

Planning Statement

Equestrian Development and Education Barn

Fell View Barn, Barrett Hill Brow, Bolton by Bowland BB7 4PQ

Introduction

A pre-application enquiry was submitted earlier this year. At that stage it was proposed to use the existing portal frame barn as livery stables, to provide a 20 metre by 40 metre ménage (riding arena) and a circular horse exerciser. There was also the possibility of applying for an additional building.

Helpful advice was received from the Council's Planning Officer, Laura Eastwood, on 8 July. This has been taken into account by my clients who are not proceeding with the livery proposal or the additional building. They still intend go ahead with the riding arena and horse exerciser for their own personal use. Subject to planning permission being granted, the barn would be used as an education centre for children and mental health patients, to include animal assisted therapy.

Statements from the applicants explain their business plan and the use of the arena and horse exerciser.

The Site and Its Situation

The land and buildings are within a small hamlet known as Baygate. Access is by a private road from Barret Hill Brow. The house was converted from a stone barn in accordance with planning permissions granted in 2002 and 2003. A stone built stable was approved in 2016 and converted into residential use with permission granted in 2018.

A portal frame agricultural building was approved under permission number 3/2010/0924. The building measures 30 metres by 15 metres with Yorkshire boarding above random natural stone. Condition number 4 stated that "the proposed agricultural building shall be used for agricultural purposes only and no trade or business whatsoever shall be carried out from within the building". It is now intended that the barn will be used for education purposes if the planning condition can be overcome.

Planning Policy

Current guidance for new development is contained in the revised National Planning Policy Framework which was issued on 20 July 2021. Changes include an increased emphasis on good design and more focus on sustainability. The revised NPPF continues to encourage the grant of planning permission for sustainable development in accordance with the development plan and suggests that conditions can be used to allow development that otherwise may be unacceptable.

The NPPF supports a prosperous rural economy (paragraph 84). “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 new buildings;
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside”.

Paragraph 85 goes on to state that “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”.

The Council’s pre-application advice included a list of relevant Core Strategy Policies. The property is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Natural Beauty. Policy DMG2 states that development outside settlement boundaries will not be permitted unless it meets one of a number of exceptions. One of these is that “the development is for small-scale uses appropriate to a rural area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated”.

A Supplementary Guidance Note titled “Agricultural Buildings and Roads” was issued in 1997 with advice that is still relevant in 2021.

Pre-Application Advice

The Planning Officer confirmed that equestrian developments would normally be found in areas of open countryside and accordingly there was no objection in principle to the arena and horse exerciser. Subject to the submission of details, the impact on the landscape would be minimal.

She did not consider that the conversion of the agricultural building to stables would be unacceptable but, together with the new building that was previously proposed, the development may not be “small scale”. It was also pointed out that vehicle movements to and from the site may be an issue.

The Proposals

Improvements to the land are already being carried out with new timber post and rail fencing and tree planting to help screen the buildings from the road.

When planning permission was granted for the barn a condition was imposed requiring that it should only be used for agricultural purposes. That does not preclude a successful planning application for another use. The Planning Officer has already indicated that, provided the barn is no longer needed for agricultural purposes, there could be a business use.

The use now proposed for the barn appears to be within the recently introduced Use Class F1a) – For the Purpose of Education. Details of the use are within the applicants’ business plan. Briefly, it is intended to educate people about animal husbandry, husbandry and behaviour as well as animal assisted therapy for those with poor mental and physical health. The applicants’ own animals will continue to be accommodated in the barn.

A 20 metre by 40 metre sand surfaced manege (riding arena) will be constructed at the rear of the barn enclosed by a timber post and rail fence. The land slopes gently upwards from the barn and will need to be levelled meaning that the surface of the arena will be set down to make it less visible. There will be no lighting.

A circular horse walker with an approximate diameter of 10 metres and a canopy roof will be installed.

Justification

The carefully thought out and sensitive development which is intended complies with Government guidance and Council policies which together encourage appropriate rural enterprise and business diversity.

The riding arena and exerciser are now intended only for the applicants' own horses. The Council's Planning Officer has already indicated that they are acceptable in principle. The arena will have a timber post and rail fence similar to those which have already been erected. A plan of the arena is submitted. It will be behind the barn and will not be visible from the road. The land form will screen it from any views from the south. There will be no lighting.

Details of a typical horse exerciser are submitted. It will be between the barn and the house and, like the arena, will have little or no visual impact on the AONB.

- The proposed use of the barn will provide a unique facility in the area.
- The experience which will be offered is not appropriate to a village or town and will be enhanced by the tranquil beauty of the setting.
- The qualifications and experience of Mr and Mrs Taylor are ideally suited for the project with their background in veterinary science, counselling and understanding mental health.
- The exterior of the barn will not be altered.
- There be less discernible activity than an agricultural use or livery stables
- Attendance by clients will be strictly by appointment only with limited opening hours. There may also be an occasional evening session.
- The facility is intended for individuals or very small groups. The location is such that there is no public transport but the size of vehicles and their movements will be less than would be generated by farming or livery stables.
- There is an existing parking area next to the barn.

It is understandable that the local planning authority may be wary of the proposed use evolving into something that is more intrusive. My clients are happy to provide additional assurances and to discuss appropriate planning conditions to ensure that this does not happen.