

Agricultural Assessment Of The Farm Holding For Planning Purposes.

**Hague Farm
Bolton by Bowland Road
Bolton by Bowland
Clitheroe
BB7 4NJ**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 ML Planning Consultancy have been instructed by Mr Mark Dakin to prepare an agricultural assessment of the farm holding at Hague Farm for planning purposes, specifically in respect of an agricultural workers dwelling. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Paragraph 79) recognises that an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently on or near a site of agricultural work in the countryside.

1.2 The farm has been in operation at the site for 63 years.

1.3 The applicant is Mark Dakin who is the third generation of his family to farm at the site.

1.4 There is an essential need for a worker to reside on site to ensure that the welfare of the animals in the applicant's care is maintained at all times. A Standard Man Day (SMD) calculation has indicated that the farm currently requires a yearly average of 5.19 workers to tend to the farm on a daily basis. John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook (52nd Edition) has been used to calculate the SMD.

1.5 At present, there are four dwelling associated with the unit. Due to retirements, a further 24 hour presence is essential on the unit to maintain the welfare of the livestock on the unit.

1.6 This report has been produced to prove a genuine need for an agricultural workers' dwelling at the site. This is in line with Policy DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy which sets out the criteria for Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB.

1.7 This report will provide an assessment of the existing agricultural business carried out at the site.

1.8 At present two full time staff meet the labour requirements of the unit, one of which currently lives off site.

1.9 We will also include the following information, to allow a deeper understanding of the site and its specific requirements:

- how the livestock unit is operated
- explanations as to why it is necessary for the workers to be available on the site at all times, including tending to the needs of the animals to ensure adequate standards of care, crime prevention, and the requirement for the worker to be able to balance that need with the need to sustain a good level of family and personal life.

1.10 The site is located within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.11 The site is located in Flood Zone 1.

1.12 We apply for an agricultural worker dwelling at outline.

2.0 Farm Description

2.1 The proposed site lies within the Ribble Valley Council Borough. It covers a total area of 400 acres of owned and 42 acres of rented land, and enables the care of 200 dairy cows and 230 ewes.

2.2 The site is in the parish of Bolton by Bowland and is accessed from Bolton by Bowland Road. As can be expected, the farm is in a relatively rural location, but the comprehensive highway network surrounding the site provides good access to and from the unit.

2.3 The business is owned by [REDACTED], [REDACTED] G & MM Dakin and Sons. The farm buildings and land belong to the farm business.

2.4 Due to the number of livestock and vulnerability of the young calves on the unit, on site high standards must be upheld at all times, with additional work being required to maintain these standards. This is essential to ensure that the animals' welfare is protected, and also to ensure the highest production and profitability for the business.

3.0 Stocking & Cropping

3.1 The main enterprise on the farm is

- 200 dairy cows
- 2 bulls
- 45 dairy calves up to 6 months
- 230 lowland ewes
- 8 rams

3.2 Cropping on the farm is as follows

- 160 acres silage
- 4 acres hay
- 250 acres of grazing

3.3 Based on the current levels of stocking and cropping set out above the labour requirement of the holding has been assessed, see Appendix 1. This assessment indicates that there is a need for 5.19 full time workers on the holding to cover the day to day farming activities as outlined to ensure good animal husbandry and welfare and to allow for general maintenance of the property and general management.

3.4 For the last two years, the enterprise has had to reduce its sheep numbers due to their only being one person on site to deal with out of hours lambing. The provision of an additional dwelling will allow the unit to increase its flock numbers back up to 400 ewes as there will be an additional 24 hour presence on the site.

4.0 Labour

4.1 Labour on the farm currently comprises of the following:

Name	Full / Part / Seasonal	Duties

Peter Dakin	Full time	Milking, buying and selling of stock, lambing, calving, general herd health and fertility management.
Mark Dakin	Full time	Calving, lambing, winter feeding and mucking out, Calf feeding and general care, relief milking, general farm maintenance

4.2 [REDACTED] are all retired partners of the business.

5.0 Existing Functional Need

5.1 The current enterprise at Hague Farm requires a high level of supervision with a high functional need for workers to be on hand to deal with instances that require urgent and immediate action, particularly those instances that occur outside of normal working hours. Any shortfall in supervision at a critical moment could result in the loss of the livestock, with a consequential knock-on effect on farm profitability (and hence sustainability).

5.2 Sheep

Breeding ewes will lamb each spring. Many of these ewes will give birth outside of normal working hours and some will need assistance from a worker. On this farm the lambing period is from February to March.

5.3 Cows

Animal husbandry is a large responsibility on the farm. Dairy farming is a 24/7 business to ensure adequate care for the animals. Timely attention to their needs is vital to their health and welfare, and the economic viability of the business.

The applicant is responsible for managing calvings which number approximately 250 per year.

The calves are then hand reared before being sold on at six weeks old.

Cows are large animals and accidents can happen in a short amount of time, causing potential injury to other livestock and workers. It is important that livestock are closely managed, and an on-site presence is vital to facilitate this.

In the event of an emergency, it is essential for the applicant to attend. A swift response time is vital to ensure the health and safety the animals under the applicant's care and the safety of the workers. Mark is a 6 mile/12 minute car journey away, and any emergency could have escalated in the time it takes him to travel to site. In the interests of animal welfare, worker safety and economic viability, the farm requires a further 24/7 on site presence to ensure that the safety of the livestock and the workers are protected at all times.

It is recommended that two people attend every calving for the safety of the workers and the animals. Furthermore, labouring mothers should only be left unattended for three hours at a time. If the applicant cannot live on site, he would need to go to site up three times a night when a mother is calving. This is not feasible given that calving takes place all year round.

During the birth, cows can suffer a number of complications which can prevent the birth from taking place. Calves are susceptible to disease, injury and infection just after birth and it is essential that they benefit from their mother's milk to give them the best chance of being reared healthily. It is best practice for calves to be removed from their mothers immediately after birth with the mothers being given calcium to prevent deficiency, and the calves fed manually. This is

best for both mother and calf, but it is something the applicant is currently unable to do as he cannot be on site 24 hours a day. This means the animals are not having the utmost care which could have an effect on their health and ultimately the profitability of the business. It is vital for the animals to be cared for and monitored constantly for prevention of injury and disease, which calves are especially and particularly susceptible to.

Any signs of illnesses need to be identified as early as possible for the benefit of the individual cow and the herd as a whole. Should livestock become ill, they will require isolating from other livestock to avoid the illness spreading. Once isolated the animal must be regularly monitored and many require around-the-clock treatment.

5.4 Security & Bad Weather

Farms can be vulnerable to theft and intrusion. Increasing the number of people living on site will increase the amount of time there is always someone around and thus increase security and / or the ability to respond to alarms etc.

Given livestock need 24/7 care, any periods of bad weather which delay or prevent workers travelling to the farm when planned can have serious impacts. With the amount of work and livestock to care for, two people need to be on site full time. The nearby village of Sawley is susceptible to flooding from the River Ribble which can result in a number of road closures in the local area. Road closures could increase the journey time to site for the applicant by at least 30 minutes which could have catastrophic consequences in the case of an emergency.

6.0 Support Payments

6.1 The farm makes claims under the Delinked Payment Scheme and consequently all the land owned is registered and receiving payments on an annual basis.

7.0 Farm Buildings

7.1 There are 15 farm buildings and sheds on site. Uses, dimensions and materials to be found in Appendix 3.

7.2 The farm business and the associated buildings have been there for many years. None of the farm buildings are capable of conversion, they are working farm buildings and are required to carry out the farming enterprise.

8.0 Existing Accommodation

8.1 There are four dwellings associated with the farm business:-

8.2 Hague Farmhouse is lived in by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is a partner in G and MM Dakin and Sons and works full time on the farm.

8.3 The Granary is lived in by [REDACTED]). [REDACTED] is a retired partner. [REDACTED] is still involved in decision making but not day to day operations.

8.4 Rod Hill Barn is lived in by [REDACTED] is a retired partner but deals with the business accounts.

8.5 Slipping Brook Barn is lived in by [REDACTED] is a recently retired partner, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] manages the maintenance of the farm machinery and still helps out with seasonal tractor work when required.

8.6 Given that three of the four properties are occupied by retired workers, further on-site accommodation is essential to provide the supervision and 24 hour care that the livestock require.

8.7 Recent case law has evidenced that it is unreasonable to expect a person in an existing dwelling on site to move out to make room for an essential worker. A High Court judgement of relevance is the case *Keen V Secretary of State for the Environment and Aylesbury Vale District Council*. This found that it was insufficient for accommodation to merely exist, rather it is necessary to determine whether or not it can reasonably be held to be available. Many decisions since accept that dwellings still occupied by retired farmworkers are unavailable on this basis, with no realistic prospect of them being available soon enough for the needs of the business.

8.8 A Rightmove search has shown that there are no suitable properties close to the site. A full Rightmove Assessment can be found in Appendix 6 (conducted 18th October 2024). Properties must be under £150,000 (the cost to build new) and must have 4 bedrooms (or three plus an office) to ensure it meets the needs of present and future generations. We exclude any shared ownership or retirement properties, and we exclude any properties that do not have any parking. We also exclude any leasehold properties to ensure a like for like purchase option.

7.9 Off-site accommodation is not suitable to house farm workers. A 24 hour on-site presence within sight and sound of the animals is required for animal husbandry, year round calvings, managing employee work-life balance, protection of lone workers, security, and responding to bad weather.

9.0 Planning Policy

9.1 The NPPF supports, as an exception, the construction of isolated new homes in the countryside where the home is required to meet the essential need of a rural worker.

9.2 Under Local Policy, the principle of development is required to be secured against the Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policies DMG2 and DMH3:-

9.3 DMG2 states that outside the defined settlement area, development must meet at least one of a number of criteria – one of which is that *‘the development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture’*

9.4 DMH3 states that within areas defined as Open Countryside or AONB on the proposal map, residential development will be limited to *‘development essential for the purposes of agriculture...in assessing any proposal for an agricultural worker dwelling a functional and financial test will be applied’*.

9.5 To address these functional and financial tests, the following has been assessed:-

(a) The necessity for the applicant to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of the existing agricultural enterprise

Section 5 of this document sets out the functional need for the proposed dwelling.

(b) The Labour requirements of the existing agricultural enterprise

Stocking & Cropping and Labour details are set out in sections 3 and 4 respectively of this report and establish that 5.19 standard man days are required on the farm unit. The present workforce consists of 2 full time workers the applicant and Peter Dakin.

(c) The degree to which there is confidence that the agricultural enterprise is currently economically viable and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future

G & MM Dakin and Sons has been established for many years and has generated a continuous net profit over the last three years.

In the interests of confidentiality, the accounts have not been included here. A summary of the accounts can be made available for inspection if required.

(d) Suitability and availability of existing dwellings on the agricultural holding

Section 7 of this report considers the existing buildings on the site and whether they are available for conversion. Section 8 goes on to review the existing accommodation on the unit together with available accommodation in the local area.

9.6 Core Strategy Policy DMG1 requires all development to 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.

9.7 In addition, Core Strategy Policy DMG2 states that 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.

9.8 The proposal is for permission in outline so matters of scale, massing, style, features and building materials are not relevant at this stage.

9.9 Careful consideration has however been given to the siting of the proposed dwelling. The proposed location would bring far more advantages to the farm business than just satisfying the need for an additional worker on the unit.

9.10 The addition of a dwelling in the proposed location would allow the applicant to make better use of existing fields and concentrate calving to take place within the summer months.

9.11 Currently, cows are calved in a small croft to the front of the farmhouse (shown on the images below). It is the intention that calving will be moved to a larger pasture adjacent to the site of the proposed dwelling. Calving in a larger pasture would mean calving more cows at any

one time. The larger pasture would also provide a larger grazing area and reduce the need for buffer feeding with haylage.

9.12 Calving more cows at any time, means calving can be concentrated to the summer months. This would drastically reduce the amount of medication used in rearing calves. Calves thrive in the summer months as the weather is better and less antibiotics are used than in the winter season.

9.13 The freed-up calving croft would be utilised for lame milk cows and other animals which require extra care and monitoring. These animals are currently spread between two small crofts close to the farmyard (shown on the images below), so the lame cows don't have to walk as far for milking, and the vulnerable animals can be monitored from the farmhouse. These small crofts do not provide enough grass for the animals and they also have to be buffer fed so an additional space close to the farm buildings would negate the need for this buffer feeding.

9.14 A reduction in buffer feeding for across all animals has an added benefit of a move away from using plastic wrapped bales.

Image showing current use of fields:-



Image showing proposed use of fields:-



10.0 Conclusion

10.1 There is clearly a functional need on the holding for an additional dwelling for a full-time employee. The unit has been established for more than three years, is profitable and will remain so. There is no other suitable dwelling on site, or within the local area. Nor are any of the farm buildings suitable of conversion. Therefore, the proposed complies with the criteria set out in the planning policies and we seek approval of this proposal.

Appendix 1

RPA maps supplied as supporting documents

Appendix 2

Calculation of Annual Labour Requirement. As of 14/10/2021

All enterprise requirements in terms of Standard Man Days (SMD) have been taken from the Farm Management Pocketbook (2022 edition) by John Nix.

Livestock:

Type	Quantity	SMD per head	Total SMD
Dairy cows	200	4.00	800.00
Bulls	2	3.50	7.00
Calves (up to 6 months)	45	1.20	54.00
Ewes (lowland)	230	0.50	115.00
Rams	8	0.50	4.00

SUBTOTAL

980.00 SMD

Land:

Product	Acres	Hectares	Cuts	SMD	Total SMD
Silage with reseeded	160	65	2	3.40	220.15
Grazing only	250	101		0.40	40.47

SUBTOTAL

260.62 SMD

Total Enterprise SMD Requirement/Year 1240.62 SMD

Plus:

15% Addition for general maintenance & management $1240.62 * 1.15 = 1426.72$ SMD

Number of Workers Required

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 applicant's enterprise at the site equates to 5.19 full time workers ($1426.72/275$).

Appendix 3

A schedule with an accompanying numbered plan of existing buildings describing the dimensions, type of construction and cladding and use.

Building No.	Use	Area (sqm)	Materials
1	Hague Farmhouse (dwelling)	104	Stone
2	The Granary (dwelling)	110	Stone
3	Lambing barn/hay storage/farm workshop	201	Stone
4	Sheep pens/cattle housing	132	Concrete frame
5	Lambing shed	103	Concrete block
6	Lambing shed	260	Steel frame
7	Lambing shed	256	Steel frame
8	Loose housing/sawdust store	346	Steel frame
9	Cubicle shed	549	Steel frame
10	Cubicle shed/milking parlour/dairy	1290	Concrete frame with steel framed lean-to
11	Machinery/fertiliser store	831	Steel frame
12	Calf shed	354	Steel frame
13	Calving shed	285	Steel frame
14	Winter sheep housing	98	Steel frame
15	Garage	82	Stone



Appendix 4

Rightmove assessment completed 11/05/2021

To meet the functional requirements of the farm, any other accommodation must meet the following criteria, and must be within sight and sound of the animals as it will be the only dwelling providing supervision:

Under £150,000	As this is the cost to build new
3 Bedrooms	To ensure appropriate living space for the applicant
Within 1 mile	To enable swift responses in the event of an emergency
Within a 10 minute drive	To enable swift responses in the event of an emergency
With garden and off road parking	Larger vehicles should have dedicated parking with the property
No buying schemes	Full ownership to ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable
Freehold	To ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable
No shared ownership	To ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable

The result shows that there are no suitable properties close to the site:-

The screenshot shows a Rightmove search interface. The search bar contains 'BB7 4NJ' with filters for 'Min Price to £150,000', '3 Bed to Max Beds', 'Property Type (3)', and 'Filters (2)'. The main content area displays a message: 'We couldn't find what you're looking for right now. Here's what you can try to find more properties:'. A 'We recommend...' box shows 'BB7' with '1' property matching criteria at an average price of '£313,103'. A 'Notify me about...' box offers to alert for 'Houses For Sale in BB7 4NJ, at least 3 beds, up to £150,000, must have parking, don't show buying schemes'. The right sidebar includes a map of the area and a link to 'See properties to rent in BB7 4NJ'. The footer features sponsored ads for 'Bowland Properties' and 'BCS Prep'.

A widening of the search to the area of BB7 revealed one property in Clitheroe.

rightmove [Buy](#) [Rent](#) [House Prices](#) [Find Agent](#) [Commercial](#) [Inspire](#) [Overseas](#) [Sign in](#)

BB7 [Clear](#) [+ 0 miles](#) [Min Price](#) to [£150,000](#) [3 Bed](#) to [Max Beds](#) [Property Type \(3\)](#) [Filters \(3\)](#)

Houses For Sale in BB7, at least 3 beds, up to £150,000, must have parking, don't show retirement, buying schemes [Save search](#) [Create Alert](#)

1 results [Sort: Highest Price](#) [List](#) [Map](#)

[Prioritise properties with...](#) [Add keyword](#)

Abi Langdale 2023, Ribble Valley Park & Leisure, Clitheroe... [X](#)

Lodge [3](#) [1](#)

The ABI Langdale is classed as a villa which gives you an extended licence period of 30 years that it can stay on the park, it also includes free 2024 pitch fees.

Added on 16/02/2024 by Unique Estate Agency Ltd, Thornton Cle...

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£89,995

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This property is discounted for the following reasons:

- It is a holiday home which is not considered appropriate for an agriculturalworker dwelling.
- It is not within sight and sound of the animals and will not provide the necessary supervision that the livestock require.
- It is further from the agricultural unit than the applicant's current home address.