

## AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION REPORT

November 2024



### **Land at Lower Edge Farm Tinklers Lane Slaidburn Lancashire BB7 4TP**

Prepared by MacMarshalls Rural Chartered Surveyors & Planning Consultants  
on behalf of Mr R Robinson



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## 1. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.1. MacMarshalls are instructed on behalf of Mr Richard Robinson, herein referred to as the 'applicant', to submit this agricultural justification statement as part of a full planning application in respect of the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling at Land at Lower Edge Farm, Tinklers Lane, Slaidburn Lancashire BB7 4TP.
- 1.2. This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant by Robert James Mackenzie BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV. Robert is a qualified member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (Rural), an RICS registered valuer and a Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers. During his time as a rural Chartered Surveyor (10 years) Robert has submitted a substantial number of rural planning applications to local authorities as well as providing agricultural reports for others. Having grown up on a mixed beef and sheep hill farm, Robert has gained experience in all aspects of agriculture and rural business.
- 1.3. Set out within this report are full details of the agricultural enterprises undertaken by the applicant and demonstrate that the proposed development is justified and acceptable in terms of both local and national planning policy.

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1. This agricultural assessment has been prepared to support the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling at Land at Lower Edge Farm, Tinklers Lane, Slaidburn Lancashire BB7 4TP. The proposed dwelling is required in order to provide accommodation for a stock person for Mr Richardson, who requires a permanent member of staff to live in to tend to his farming enterprise. The application is supported by a statement provided by ADAS dated 23rd June 2017.
- 2.2. The applicant currently owns approximately 70.41 hectares (174 Acres) of mainly grassland across two farms: the buildings at Lower Edge Farm and Wood Hill Farm, land that formerly formed part of Standridge Farm. Across these lands, the applicant operates a successful farming business, Robinsons Foods Ltd, which operates as a specialist purpose-built poultry unit for free range egg production. The site of this proposed development is also used for livestock grazing.
- 2.3. Mr Robinson undertakes the main farm work across two farms in relation to poultry and livestock units, and now seeks to erect a dwelling at Lower Edge Farm in order to allow for an employee to live on site and be in close proximity to have continued supervision to the farm.
- 2.4. The land associated with the site is classified as being grade 4 on the Agricultural Land Classification maps which designates the land as: *Land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops and/or level of yields. It is mainly suited to grass with occasional arable crops (e.g. cereals and forage crops) the yields of which are variable.*
- 2.5. Due to the grade of the land, it is utilised for hay and silage production which is stored on site and fed to livestock during the winter, furthermore, the land is used for sheep grazing. The applicants farm the majority of the land down to grass, with some areas of woodland.
- 2.6. The land itself is mainly flat, low lying mowing and pasture land. The land at the time of inspection appeared in a very good heart and was clearly being farmed well. In an average year three cuts of haylage/silage are taken from the land, the land is then grazed by livestock.
- 2.7. Basic Payment scheme (BPS) is claimed on all the land farmed by the applicants. On inspection, all the land appeared well maintained, showing the clear benefits of investment in fences, boundaries and drainage. The land appears well drained and with high nutrients, farm yard manure, fertiliser and lime are utilised to ensure the high quality of crops.
- 2.8. The applicant has also applied for environmental schemes on the land which are government led grant schemes which include: The Boundaries and Hedgerow Grant Scheme and the Mid Tier Stewardship scheme to help enhance the land. These schemes help landowners manage their land more efficiently and can generate income for ongoing maintenance including hedgerow management, dry stone walling and fencing.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

3/2024/0708: Prior notification for agricultural storage building 60m long, 15m wide, 4m high to eaves 7m high to ridge. **Permission Not Required**

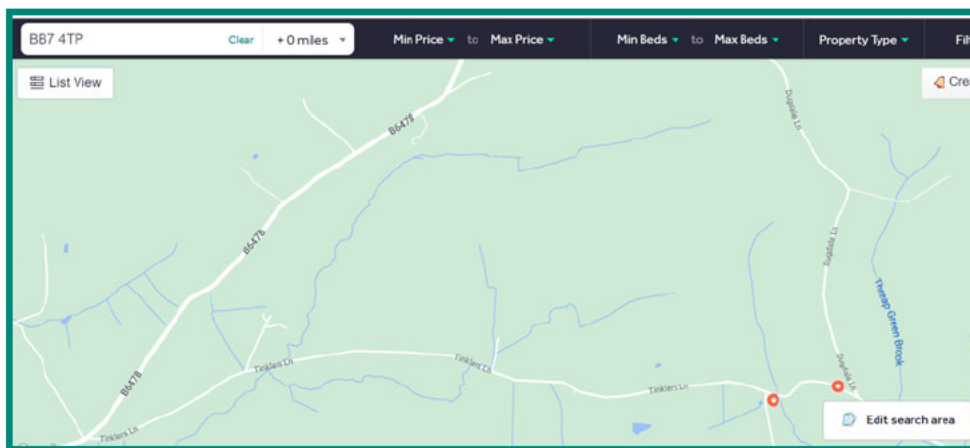
### 4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1. This full planning application is for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling. The dwelling will be sited to the north of the existing farmstead on the site of existing unused stables, in close proximity to the surrounding agricultural buildings and poultry units, and access track which connects to the B6478 Road. It will be well situated to meet the needs of the existing farming enterprise, will maintain the existing build line of the farmstead and will utilise a piece of underproductive land.
- 4.2. The applicant currently resides at Woodhill Farm, located approximately 500 metres north of Lower Edge Farm, to which this application relates. While the distance may appear short, it does not allow for immediate access in the event of an urgent situation requiring an on-site presence at Lower Edge Farm. Furthermore, the applicant is already responsible for managing operations at Woodhill Farm, meaning that in the case of concurrent emergencies at both locations, they would be unable to attend to both simultaneously. Consequently, there is a clear need for an agricultural worker's dwelling at Lower Edge Farm to provide a dedicated stockperson with a permanent on-site residence, ensuring immediate response capabilities and consistent oversight of the livestock and facilities.
- 4.3. The extract of the site plan below shows the proposed site and the surrounding existing buildings.

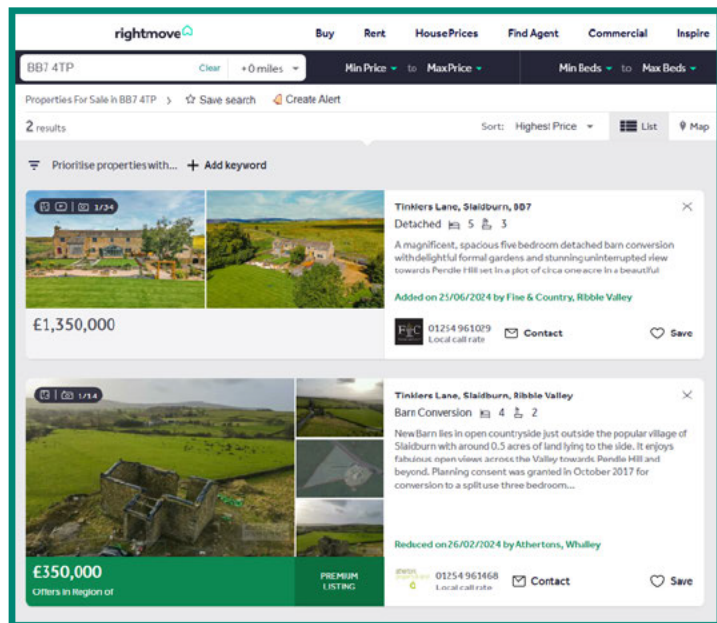


*Appendix 1 - Proposed Site Plan*

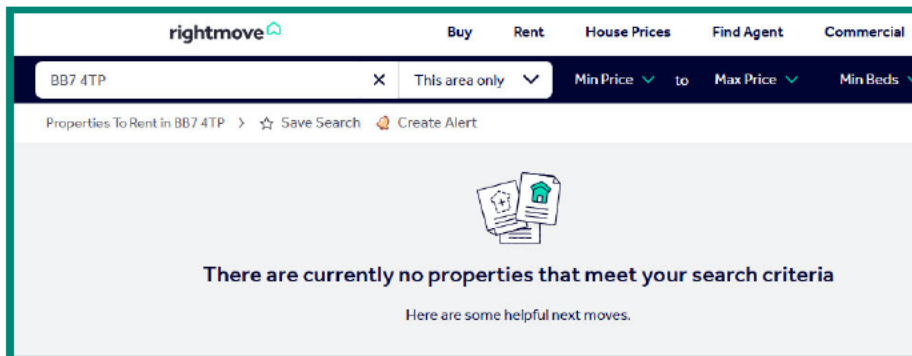
- 4.4. A full Rightmove search has been undertaken and no suitable properties have been found. The below screen shots show that currently there are two properties available within the post code region, however these are too far from the farm so would not be viable in terms of living in close proximity to the farm. Secondly, one of the properties is out of the budget for the applicant, and the other is a dilapidated barn which would need rebuilding and conversion, which isn't within the needs of the applicant. There are no properties to rent within the vicinity of the farm.
- 4.5. Therefore the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling is required to provide continued on site living for the benefit of the applicant and the livestock.



Appendix 2 - Map Search Of Available Properties To Buy



Appendix 3 - List Search Of Available Properties To Buy



*Appendix 4 - List Search Of Available Properties To Rent*

## 5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1. The application site is designated in the Ribble Valley Borough Council which was adopted in July 2015 as Green Belt and as such the following Policy and Guidance will apply:

- Ribble Valley Core Strategy - December 2014
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

### **Ribble Valley Core Strategy**

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy

Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development

Key Statement EN2: Landscape

Policy DMG1: General Considerations

Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations

Policy DME2: Landscape & Townscape Protection

Policy DMH3: Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB

## 6. POLICY ASSESSMENT

6.1. The proposed agricultural worker's dwelling is essential to the functioning of an established agricultural business and aligns with the policies set out in the **Ribble Valley Core Strategy** and the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**.

6.2. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 6.3. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF, in relation to rural housing states that ‘Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:’

*a) 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*

The accompanying evidence supports this, showing that the proposed dwelling will directly contribute to the efficient functioning of the agricultural enterprise.

- 6.4. Section six of the NPPF highlights the commitment to ‘*supporting a prosperous rural economy*’ at paragraph 89 the NPPF states:

*‘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, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist’*

- 6.5. Paragraph 88 states:

*‘Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;*

*b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses’*

- 6.6. Furthermore, paragraph 135 states that:

*Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

*a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*

*b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*

*c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

*d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

*e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and 39*

*f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience'*

- 6.7. Policy DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy permits new dwellings in the open countryside, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), under specific circumstances. One of these is when it is essential for agricultural workers to live on-site. The proposed dwelling meets this requirement by addressing a clear functional need for a full-time worker to be present at all times to manage the day-to-day operations of the agricultural business, including the care of livestock that requires round-the-clock attention. An accompanying agricultural appraisal demonstrates that this need cannot be met by existing nearby accommodation, thus justifying the necessity for a new dwelling on the site.
- 6.8. Further, Policy DMG1 requires that new development respects the local character, scale, and setting. The proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to blend harmoniously with the surrounding landscape, minimising visual intrusion and ensuring the preservation of the AONB's natural beauty, in accordance with Policy EN2. The siting and design have been selected to reduce impact on the visual amenity and maintain the rural character of the area, addressing concerns outlined in Policy EN2 about protecting the landscape quality and scenic beauty of the AONB.
- 6.9. Additionally, the proposal aligns with Policy DS2, which emphasises sustainable development. The dwelling has been planned to incorporate energy-efficient building practices, ensuring minimal environmental impact, and thus supports the broader objectives of the Local Plan and NPPF for promoting sustainable rural economic development.
- 6.10. In summary, the proposed agricultural worker's dwelling is necessary to support the essential activities of the agricultural business. It meets the requirements of Policy DMH3 by providing robust evidence of functional need, complies with Paragraph 85 of the NPPF by justifying its role in a sustainable rural economy, and adheres to Policies DMG1, DMG2, and EN2 by respecting the local landscape and maintaining the natural beauty of the AONB. Therefore, it is considered that the dwelling should be approved, subject to appropriate conditions.

## **7. JUSTIFICATION**

### **7.1. Employment Requirements**

- 7.1.1. Standard Man Days (SMD) is an estimate of the farm labour requirement. A SMD is the equivalent of 2,200 hours per year. This is 45 weeks work of 39 hours plus an average of 10 hours overtime. The data for the SMD calculation has been taken from the John NixM Pocketbook for farm management.

Enterprise	Standard Man Days (SMD) per animal	Total SMD
Cows (300)	1.2	360
Lambs (600)	0.45	270
Chickens (44,000)	0.06	2640
First cut silage (70 hectares )	1.6	122
Sub Total		3392
Plus 15% for Maintenance, Repairs & Management		508.8
Total SMD		3900.8

*Appendix 5 - SMD Calculation Table*

- 7.1.2. The average full-time agricultural worker provides 275 standard man days, therefore based on the above table it can be calculated that the total labour requirement for the Applicants' farming enterprise equates to 14.2 full time workers.

## 7.2. **Functional need of the Farming Business**

- 7.2.1. The successful operation of a livestock business depends on consistent, high-level, 24-hour supervision to maintain its financial viability, animal welfare standards, and health and safety requirements. Effective stockmanship, which includes close monitoring and immediate response to the needs of animals, is critical to preventing losses and ensuring the overall productivity and sustainability of the farm. Given the applicant's responsibility for managing a substantial number of animals across both of his farms due to being the only person living onsite, the ability to promptly identify, address, and treat any issues that arise, particularly with ill or injured animals, is essential for minimising risk and maintaining the welfare and productivity of the livestock.
- 7.2.2. The applicant's daily schedule demonstrates the intensity and demands of this responsibility, as a typical day for the Applicant starts at 6:00am and often finishes at 11:00pm. Balancing the needs of both farms while managing his egg production business, Robinsons Foods Ltd., has become overwhelming, creating significant stress and ultimately limiting his ability to maintain the level of care essential for the health and

productivity of the livestock. Without an additional, permanent stockperson stationed at Lower Edge Farm, it has become increasingly challenging to meet these needs.

- 7.2.3. For the farm's operations to be sustainable and for the applicant to maintain the required standards of animal care, a permanent stockperson is indispensable. However, to attract and retain a skilled individual in this role, an on-site dwelling is essential. By establishing a dedicated residence for a stockperson at Lower Edge Farm, the applicant can ensure that the livestock receives the consistent, high-quality care necessary for the continued proper functioning and growth of the farming business. This provision is not only a practical necessity but a critical investment in the long-term viability and welfare standards of the enterprise.

### **7.3. Biosecurity**

- 7.3.1. An agricultural worker's dwelling is required, as the nature of the farming operation necessitates the applicant to live on-site to manage the day-to-day needs of the agricultural business effectively. This is to allow the applicant to be on site at all times to provide care and supervision.
- 7.3.2. It is considered that in the interest of welfare of the livestock, it is essential that people actively involved with the management of the unit are living thereon. The requirement is considered essential as the livestock require close supervision and management in order to ensure the health of the animals.
- 7.3.3. The proposed agricultural worker's dwelling is essential for meeting the farm's biosecurity, welfare, and productivity needs, particularly for the livestock. Housing a permanent stockperson on-site is critical to maintaining stringent biosecurity measures, as their consistent presence ensures that livestock are monitored and attended to closely, which minimises the risk of disease outbreaks—a significant concern in modern farming. In the case of poultry and ruminants, disease control is paramount as illnesses can spread rapidly, impacting animal health, productivity, and, ultimately, the farm's economic viability. Rapid responses are particularly important given the sector's vulnerability to diseases like avian influenza.
- 7.3.4. An on-site stockperson would be able to implement daily sanitation practices, control visitor and vehicular access, and conduct routine health checks immediately, reducing potential exposure to pathogens. Additionally, less vehicle movements will enhance sustainability, good for environment and the farm animals as not bringing across outside elements too frequently, as would be multiple trips throughout the day and through the night when necessary
- 7.3.5. Whilst the presence of someone on site will not prevent ill health occurring, it will increase the chances of it being spotted early and dealt with.

### **7.3.6. Animal Welfare**

- 7.3.7. The presence of a dedicated, on-site stockperson is essential for ensuring high standards of animal welfare through prompt responses to health and environmental challenges. Livestock require continuous, attentive care to thrive, especially in situations that demand immediate intervention, such as injuries,

sudden illnesses, or complications during lambing and calving. For both lambs and cows, close supervision is critical, as timely action can be the difference between life and death for both mother and offspring. Additionally, chickens benefit significantly from proximity to a skilled caretaker, as they are vulnerable to predator threats and equipment malfunctions—issues that, if not addressed quickly, can negatively impact their health and productivity.

7.3.8. Round-the-clock on-site supervision also serves as a vital safeguard against potential risks like theft, predator attacks, or livestock escape. In cases where animals stray from enclosures or fields, an immediate response is necessary to retrieve them and prevent further loss or injury. Delays in reaching the farm, as experienced by the applicant recently, have led to serious losses, including the death of cows and calves, highlighting the urgent need for a constant on-site presence.

- The animal's welfare in terms of the 'five freedoms' is considered. The five freedoms as provide by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) comprise:
- Freedom from Hunger and Thirst - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- Freedom from Discomfort - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from Fear and Distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering;

7.3.9. As the farm plans for future expansion and succession, the importance of a permanent, on-site stockperson grows even more significant. For animal welfare, economic viability, and continuity, maintaining close and constant oversight is essential. The addition of a dwelling to accommodate an on-site worker will provide the farm with the necessary support to protect its livestock effectively and meet its current and future operational needs.

#### **7.4. Financial Viability of the Farming Business**

7.4.1. The farm shows healthy profits in the last 5 years, the farm is viable and has a clear prospect of remaining so, support from the applicant's accountant can be provided. The farm accounts are not attached to this application as they contain confidential information, audited copies can be made available if the council requires to inspect them.

- 7.4.2. The farm has struggled to retain permanent staff, largely due to the absence of suitable on-site accommodation, which is increasingly a standard requirement for skilled agricultural workers seeking long-term roles. Without appropriate housing, staff turnover remains high, affecting continuity and limiting the farm's capacity to develop and expand effectively. Establishing this dwelling would enable the farm to offer more secure, appealing employment, allowing us to attract and retain qualified, committed staff. A permanent stockperson would not only improve the consistency of care and management but would also enable the farm to plan for long-term growth with greater confidence. By ensuring that biosecurity measures and welfare standards are consistently maintained, the farm can enhance operational resilience and create more opportunities for sustainable agricultural expansion, ultimately benefiting both the business and the surrounding agricultural community.
- 7.4.3. The applicant's commitment to the long-term financial viability and growth of the farm is clearly demonstrated by recent investments, including a previously approved planning application (3/2024/0708) for a permitted development agricultural building. This new structure, designated for storage, highlights the applicant's proactive approach to improving farm infrastructure and ensuring a foundation for increased efficiency and productivity. By adding essential storage facilities, the applicant has taken a significant step toward enhancing the farm's operational capacity, laying the groundwork for more streamlined management and the possibility of future expansion.
- 7.4.4. This application for an agricultural worker's dwelling is a natural and necessary extension of these recent investments. While the dwelling addresses the immediate need for consistent, high-quality care and supervision of the current livestock, it also serves as an essential component of the farm's strategy to increase capacity and expand livestock operations. By enabling a permanent, on-site stockperson, the farm will benefit from improved biosecurity measures, faster response times to emergencies, and overall enhanced animal welfare—measures that are all critical to supporting and protecting a larger number of animals.
- 7.4.5. In addition, the ability to provide dedicated, on-site supervision will allow the farm to grow sustainably, as it mitigates risks associated with disease outbreaks, ensures better health outcomes for the animals, and strengthens the overall productivity of the farm. Together, these investments in both infrastructure and human resources demonstrate a clear, forward-looking commitment to establishing a resilient and profitable farming business that can expand responsibly, secure in the knowledge that both existing and future livestock will be well-managed and safeguarded.

## **7.5. Siting and Design**

- 7.5.1. The proposed siting of the dwelling on the footprint of existing, unused stables demonstrates careful planning to minimise environmental impact. By utilising this previously developed land, the applicant avoids encroachment on open countryside, preserving the rural character and openness of the area while integrating the new dwelling into the established density and layout of the existing farm buildings. This

approach respects the visual integrity of the landscape and reduces any potential impact on the natural surroundings.

- 7.5.2. The access to the proposed dwelling will be using the existing track to the north.
- 7.5.3. The design of the proposed dwelling will align with local architectural styles, ensuring that it complements the rural character of the AONB. The scale of the dwelling will be similar to that of the existing stable building and will therefore avoid any disproportionate or visually intrusive presence on the landscape.

## 7.6. Alternative Accommodation

- 7.6.1. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] there are currently no suitable dwellings available in the immediate vicinity of Lower Edge Farm that could support the applicant's need for a skilled stockperson to live on-site.
- 7.6.2. Notwithstanding a property being available in the locality and within an affordable budget, it is of the professional opinion that the Applicant needs a resident on the farm to properly manage and supervise the large number of livestock at the farm. Being the only individual who is residing and working full time across the two farms is not a viable option for the Applicant.

## 8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. The application for an agricultural worker's dwelling at Lower Edge Farm is vital to the farm's sustainability and future growth. The applicant's need for an on-site presence is clear, as recent delays in reaching the farm have led to losses in livestock, emphasising the importance of prompt, round-the-clock care for animal welfare and economic stability. Additionally, the recent sale of nearby properties by the applicant's ex-father-in-law has removed the possibility of renting close accommodations, leaving no viable local housing options for necessary staff. The proposed dwelling is thoughtfully sited on previously developed land, minimising environmental impact while aligning with the area's character and preserving the openness of the landscape. This dwelling will not only secure current livestock operations but also supports future expansion and succession plans for the farm. For these reasons, the approval of this application is both necessary and well-justified.
- 8.2. The proposal is compliant with paragraph 84 of the NPPF, along with and there is an established and essential need for the Applicant to reside at the farm for the proper functioning of the business.
- 8.3. This agricultural justification demonstrates the essential need for an on-site dwelling to ensure continuous livestock care, safeguard animal welfare, and support the farm's long-term viability, providing clear grounds for the application's approval.

**Produced & signed by:**

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Ref: Supporting Statement

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