

Design and Access Statement & Planning Statement

to support a

**Planning application for a change of use of land to create
an extension to the car park for the farm park**

At

**Mrs Dowson's Farm
Hawkshaw Farm
Longsight Road
Clayton Le Dale
Blackburn
BB2 7JA**

Prepared by
Mary Miller
Rural Futures (North West) Ltd



This statement has been structured with reference to CABI best practice guidance; Design & Access Statements – how to write read and use them. CABI 2006.

Design & Access Statement and Planning Statement

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1.0 Introduction

This planning application is for a change of use of land to create additional car parking for Mrs Dowson's Farm Park. The current parking area is no longer sufficient when themed events are held such as the autumn pumpkin event or the spring lambing and Easter event. Throughout the year a number of seasonal events attract increased numbers of visitors with the majority of young families coming by car. The existing car parking was granted planning consent in September 2018 under application reference 3/2018/0575.

The holding is a 135 acre dairy farm owned and occupied by Mr & Mrs Dowson and their family. Due to personal circumstances the dairy herd has been reduced in size as Mr Dowson's health issues have reduced the amount of time he can work with the cows.

The current herd of 50 milking cows still produces the milk which is used to make Mrs Dowson's award winning ice creams with currently over 55 different flavours available, including sorbets and vegan ice cream. Surplus milk is sold to the wholesale market. Ice cream making began on the farm in 2001 and has continued to grow on an annual basis. A small suckler herd and a beef rearing enterprise operate alongside the dairy cows. The commercial flock of sheep offer a "lambing live" experience to visitors every spring.

Mrs Dowson's Farm offers a wide range of visitor experiences and is open to the public at weekends and through the school holidays. There is a wide mix of animal species on the farm park including pigs, sheep, goats, poultry, camelids, ponies, donkeys, water buffalo, deer, emus and wallabies.

The farm park enterprise has continued to grow, especially since the pandemic, as more people appreciate undertaking family activities which are outside and connected to nature and animals. The large play barn and outdoor play areas offer options for all weathers. The scare kingdom attraction has been operating for almost 20 years and offers seasonal events around Halloween.

Currently the farm, farm park and ice cream making enterprise employ 15 full time staff and 45 part time staff who work alongside Mr & Mrs Dowson within the various enterprises. Many of the part time jobs are theatrical staff who present the various activities to visitors. The diversified enterprises also offer employment for up to 70 seasonal casual staff at varying times of the year.

Across the various activities and attractions Hawkshaw Farm welcomed approximately 130,000 visitors to the site in 2024.

2.0 Site details

Hawkshaw Farm is located on Longsight Rd and is to the east of the A59. All the land at the farm is grassland with a mixture of pastures and silage meadows.

There is a farmhouse and a large range of traditional and modern farm buildings providing cattle housing, silage clamps, general storage and manure storage associated with the agricultural enterprise.

The farm also has diversified the business to include Mrs Dowson's ice cream, a farm visitor centre and the Scare Kingdom attraction.

The scheme for the access which was approved by highways when the original visitor centre was granted planning has been implemented. The work was completed to standards above those approved with the working amendments being agreed with a highways engineer during a number of site visits. Unfortunately this wasn't logged in a paper application but it can be seen that the widening works and improvements have been made thus ensuring a safe access for visitors and farm traffic alike.

The farm park and other activities attracted 130,000 visitors last year across the wide range of events throughout the year. Annually events include lambing live, Easter themed activity days, sunflower picking, pumpkin picking, Halloween events and Christmas activities. The farm park opens every weekend, during school holidays and on bank holidays. A small number of pre-booked school groups attend educational activities during the week.

Parking is alongside the access route as approved in a previous planning application and serves all activities. The site is also accessible using public transport with the bus route passing the farm entrance.

3.0 The proposed development

The proposal is for a change of use of land to extend the car parking area to the north west to offer enhanced parking for visitors. The existing car park, approved under application reference 3/2018/0575 created 229 parking spaces to serve the farm park and the proposed wedding venue.

After a small number of weddings at the site this enterprise will not be continued as it is not compatible with the other operations at Hawkshaw Farm. The car parking spaces approved are too small for parent and child spaces and so cars are parked to a much lower density than indicated on the original plan. In essence the existing car park only provides parking for around 135 cars when parked in such a way as to allow parents to get children in and out of vehicles. This is illustrated on the enclosed site plans.

The majority of themed events are targeted at families with young children with many visitors using a push chair or buggy. This inevitably leads to the most visitors arriving by car as public transport is difficult with a pushchair and one or more young children.

In addition to this, walkways for families with children have been created within the car park to improve visitor safety. In practise this lower density parking means that on busy weekends there is insufficient car parking on the site.

When visitors cannot find a parking space quickly there are delays in people coming into the site from the A59. It is also now a frequent requirement to provide additional parking on the adjacent field. In dry conditions this works well but cannot be actioned in wet weather.

The images below were taken over the Easter weekend when a member of staff directed car parking to maximise space.



As can be seen the spaces between cars allow children to be lifted out of car seats as in parent and child parking at a supermarket or similar

Hawkshaw Farm



Looking from the edge of the existing car park to field parking used over the Easter weekend



Looking from the site entrance showing cars parked on the field.

Hawkshaw Farm

Additional car parking is required to provide safe parking for visiting families. The proposed layout allows parking spaces of 2.5m wide by 5 m long. The spaces are set out in pairs with a 1200mm space between them to enhance access to vehicles with a pram and with young children.

The car park extension will be created by removing 25 cm of soil, laying a permeable membrane and then filling with hardcore. The surface will then be coated with road planings to match the existing car park. This will ensure that the area is permeable to rainwater.

It is proposed to create an access point from the farm road into the new parking area and to maintain the existing access from the farm track. This will enable signage to be erected to create a one way system in the parking area to improve traffic flow. The concrete access road is wide enough to allow two cars to pass all along its length which leads to good traffic flow.

4.0 Design and Access

Context of Site

Assessment

Mrs Dowson's Farm park is a well established tourism and educational attraction within the Ribble Valley. The majority of visitors to the site are families with young children, many of them being pre-school age and still using a pram or buggy. This means that most visitors to the farm park arrive by car as it is difficult to utilise public transport with a young family.

The current car parking is inadequate for busy weekend events such as Easter, lambing time and pumpkin picking. The farm offers themed events during most of the school holidays and at weekends which has led to a continuing increase in visitor numbers.

Mrs Dowson's Farm park is a significant employer in this rural area and has a positive financial impact on other businesses in the area such as restaurants, pubs and nearby small towns.

The application to extend the car park will enable safe parking to be provided whilst meeting the needs of families with young children. The proposed car park will avoid the need to park on the field and will ensure there is always safe access in and out of the site from Longsight Road.

Involvement

There has been no previous involvement with this application.

Evaluation

The proposed extension to the car park will improve facilities for visitors and ensure they enter the site quickly and leave safely, thus maintaining highway safety.

Design

The car park extension will be created by removing 25 cm of soil, laying a permeable membrane and then filling with hardcore. The surface will then be coated with road planings to match the existing car park. This will ensure that the area is permeable to rainwater.

The soil removed will be utilised to create a bund inside the site boundary. This will then be planted with native species trees and maintained as rough grassland to meet the BNG requirements. The existing hedgerow already provides screening for the car park when viewed from outside the site.

Design Principles and Concepts:

Use

The extended car park will be used solely to provide parking for visitors to Mrs Dowson's Farm Park.

Amount

The whole site area including the provision for BNG measures is 0.64 hectares.

Layout

The submitted plans show the existing site layout and proposed site layout for the proposed parking

Landscaping

There is a mature hedgerow alongside Longsight Road which screens the site to the north west. The proposed works to meet the BNG requirements will see the creation of a soil bund which will be maintained as rough grass and which will be planted with native species trees.

Appearance

The surface of the parking will be road planings which is in keeping with the existing car park and will ensure the surface is permeable. The proposed site plan indicates the areas of grassland and permeable surface.

Access:

An Accessible Environment

The site is easily accessible by car, public transport and cycle from Longsight Road.

Vehicular and Transport Links

The site has good vehicular access and public transport can be accessed from Longsight Road

Access and Movement Patterns

There is good access and adequate turning space for vehicles within the site.

Emergency Services Access

There is good access for the emergency services and this will not be altered by the works carried out.

5.0 Planning Policy Framework

Central Government provides policy advice in the National Policy Planning Framework 2023. In this instance the local planning policy which is relevant to the site comes in the form of the Core Strategy 2008-2028 A Local Plan for the Ribble Valley

5.1 National Policy

National planning Policy Framework 2023

The National Planning Policy Framework document has three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The application supports this rural family business which is of significant economic importance as an employer in this rural area. The visitor attraction draws people to the Ribble Valley providing wider economic benefits to other local shops, accommodation providers and eating establishments. The business also provides jobs for local people including full time, part time and seasonal roles. The extension to the car park is essential to accommodate families coming to the site.

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

88. 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; and

d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship

The works will support this rural tourism business whilst creating employment for local people and boosting the local economy.

Promoting sustainable transport

The farm park is accessible by public transport or by cycle.

Achieving well-designed places

The farm park has been designed throughout to sit within the surrounding agricultural environment. It is fully accessible to all users and maintains a strong sense of place. The additional car parking is designed to fit with the existing surroundings with additional works for the environment to meet the BNG requirements and to provide new habitat.

Local Planning Policy

KEY STATEMENT DS1: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This policy provides a hierarchy for planning development. It is difficult to apply in this situation as the work is the expansion of an existing enterprise and so could not be located elsewhere.

KEY STATEMENT DS2: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

This development is key to supporting the business by providing better parking facilities and improving the visitor experience to retain existing customers and to attract new ones.

KEY STATEMENT EN2: LANDSCAPE

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.

The works are designed to maintain the openness of the area and are in keeping with adjacent farmland.

KEY STATEMENT EN3: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Council will seek to ensure that all development meets an appropriate recognised sustainable design and construction standard where viable to do so, in order to address both the causes and consequences of climate change. In particular, all development will be required to demonstrate how it will contribute towards reducing the Borough's carbon footprint. The Council will assess applications against the current Code of Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and Buildings for Life and BREEAM standards, or any subsequent nationally recognised standards.

Proposals for the development of new renewable energy generation facilities, including onshore wind turbine technologies, will be considered. This will require the consideration of many factors including the need to reduce the area's carbon footprint whilst also recognising its exceptional environmental and landscape context.

In adapting to the effects of climate change it is expected that proposals for development will demonstrate how sustainable development principles and sustainable construction methods, such as the use of sustainable drainage systems, will be incorporated.

New development in vulnerable areas should ensure that risks can be managed through suitable measures, including through the conservation of biodiversity, improvement of ecological networks and the provision of green infrastructure.

All development should optimise energy efficiency by using new technologies and minimising the use of energy through appropriate design, layout, material and landscaping and address any potential issues relating to flood risk. Ribble Valley Borough Council will liaise with the County Council over development within Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) in both proposing future site allocations and in determining planning applications. This liaison will include consideration of the issue of preventing the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources within MSAs and, where feasible and practicable, the prior extraction of mineral resources.

On larger schemes, planning permission will only be granted for developments on sites that deliver a proportion of renewable or low carbon energy on site based on targets elaborated within the relevant Development Management policy and also incorporate recycled or reclaimed materials or minimise the use of energy by using energy efficiency solutions and technologies. Where developments fail to achieve any of these, it must be demonstrated why this cannot be achieved.

The site is accessible by public transport or cycle. However families travelling with young children requiring prams or buggies will generally use a car to travel to the site. Hawkshaw Farm is well related to the wider road network which is the preferred method of transport for families with young children.

KEY STATEMENT EN4: BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY

The Council will seek wherever possible to conserve and enhance the area's biodiversity and geodiversity and to avoid the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats and help develop green corridors. Where appropriate, cross-Local Authority boundary working will continue to take place to achieve this.

Negative impacts on biodiversity through development proposals should be avoided. Development proposals that adversely affect a site of recognised environmental or ecological importance will only be permitted where a developer can demonstrate that the negative effects of a proposed development can be mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for. It will be the developer's responsibility to identify and agree an acceptable scheme, accompanied by appropriate survey information, before an application is determined. There should, as a principle be a net enhancement of biodiversity.

These sites are as follows:

- *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)*
- *Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)*
- *Local Biological Heritage sites (CBHs)*
- *Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*
- *Local Geodiversity Heritage Sites*
- *Ancient Woodlands*
- *Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species*
- *European Directive on Protected Species and Habitats - Annexe 1 Habitats and Annexe II Species*
- *Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England.*

With respect to sites designated through European legislation the Authority will be bound by the provisions of the relevant Habitats Directives and Regulations.

For those sites that are not statutorily designated and compensation could be managed through a mechanism such as biodiversity off-setting via conservation credits

A BNG assessment for the development is attached to this proposal. The car park will be created on intensively managed grassland which has little or no habitat value.

The proposals made in the report will be carried out in full and maintained.

KEY STATEMENT EC1: BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

Developments that contribute to farm diversification, strengthening of the wider rural and village economies or that promote town centre vitality and viability will be supported in principle.

This proposal supports the visitor attraction at Hawkshaw Farm and will continue to support the jobs created and the wider economic benefit brought by visitors to the area.

KEY STATEMENT EC3: VISITOR ECONOMY

Proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged, including the creation of new accommodation and tourism facilities through the conversion of existing buildings or associated with existing attractions. Significant new attractions will be supported, in circumstances where they would deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to local communities and employment opportunities.

The works will improve the visitor experience at this significant visitor attraction. Mrs Dowson's Farm attract visitors to the Ribble Valley from all around the area and has led to the creation of jobs as well as supporting the wider economy.

POLICY DMG1: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

IN DETERMINING PLANNING APPLICATIONS, ALL DEVELOPMENT MUST:

DESIGN

- 1. BE OF A HIGH STANDARD OF BUILDING DESIGN WHICH CONSIDERS THE 8 BUILDING IN CONTEXT PRINCIPLES (FROM THE CABE/ENGLISH HERITAGE BUILDING ON 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.*

ACCESS

- 1. CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL TRAFFIC AND CAR PARKING IMPLICATIONS.*
- 2. ENSURE SAFE ACCESS CAN BE PROVIDED WHICH IS SUITABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THE SCALE AND TYPE OF TRAFFIC LIKELY TO BE GENERATED.*
- 3. CONSIDER THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND ACCESS.*

AMENITY

Hawkshaw Farm

1. NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AMENITIES OF THE SURROUNDING AREA.
2. PROVIDE ADEQUATE DAY LIGHTING AND PRIVACY DISTANCES.
3. HAVE REGARD TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURED BY DESIGN PRINCIPLES.
4. CONSIDER AIR QUALITY AND MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS WHERE POSSIBLE.

ENVIRONMENT

1. CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS SUCH AS SSSIS, COUNTY HERITAGE SITES, LOCAL NATURE RESERVES, BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP) HABITATS AND SPECIES, SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION AND SPECIAL PROTECTED AREAS, PROTECTED SPECIES, GREEN CORRIDORS AND OTHER SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION.
2. WITH REGARDS TO POSSIBLE EFFECTS UPON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, THE COUNCIL PROPOSE THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY BE FOLLOWED. THIS GIVES SEQUENTIAL PREFERENCE TO THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT
- 2) AVOID THE IMPACT
- 3) MINIMISE THE IMPACT
- 4) RESTORE THE DAMAGE
- 5) COMPENSATE FOR THE DAMAGE
- 6) OFFSET THE DAMAGE.

3. ALL DEVELOPMENT MUST PROTECT AND ENHANCE HERITAGE ASSETS AND THEIR SETTINGS.
 4. ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE REQUIRED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE RISKS ARISING FROM FORMER COAL MINING AND, WHERE NECESSARY, INCORPORATE SUITABLE MITIGATION MEASURES TO ADDRESS THEM.
 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
- ### INFRASTRUCTURE

1. NOT RESULT IN THE NET LOSS OF IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE, INCLUDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PLAYING FIELDS WITHOUT A ROBUST ASSESSMENT THAT THE SITES ARE SURPLUS TO NEED. IN ASSESSING THIS, REGARD MUST BE HAD TO THE LEVEL OF PROVISION AND STANDARD OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN THE AREA, THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAYING FIELDS AND THE NEED TO PROTECT SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS. REGARD WILL ALSO BE HAD TO THE LANDSCAPE OR TOWNSCAPE OF AN AREA AND THE IMPORTANCE THE OPEN SPACE HAS ON THIS.
2. HAVE REGARD TO THE AVAILABILITY TO KEY INFRASTRUCTURE WITH CAPACITY. WHERE KEY INFRASTRUCTURE WITH CAPACITY IS NOT AVAILABLE IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO PHASE DEVELOPMENT TO ALLOW INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENTS TO TAKE PLACE.
3. CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION.

OTHER

1. NOT PREJUDICE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL AND AMENITY IMPROVEMENTS.

The works are in keeping with the above principles using natural materials were possible to ensure the site is in keeping with its surroundings.

POLICY DMG3: TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

IN MAKING DECISIONS ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL, IN ADDITION TO ASSESSING PROPOSALS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, ATTACH CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT TO:
THE AVAILABILITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE THOSE MOVING TO AND FROM THE DEVELOPMENT –

1. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE SITE TO THE PRIMARY ROUTE NETWORK AND THE STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK.

The site is well linked to the primary road network and is on a bus route.

POLICY DME2: LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE PROTECTION

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE REFUSED WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY HARM IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES.

The siting and design ensures there is no significant harm to the local landscape.

POLICY DMB1: SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

PROPOSALS THAT ARE INTENDED TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY WILL BE SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE DETERMINED IN ACCORD WITH THE CORE STRATEGY AND DETAILED POLICIES OF THE LDF AS APPROPRIATE.

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL MAY REQUEST THE SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR FARM DIVERSIFICATION WHERE APPROPRIATE. THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING FIRMS WITHIN SETTLEMENTS WILL BE PERMITTED ON LAND WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THEIR EXISTING SITES, PROVIDED NO SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ARE CAUSED AND THE EXTENSION CONFORMS TO THE OTHER PLAN POLICIES OF THE LDF. THE EXPANSION OF ESTABLISHED FIRMS ON LAND OUTSIDE SETTLEMENTS WILL BE ALLOWED PROVIDED IT IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT AND CAN BE ASSIMILATED WITHIN THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE.

THERE MAY BE OCCASIONS WHERE DUE TO THE SCALE OF THE PROPOSAL RELOCATION TO AN ALTERNATIVE SITE IS PREFERABLE. PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT OR CONVERSION OF SITES WITH EMPLOYMENT GENERATING POTENTIAL IN THE PLAN AREA FOR ALTERNATIVE USES WILL BE ASSESSED WITH REGARD TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- 1. THE PROVISIONS OF POLICY DMG1, AND*
- 2. THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE PROPOSAL WITH OTHER PLAN POLICIES OF THE LDF, AND*
- 3. THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY THE COMMUNITY, AND*
- 4. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT CAUSED BY LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO THE BOROUGH, AND*
- 5. ANY ATTEMPTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO SECURE AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT GENERATING USE FOR THE SITE (MUST BE SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE (SUCH AS PROPERTY AGENTS DETAILS INCLUDING PERIODS OF MARKETING AND RESPONSE) THAT THE PROPERTY/ BUSINESS HAS BEEN MARKETED FOR BUSINESS USE FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS OR INFORMATION THAT DEMONSTRATES TO THE COUNCIL'S SATISFACTION THAT THE CURRENT USE IS NOT VIABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES.)*

Visitor numbers have increased again over the last year and safe car parking within the site has become a problem. The extension to the car park is vital to allow this business to continue to offer a wide range of activities to families with young children.

POLICY DMB3: RECREATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THAT EXTEND THE RANGE OF TOURISM AND VISITOR FACILITIES IN THE BOROUGH. THIS IS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA BEING MET:

- 1. THE PROPOSAL MUST NOT CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES OF THIS PLAN;*
- 2. THE PROPOSAL MUST BE PHYSICALLY WELL RELATED TO AN EXISTING MAIN SETTLEMENT OR VILLAGE OR TO AN EXISTING GROUP OF BUILDINGS, EXCEPT WHERE THE PROPOSED FACILITIES ARE REQUIRED IN CONJUNCTION WITH A PARTICULAR COUNTRYSIDE ATTRACTION AND THERE ARE NO SUITABLE EXISTING BUILDINGS OR DEVELOPED SITES AVAILABLE;*

3. *THE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT UNDERMINE THE CHARACTER, QUALITY OR VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE PLAN AREA BY VIRTUE OF ITS SCALE, SITING, MATERIALS OR DESIGN;*
4. *THE PROPOSALS SHOULD BE WELL RELATED TO THE EXISTING HIGHWAY NETWORK. IT SHOULD NOT GENERATE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC MOVEMENTS OF A SCALE AND TYPE LIKELY TO CAUSE UNDUE PROBLEMS OR DISTURBANCE. WHERE POSSIBLE THE PROPOSALS SHOULD BE WELL RELATED TO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK;*
5. *THE SITE SHOULD BE LARGE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE THE NECESSARY CAR PARKING, SERVICE AREAS AND APPROPRIATE LANDSCAPED AREAS; AND*
6. *THE PROPOSAL MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ANY NATURE CONSERVATION IMPACTS USING SUITABLE SURVEY INFORMATION AND WHERE POSSIBLE SEEK TO INCORPORATE ANY IMPORTANT EXISTING ASSOCIATIONS WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT. FAILING THIS THEN ADEQUATE MITIGATION WILL BE SOUGHT.*

The development supports and enhances an existing tourism attraction. The siting, materials and design are in keeping with the setting.

POLICY DMB5: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THE RETENTION, MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF BY-WAYS AND UN-SURFACED/UNCLASSIFIED ROADS AS PART OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK.

IN SITUATIONS WHERE A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY WILL INEVITABLY BECOME LESS ATTRACTIVE (DUE TO ADJACENT/SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT), THE POLICY SHOULD REQUIRE COMPENSATORY ENHANCEMENTS SUCH THAT THERE IS A NET IMPROVEMENT TO THE PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY NETWORK.

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL, UNLESS SUITABLE MITIGATION MEASURES ARE MADE, PROTECT FROM THE DEVELOPMENT FOOTPATHS WHICH:

1. *PROVIDE A LINK BETWEEN TOWNS/VILLAGES AND ATTRACTIVE OPEN LAND;*
2. *LINK WITH THE RIBBLE WAY FOOTPATH;*
3. *ARE ASSOCIATED TO THE LOCAL NATURE RESERVES; AND*
4. *ARE HEAVILY USED.*

THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE FOOTPATH AND BRIDLEWAYS NETWORK TO BE IMPORTANT GIVEN THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND THE CONTRIBUTION SUCH NETWORKS CAN BE MADE TO LEISURE, HEALTH AND TOURISM.

An application has already been submitted to Lancashire County Council to divert footpaths through and around the wider site. The proposed routes have been developed in conjunction with the Public Paths Order Officer and is awaiting consideration. A copy of the proposed routes is enclosed with this application. The proposed diversion takes walkers through the proposed car park extension which is already a dual use area for vehicles and pedestrians.

6.0 Determining issues

It is considered that the determining issues in the case of this application are:-

- a) The visual impact of the works on the open countryside
- b) How appropriate the development is in this location
- c) The wider benefit of the improvements to the site in order to enhance the visitor experience and road safety whilst continuing to attract new visitors to the Ribble Valley

7.0 Assessment of the determining issues

- a) The proposed works will be an extension to the existing car park with all works being at ground level. The car park is surrounded by mature hedges and additional landscaping will enhance the screening. A bund will be created and additional trees will be planted in an area of rough grassland to create a new wildlife habitat.
- b) As the development is required to enhance the existing visitor attraction it is not possible to locate the works elsewhere within the site.
- c) As a key attraction within the Ribble Valley the farm park is a valued location for both local residents and visitors to the area. A large proportion of visitors travel to the farm park by car so the additional car parking will create space to allow cars safe entry and parking adjacent to the farm.

8.0 Conclusion

This proposal fits within planning policies and supports the visitor economy in line with Ribble Valley Borough Council planning policies. The farm park is a significant employer in this rural area and provides benefits to the wider rural economy when visitors visit local shops, pubs and restaurants.