Submitted in support of this application, are the following documents:

- Drawings Package;
 - Design and Access Statement;
 - Heritage Impact Assessment; and
 - Bat Survey.
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SITE DESCRIPTION

Blackhouse Farmhouse is a Grade II listed house dating from the early-to-mid C19th. The farmhouse is located within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is located at a nodal point in the public rights of way network, however, the proposed development site is screened to its north, east and south by existing development within the farmstead and established tree planting to the west. The site is therefore well contained.

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning permission (and Listed Building consent) was sought for the "Conversion and extension of outbuildings to enlarge existing house; Construction of annexe; Construction of home office; and plant room mower store (LPA refs: 3/2020/0328 and 3/2020/0355). Both were refused on 20th July 2020. The reason for refusal stated:

The proposal is harmful to the special architectural and historic interest and setting of the listed building and the cultural heritage of the Forest of Bowland AONB because of the prominence, incongruity and conspicuousness of extension and new buildings resulting from: extension form (including projection to the front of the principle listed building main façade), location and materials; the encapsulation of historic outbuildings with the loss of views of interesting elevation treatments and important and characterful spaces and the extent of glazing to and size of proposed buildings. This is contrary to Key Statements EN5 and EN2 and Policies DME4, DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

In response to the previous refusal, a review of the scheme has been undertaken. This proposal seeks only the extension and conversion of the outbuildings in order to enhance the living accommodation of the farmhouse. A review of the scale, materials, use of glazing, and layout have been undertaken along with a review of the significance of the heritage asset to determine the level of any harm occurring.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development seeks to enlarge the existing domestic accommodation. The design involves the conversion and alteration of the following spaces and includes upgraded elements:

- Conversion of outbuilding 1 to a dining room, pantry and cloakroom;
- Conversion of outbuilding 2 to a utility and wc;
- A link between outbuilding 1 and the farmhouse to create a kitchen and re-use of the existing doorway from the north entrance yard;
- A link between outbuilding 1 and 2 to connect the converted spaces;
- Re-construction of the modern concrete outbuilding to provide storage for game;
- Re-construction of the brick and corrugated asbestos lean-to (south end of outbuilding 1) with matching stonework and slate roof;

- Farmhouse kitchen: Removal of dilapidated kitchen units, redecoration with appropriate breathable heritage paints and refurbishment of the kitchen window to provide a ground floor bedroom;
- Re-positioned boiler: To prevent fire risk within the Listed property; and
- General repairs to the listed property (detailed further within this letter).

The design has sought to limit impacts to the setting and significance of the listed building whilst also ensuring appropriate design in terms of massing, materials, and form.

The proposal to convert the outbuildings to residential use provides a permanent use for these buildings and prevents them from further decay and eventual collapse. As part of the farmstead, they form an integral part of the understanding of the whole group and impact on the Listed Building and the setting of the Listed Building.

The new links between the outbuildings and the farmhouse constitute a modern intervention but have been designed to have a minimal impact on the fabric of the listed building but also on the comprehension of the whole group. This is evidenced by the low roof forms of the links and the recessed position of them in relation to the primary elevations of the listed building and the overall wall lines of the existing outbuildings. It is of note that none of the proposed new link areas project forward from an existing elevation and as such do not extend the existing farmstead group outwards. The extension to the existing property has been scaled back to ensure that the extension does not project forward of the existing principal elevation.

Full consideration of the individual elements of the proposal is considered within the assessment set out in the Heritage Assessment, however, a brief summary of the conclusions is set out below.

CONCLUSIONS ON HERITAGE IMPACT

The proposal is sensitive to the overall arrangement of the farmstead group, retaining the original form and scale of the buildings. There are a number of key headlines that can be taken from the assessment of impact on the heritage asset:

- The proposed development respects the principal elevations and building lines of the existing proposal.
- The new roofs over the glazed links are sensitively designed to be diminutive in scale but also positioned such that they do not impact important heritage features.
- There is 'less than substantial harm' to the gable of the listed building caused by the new roof and glazed link, however, the primary features and overall form of the listed building and its setting have not been impacted.
- The proposed link is set back from the principal elevation and is largely transparent on the south elevation, thus allowing the existing buildings to remain the dominant feature of the site.

- The overall form of the outbuildings has been respected and enhanced further by removal of unsightly elements such as the modern porch and replacement of the concrete shed.
- The garden walls and boundary features are all retained and given purpose thus maintaining the need for these elements.
- The setting will be improved from the south side due to the replacement of the brick-built and corrugated metal roof lean-to with a stone-built structure that is in keeping with the outbuilding nearest the listed building.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to cause 'less than substantial' harm on the significance of the designated heritage asset and its setting. The benefits of the proposed development are considered to be significant and comply with Local and National Policy and concur with relevant guidance from Historic England.

The minor harm caused to the heritage asset could be lessened by the mitigation measures suggested in the heritage assessment and by the significant benefits inherent in the proposals. This would reduce the harm to an overall neutral impact on the farmstead.

As such, the development contributes to one of the three objectives of 'sustainable development' defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The development seeks to adapt the houses in a mode sympathetic with their surroundings, to maintain it in a viable use consistent with its original use and long-term conservation thereby ensuring its continued contribution to quality of place. It is also considered to be appropriate in terms of sympathetic design and the use of traditional materials.

BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT

The development will bring with it a number of benefits that are of consideration in the planning application determination process. These benefits include:

- Finding an optimal and viable use for the outbuildings and the enhancement of the listed farmhouse and wider farmstead setting;
- Preserving the buildings which would otherwise run into further disrepair and risk of collapse;
- The reuse of the outbuildings on previously development land;
- The visual enhancement of the site within the AONB through the repair and sensitive design of the outbuildings and the link structures;
- Enhancement of the living quality of the family that occupies the dwelling; and
- Repairs to the listed farmhouse ensuring its long term and sustainable future.

COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The Development Plan policies that are relevant to the development are found in the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028.

The key Local Policy local policies from the plan that are considered to be of relevance are set out below.

Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets

There will be a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The Historic Environment and its Heritage Assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance for their heritage value; their important contribution to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place; and to wider social, cultural and environmental benefits.

This will be achieved through:

(non-relevant bullet points deleted)

- Recognising that the best way of ensuring the long term protection of heritage assets is to ensure a viable use that optimises opportunities for sustaining and enhancing its significance.
- Considering any development proposals which may impact on a heritage asset or their setting through seeking benefits that conserve and enhance their significance and avoids any substantial harm to the heritage asset.
- Requiring all development proposals to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness/sense of place.

RSL comment: The proposed development will ensure the viable and sensitive conversion of the outbuildings which will enhance and benefit the listed farmhouse. The proposal satisfies the relevant criteria noted in the policy and as demonstrated through the assessment of harm and significance in the Heritage Assessment.

Key Statement EN2: Landscape

The landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced. As a principle, 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.

RSL comment: The proposed development is contained to the conversion of the existing outbuildings plus glazed extensions adjoining the Blackhouse Farmhouse. The site is well screened and contained from views beyond the farmstead, as the site is enclosed by existing barns and development to its north, east and south, and a significant landscape belt to the west. As such the proposal will not result in any negative impact upon the surrounding landscape or AONB. The choice of materials is sensitive to the existing historic fabric on site. The sensitive reuse of the outbuildings will enhance this part of the AONB through finding a long term use of the outbuildings.

POLICY DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets

Alterations or extensions to listed buildings or buildings of local heritage interest, or development proposals on sites within their setting which cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset will not be supported. Any proposals involving the demolition or loss of important historic fabric from listed buildings will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist.

RSL Comment: It is set out robustly in the heritage assessment that the development proposal will enhance the listed farmhouse and the traditional farmstead setting by finding a viable use for the outbuildings which would otherwise fall into a further state of disrepair and be lost in the future. The development proposal will in many ways provide benefits and enhancements to the listed farmhouse which on balance leads to the proposal resulting in a less than substantial level of harm.

DMGI General Considerations

In determining planning applications, all development must:
(Non-relevant criteria deleted)

Design:

1. Be of a high standard of building design that considers the building in context principles (from the CABE/English Heritage building in context toolkit).
2. Be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials.
3. Consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance, particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, as well as the effects of development on existing amenities.
4. Use sustainable construction techniques where possible and provide evidence that energy efficiency, as described within policy DME5, has been incorporated into schemes where possible.
5. The code for sustainable homes and lifetime homes, or any subsequent nationally recognised equivalent standards, should be incorporated into schemes.

Environment:

3. All development must protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.
5. Achieve efficient land use and the reuse and remediation of previously developed sites where possible, previously developed sites should always be used instead of greenfield sites where possible.

RSL Comment: A detailed review of the previous application has been undertaken and it is considered that the proposal represents a high quality and sensitive scheme that reuses existing buildings without extensive alterations. The design of the link structures allows the historic fabric of the outbuildings to remain visible and retains the character of the buildings. The proposal satisfies and meets the requirements of this policy.

Policy DMG2 Strategic Considerations

Included within Policy DMG2 is the following requirement:

In protecting the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the council will have regard to the economic and social well being of the area. However, the most important consideration in the assessment of any development proposals will be the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape and character of the area avoiding where possible habitat fragmentation. Where possible new development should be accommodated through the re-use of existing buildings, which in most cases is more appropriate than new build. Development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the AONB by virtue of its size, design, use of material, landscaping and siting. The AONB management plan should be considered and will be used by the council in determining planning applications.

RSL Comment: The proposed development complies with this policy by seeking the conversion of existing outbuildings, which is supported by the Development Plan. The choice of materials and scale of the link extensions are intended to be a light-touch approach to ensuring the viable reuse of the outbuildings and in doing so enhancing the listed farmhouse in the AONB. Restoring and rebuilding the outhouses will enhance the AONB through positive investment in the site and protection of the heritage asset.

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The vision for the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan seeks to retain its sense of local distinctiveness, notably the wide open moorland character of the Bowland Fells, undulating lowland farmland, clough woodlands, traditional buildings and the settlement patterns of its villages, hamlets and farmsteads. The reuse and repair of the outbuildings will restore and enhance the character of this historic farmstead, and ensure the viable long term protection of it within the AONB.

NATIONAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Paragraph 170 requires the planning system to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Paragraph 172 is concerned with the determination of planning applications in areas subject to protective landscape designations, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The paragraph states that:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest standard of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks

and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

The proposed development does not constitute 'major' development by virtue of its limited scale and reuse and conversion of existing buildings within the AONB. The proposal satisfies the guidance set out in paragraph 172 as the reuse of the outbuildings will assist in the preservation of the historic farmstead that sits within this part of the AONB.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 196 continues to state that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Further consideration of these national policies are included within the Heritage Assessment. However, in summary, it is deemed that the proposal will lead to a 'less than substantial harm' but there are a number of benefits that weigh in favour of the proposal (see above).

CONCLUSIONS

Following the previous planning refusal, a detailed review of the previous scheme has been undertaken along with the concerns expressed in the reason for refusal. This proposal seeks only the conversion of the outbuildings to residential use.

The proposal to convert the outbuildings to residential use provides a permanent use for these buildings and prevents them from further decay and eventual collapse. As part of the farmstead, they form an integral part of the understanding of the whole group and impact on the Listed Building and the setting of the Listed Building.

The new links between the outbuildings and the farmhouse constitute a modern intervention but have been designed to have a minimal impact on the fabric of the listed building but also on the comprehension of the whole group.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to cause 'less than substantial' harm on the significance of the designated heritage asset and its setting. The benefits of the proposed development are considered to be significant and comply with Local and National Policy and concur with relevant guidance from Historic England. The minor

harm caused to the asset could be lessened by the mitigation measures suggested in the Heritage Assessment and by the significant benefits inherent in the proposals. This would reduce the harm to an overall neutral impact on the farmstead.

The proposed development satisfies the key policies of relevance as set out in the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (Key Statement EN5, EN2 and Policies DME4, DMG1 and DMG2) regarding heritage and landscape. The proposal also accords with the national policy requirements set out in the NPPF.

For the above reasons it is considered that the proposals should be approved by the Borough Council.

We look forward to receiving confirmation of validation of this application in due course and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Girling
Senior Planner



