

# Wood Top Farm Chipping Road Chaigley PR3 2TS

**PLANNING STATEMENT**  
JULY 2025

# REPORT CONTROL

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Partnership Letter from Naphens Solicitors

Appendix B - Report by AG & P Jackson on the need for a proposed permanent farm worker's dwelling

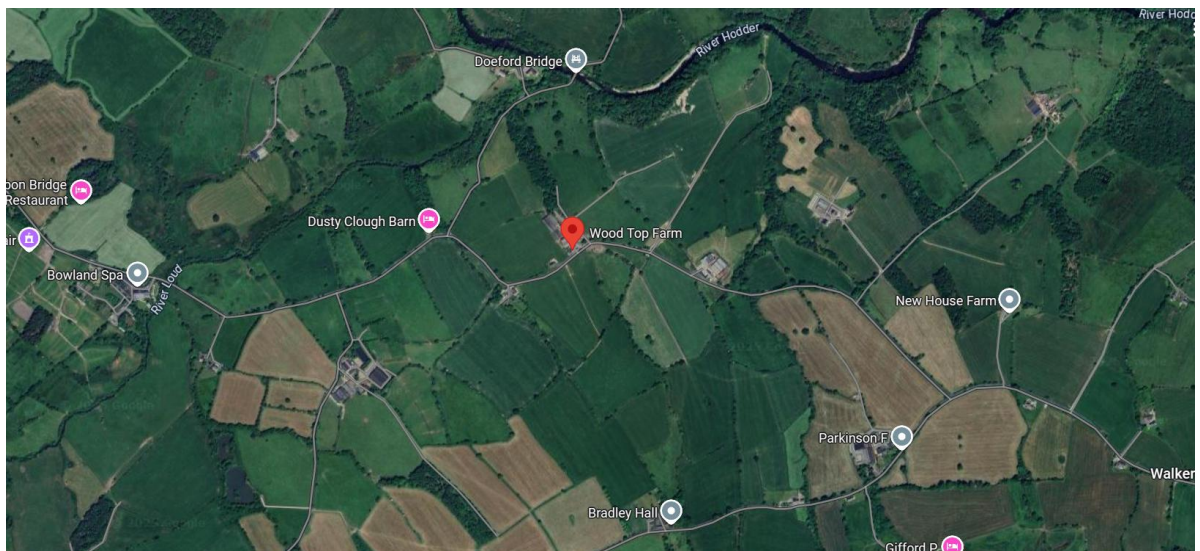
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## **/1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. PWA Planning is retained by Mr & Mrs Moon ('the applicant') to progress a full application for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling ('the proposal') at Wood Top Farm, Chipping Road, Chaigley ('The Application Site'). The planning application is made to Ribble Valley Borough Council ('the Local Planning Authority') as a full planning application, relating to the red edge application site boundary defined by the Location Plan.
- 1.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This Planning Statement will look to demonstrate that the proposals accord with the provisions of the relevant policies of the Development Plan, and moreover that there are other significant material considerations which indicate that planning permission ought to be granted
- 1.3. This Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted application package, which includes the following documents:
  - 1 APP form, relevant certificates and notices;
  - Planning Statement (this document);
  - Bat Survey;
  - Agricultural Appraisal;
  - Structural Condition Survey;
  - Transport Statement;
  - Drawn Information
    - Location Plan
    - Existing Site Plan drawing no. 2299-P02
    - Existing Building drawing no. 2299-P04
    - Proposed Site Plan drawing no. 2299-P03
    - Proposed Elevations and floor plans drawing no. 2299-P01
    - Plan showing extent of holding

## /2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The existing site relates to an area of land opposite the agricultural complex known as Wood Top Farm, situated just off Chipping Road, Chaigley. The existing access is gated immediately off Chipping Road, with the red-line then heading north-east where it envelopes an existing dilapidated barn.
- 2.2. With regard to the wider context, the site sits in a largely rural area approximately 1.9 miles east of Chipping with limited access to local services and amenities. It falls within the Forest of Bowland AONB.
- 2.3. The aerial image below in Figure 1 shows the site within its wider context.



- 2.4. Full information on the farming operations can be found in the Agricultural Appraisal submitted with this application which should be read in conjunction with this Statement. An overview is given here. Wood Top Farm, is a long-established and family-run dairy enterprise operated by Mr and Mrs Moon, alongside Mr Moon's two uncles. The holding comprises approximately 146.6 hectares (ha) of agricultural land, of which 95.9 ha are classified as meadow and 50.6 ha as pasture.
- 2.5. The primary enterprise on the farm is dairy production. The farm maintains a milking herd of 190 Holstein-Friesian dairy cows, each producing around 10,000 litres of milk per year. These cows calve year-round, with female calves reared on site as replacements and male calves either sold young or raised as store cattle. In addition to the dairy herd, the farm

supports approximately 178 head of young cattle and accommodates around 400 ewes over the winter months.

- 2.6. Silage production forms a key part of the operational regime, with up to 90 ha of grassland cut for silage annually to provide winter feed. The remainder of the land is used for livestock grazing.
- 2.7. The farm buildings consist of a mix of traditional stone-built structures and modern steel portal frame units, providing accommodation for livestock, milking, machinery storage, and general farm operations. These include a dedicated milking parlour, slurry storage, livestock housing, calf shippens, and feed and equipment stores.
- 2.8. Labour demand on the farm equates to between 4.3 and 4.7 full-time equivalent workers based on industry-standard labour requirement models (Nix Farm Management Pocket Book and SAC Handbook). The business relies on the full-time involvement of Mr and Mrs Moon, with additional input from their uncles and occasional external contractors.
- 2.9. The nature and intensity of the farm operations, particularly the year-round calving, twice-daily milking, and continuous care requirements for young stock, necessitate the presence of key workers on-site at all times to ensure animal welfare, security, and the smooth running of the enterprise.

### **/3 PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1. A search of the Ribble Valley Borough Council's online planning register has been carried out in order to understand the planning history relevant to the site and the proposed development. The relevant applications found on site are detailed below:

- **1999/0169:** Steel framed portal building extension to cover yard area between milking parlour exit door and new existing cubicle building – Approved with Conditions
- **1998/0509:** Extension for modernisation of cow housing, 390 sqm of new building – Approved with Conditions
- **1995/0635:** Outline application for an agricultural workers dwelling – Approved with Conditions
- **2005/0961:** Renewal of outline permission 3/1995/0635 for an agricultural workers dwelling – Withdrawn
- **3/2023/0620:** Proposed demolition of redundant barn and erection of farm worker's dwelling. Refused

3.2. Application ref 3/2023/0620 for the erection of a farm worker's dwelling was refused for the following reasons:

1 The proposal has evidenced that there is a functional and financial need for two resident agricultural workers, but it has been assessed that this need can be met by existing accommodation in or adjacent to the agricultural complex. As such there is no evidenced functional or financial need for an additional (third) agricultural workers dwelling. The proposal would therefore amount to inappropriate development outside of a settlement boundary and would fail to satisfy Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policies DMG2 and DMH3.

2 The proposal, by way of the provision of a two-storey residential dwelling and associated domestic curtilage which is sited separately from the existing pattern of development, would comprise an unacceptable intrusion into the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that detracts from the visual and landscape character of the area. As such it would fail to comply with Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policies EN2, DME2, DMH3 and DMG1, together with the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 130).

3 The proposed access arrangements are considered insufficient to support vehicle movements both for the proposed dwelling and the agricultural field. Furthermore insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate a suitable visibility splay can be achieved. As such the proposal would fail to comply with Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policies DMG1 (Highways) and DMG3.

- 3.3. This application differs from this earlier refusal as the applicant is now a partner in the business, with one of the other partners unable to take on as much work as he is of ill health (see Appendix A).
- 3.4. Furthermore, the applicant has had a transport statement commissioned which is submitted with this application to directly address points raised by LCC as highway authority in the previous application, this includes demonstrating a suitable visibility splay.
- 3.5. Finally, the design of the proposed development has been altered to better reflect the comments received in the recently refused planning application.



## **/4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the erection of a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at Wood Top Farm, Thornley, within the borough of Ribble Valley. The dwelling is intended to meet the long-term functional needs of the holding by providing on-site accommodation for full-time agricultural workers who are actively engaged in the day-to-day running of the farm.
- 4.2 The proposed dwelling is a two-storey, three-bedroom property designed in a traditional rural style, using materials and proportions that reflect the local vernacular. The ground floor comprises a lounge, open-plan kitchen/dining room, utility/mud room, shower room, and entrance hall. The first floor provides three bedrooms (including one en-suite) and a family bathroom, all accessed from a central landing. An oak-framed entrance canopy adds a distinctive rural character to the principal elevation.
- 4.3 Externally, the proposed dwelling is set within a defined residential curtilage and accessed via an existing gravel track that connects to the wider farm complex. The proposal includes a permeable resin-bound driveway, paving around the dwelling, and a timber cycle shed to meet highway requirements. A proprietary septic tank system is proposed for foul drainage.
- 4.4 The site layout ensures appropriate visibility splays at the access point (41m and 59m), and the proposal includes the installation of an EV charging point on the dwelling.
- 4.5 The siting, scale, and design of the dwelling have been carefully considered to minimise landscape impact, respond sensitively to the site's rural context, and deliver a functional home that supports the continued operation of the agricultural business at Wood Top Farm.
- 4.6 As detailed within the Agricultural Appraisal, existing onsite buildings have been considered through the planning process for the succession planning onsite. However, existing buildings are not suitable to provide an additional dwelling for a variety of reasons.

## **/5 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that:

*"Where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the Development Plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."*

5.2 The Development Plan for the site comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014). Key policy documents that comprise 'material considerations' include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), and any local supplementary planning guidance documents considered relevant to the proposal, which are considered below.

### **Ribble Valley Core Strategy**

5.3 The Ribble Valley Core Strategy was adopted in December 2014 and therefore can broadly be regarded as containing relevant and up to date policies in the consideration of this application. The relevant policies of the Core Strategy are considered below:

- Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
- Key Statement DS2: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy DMG1: General Considerations
- Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations
- Policy DMG3: Transport Mobility
- Policy DMH3: Dwellings in The Open Countryside and AONB
- Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscapes Protection
- Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation

5.4 **Policy DS1: Development Strategy** states that the majority of new housing will be concentrated in the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. The policy goes on to state that that development that is for identified local needs will be considered in all the boroughs settlements.

- 5.5 **Policy DS2: Presumption in Favour Of Sustainable Development** states that the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.6 **Policy DMG1: General Considerations** assists in ensuring that development proposals are in line with overarching considerations regarding the quality of developments. The policy covers Design, Access, Amenity, Environment, Infrastructure and Others.
- 5.7 **Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations** assists in the interpretation of the Development Strategy and underpins the settlement hierarchy for the purposes of delivering sustainable development. Within the open countryside, development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.
- 5.8 **Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility** outlines that in making decisions on proposals, the Council will attach considerable weight to the availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure to serve those moving to and from the development.
- 5.9 **Policy DMI2: Transport Considerations** outlines that new developments should be located to minimise the need for travel. Developments should also incorporate convenient links to public transport to reduce the need for travel by private car. Schemes offering opportunities for more sustainable means of transport will be supported.
- 5.10 **Policy DMH3: Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB** states that development in open countryside areas will be limited to agricultural or residential development that meets an identified local need, or an appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings that is in keeping with their surroundings, and finally, for the rebuilding or replacement of existing dwellings.
- 5.11 The policy states that development essential for the purposes of agriculture or residential development which meets an identified local need will be accepted. In assessing any proposal for an agricultural, forestry or other essential workers dwellings a functional and financial test will be applied.

- 5.12 **Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection** outlines that developments should not harm important landscape or landscape features including traditional stone walls, ponds, characteristic herb rich meadows and pastures, woodlands and copses.
- 5.13 **Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation** states developers are encouraged to consider incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity where appropriate.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (2024)**

- 5.14 The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions as per Paragraph 2 of the Framework and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.15 NPPF paragraph 11 maintains the presumption in favour of sustainable development, serving as a guiding principle for decision taking in the planning system. NPPF 2024 introduced several key revisions.
- 5.16 Whilst NPPF 11c is unchanged, identifying that development proposals which accord with an up-to-date development should be approved without delay, NPPF 11d sets out the alternative course where a development plan is not up-to-date.
- 5.17 NPPF 11d, Footnote 8 and NPPF 78 together specify that where the policies that are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should also be granted, subject to (i) and (ii).
- 5.18 Footnote 8 confirms that:
- “This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where: the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years...”
- 5.19 Both NPPF 11(i) and (ii) have been amended to reflect the government’s commitment to increasing the supply of homes.

5.20 NPPF 11(d)(i) is amended by the exchange of the word 'clear' to 'strong' reason for refusing development. According to the government's explanation of this change it is stated in response to the original Q6 (wording of the new presumption) that:

"A change has also been made to be clear that when assessing whether areas or assets of particular importance provide a reason for refusal, there should be a 'strong' basis for doing so when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (replacing the existing 'clear' reason). This reflects views that we heard about opportunities to strengthen the presumption's wording, in the context of the government's commitment to increasing the supply of homes, but still enables these key protections to be fully considered and enforced where it is appropriate to do so."

5.21 This means that the significance of any conflict with the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance would need to be greater than was the case in the previous NPPF. Use of the word "strong" implies the need for any such reason to be both evident and powerful.

5.22 NPPF 11d(ii) still requires an assessment of whether the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The NPPF directs particular attention to certain 'key policies' in four categories (1) directing development to sustainable locations, (2) making effective use of land, (3) securing well-designed places and (4) providing affordable homes, individually or in combination. These key policies should represent the focus of planning assessment.

5.23 Paragraph 61 of the Framework confirms the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. It goes on to acknowledge the importance that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

5.24 Paragraph 84 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;
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
  - i. is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
  - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

5.25 Paragraph 115 outlines the crucial requirements for evaluating development sites, emphasising the need to prioritise sustainable transport, ensure safe access for all users, adhere to national design guidance for transport infrastructure, and cost-effectively mitigate any significant impacts on the transport network or highway safety through a vision-led approach.

5.26 Paragraph 116 clarifies that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.27 The NPPF broadly defines sustainable development in Paragraph 8 as having three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental.

- 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.

5.28 Additionally, Paragraph 84 states that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at their place of work in the countryside.

5.29 Similarly, Paragraph 88 states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, which includes well designed new buildings.

## **/6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

### **Principle of Development**

- 6.1 The application site is located within the designated Open Countryside and the scheme proposes the erection of 1no. residential dwelling, therefore the key policy of relevance is Policy DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. Although development is not generally supported in the Open Countryside, the policy allows for development needed for the purposes of agriculture or other uses appropriate to a rural area, including the erection of agricultural workers dwellings where there is a demonstrable need. The proposed development will provide accommodation for the two key workers (and their family) of an existing rural business, which has been proven as necessary to support the business by the submitted Agricultural Appraisal.
- 6.2 The nature of the business is a dairy farm which is intrinsically connected with the rural area, meaning that any development to support the operation of this business must by its nature, be compliant with planning policy. The Agricultural Appraisal states that the proposed dwelling will allow two agricultural workers of the farm to be in immediate proximity which will allow for them to properly run the family farm and deal with any issues that arise out of typical operating hours.
- 6.3 Policy DMH3 states that in assessing proposals for essential workers dwellings, a functional and financial test will need to be provided. The supporting Agricultural Appraisal submitted as part of this application provides clear evidence of need of the two agricultural workers to reside on site to ensure the business is run safely and effectively.
- 6.4 The applicants are John and Kathleen Moon, who both work full time on the holdings and are the key workers for the farming business. The dwelling is required for themselves and their children. Wood top Farm is owned by the applicants' uncle's John and Stephen Seed who are 78 and 81 years of age. One uncle occupies the main farm house and the other occupies Wood Top House (2 dwellings on the holdings).
- 6.5 Due to the applicant's uncle's advancing years they cannot undertake many tasks on the farm or attend to emergencies in the night. The applicants are the key workers on the holding undertaking the more arduous tasks on the holdings. Both uncles have no successors, the



applicants will take majority control of the farm business in the future. Appendix A confirms that Mr Moon is now one of the partners in the farm business. The provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of the farming business through the farm succession process, as the uncles continue to take less and less of a role.

- 6.6 The functional and financial requirement has been evidenced for two resident agricultural workers, however the council (in the previous application which was refused ref 3/2023/0620 have assessed that this can be met with the existing accommodation on site (two existing farm dwellings on site).
- 6.7 The council appointed AG & P Jackson to report on the need for a proposed permanent farm worker's dwelling at Wood Top Farm and the report received was positive (attached for reference at Appendix B).
- 6.8 The report made reference to the case of Keen v Secretary of State for the Environment and Aylesbury Vale District Council which 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.
- 6.9 The following questions are to be considered when assessing if a proposal meets the functional and financial test, namely:
- Is there a clearly established existing functional need?
  - Does the need relate to a full-time worker or one who is primarily employed rather than a part time requirement?
  - Have the unit and the agricultural activity concerned been established for at least 3 years, been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound and have a clear prospect of remaining so?
  - Could the functional need be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit?
- 6.10 These points are assessed below:

#### Established Functional Need

- 6.11 There is a clearly established functional need for the dwellings. A dairy business requires a high level of 24-hour supervision to ensure its proper and continuing functioning as a viable

farming business. A high standard of animal welfare, stockmanship and supervision is required to ensure that the farming business operates effectively in terms of its financial viability and its health and safety. Further details are included in the supporting Agricultural Appraisal including details of relevant tasks undertaken by the applicants at the farm on a day-to-day basis, alongside problems that may arise out of hours that would need to be dealt with as a matter of urgency to avoid detrimental impacts to the farming business.

- 6.12 The proposed occupants of the dwellings are now responsible for the management of the farm, and therefore their need to reside on site has become increasingly important. As such, there is a clear and demonstrable need for the managers to reside on site to ensure that the business can operate successfully and without any issues arising that could negatively impact the overall business. Given the size of the operation and the family nature of the business, there is a need for a further dwelling in this circumstance to facilitate the safe and viable operation of the business, given that a number of issues could require more than one person and of a nature that the uncles in their elderly years can no longer manage.

#### Full Time Workers

- 6.13 The management of the farming business is both applicant's full time, sole employment and therefore the need relates to 2no. full time members of staff who are responsible for the management of the farm.

#### Financial Viability

- 6.14 Wood Top Farm is a long standing and established business. The farm accounts are available if the council require to assess them, however the current position of the farm is positive and given that it is a long standing family business, it is proposed to continue operating as such for years to come. This was not disputed in the previous application.

#### Alternative Accommodation

- 6.15 The Agricultural Appraisal assesses whether there are any alternative buildings on site that could be utilised as dwellings or for conversion purposes which there are not. In terms of whether there are any suitable available dwellings in the surrounding area, a search of available properties within a 1-mile radius using Rightmove (available in Appendix C) found no properties for sale. Only property came up approximately 1.5miles on Moss Lane (as the crow flies) which had the required number of bedrooms to accommodate the applicants and their family however this was priced at £965,000 which is not within the budget of the

applicants as agricultural workers. Notwithstanding a property being available and within an affordable budget, the applicants need to reside at Wood Top Farm to properly manage and supervise the large number of livestock at the farm. Continuing to live away from the farm is not a long-term or viable option for the applicants or an agricultural business of this nature.

- 6.16 It is considered that the proposed dwelling is in a suitable location given that it will replace a dilapidated and redundant barn.
- 6.17 Given that the scheme meets the functional and financial test as set out in the Agricultural Assessment, and the siting of the proposed property is suitable, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of Policy DMH3 of the Core Strategy.
- 6.18 According to Policy DMG2, development outside the designated settlement area must satisfy at least one criterion listed. In this instance, the proposed development complies with the development required for forestry or agriculture clause. In principle then, the proposed development aligns with this policy.
- 6.19 Key Statement DS1 states that the majority of new housing development will be concentrated in the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. However, the policy goes on to state that development that is for identified local needs will be considered in all settlements. The local need for the development has been demonstrated through the Agricultural Appraisal which shows the need for the proposal in this location which cannot be satisfied anywhere else within the Borough, thus this policy is complied with.
- 6.20 Considering the Framework as a whole, it is important to note that Paragraph 7 of the NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At Paragraph 8 it is stated that: "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)".
- 6.21 The first objective is with regards to the economy, where the planning system should help to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity. The second objective is a social objective whereby the planning

system should help 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 a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing. Finally, an environmental objective, whereby the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change and minimising waste and pollution.

- 6.22 Firstly, in terms of economic benefit, the proposal would, during construction of the development, make a valuable contribution to the local economy, both directly through the employment of local people and companies and indirectly through the supply chain. The proposed dwelling would also enable the two agricultural workers to live on site 24 hours a day, ensuring they are able to support the business on site and enable it to grow. This will provide a valuable contribution to the local rural economy.
- 6.23 In terms of social benefit, the proposed development would result in the creation of a high-quality environment for the applicants. The proposal would also allow for the two workers to live on site and ensure the business is kept safe and overcome issues that they are currently having with the management of the business affecting their ability to enjoy their personal lives from travel and long hours, which cannot continue indefinitely.
- 6.24 The third objective relates to the environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, mitigating and adapting to climate change and minimising waste and pollution. The supporting ecological surveys demonstrate that the proposal will not harm any protected species. The proposed development therefore meets the environmental aims of sustainable development.
- 6.25 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would constitute sustainable development in the context of the NPPF and the relevant policies of the Local Plan. Furthermore, the above analysis would also suggest the proposals can be viewed positively in the context of the adopted Development Plan with regards to the principle of development.

### **Housing Land Supply and the Tilted Balance**

- 6.26 In accordance with the NPPF, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (paragraph 11(d)), or where the most important policies for determining the application are out of date. This is especially relevant in Ribble Valley, where the adopted Core Strategy is now more than five years old. As such, under paragraph 226 and associated guidance, the standard method for calculating local housing need (LHN) must be used with immediate effect.
- 6.27 The Ribble Valley Housing Land Availability Survey (HLAS) (May 2025) and accompanying Five Year Supply Statement (as at 31st March 2025) confirm the Council's claimed position of a 6.2 year housing land supply. This updated figure reflects a significant revision from its April 2025 statement of 5.03 years and is primarily based on a deduction of 536 dwellings from the five-year requirement to account for past oversupply against the outdated Core Strategy target of 280 dwellings per annum. However, this approach is methodologically flawed. Since the Core Strategy is now considered out-of-date, any oversupply against its housing requirement should no longer be factored into current supply calculations. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG ID: 68-032) permits the use of oversupply to offset historic shortfalls but does not support a reduction in future requirements under the LHN regime.
- 6.28 The 2021 Court of Appeal judgment in *Land off Ashmead Drive, Gothington* (Appeal Ref. 3256319) reaffirmed that the question of whether and how to take oversupply into account is a matter of planning judgment and not an automatic policy entitlement. In this context, it is reasonable to conclude that the LPA's adjusted figure cannot be relied upon to rebut the presumption that the tilted balance applies. The applicable LHN figure has increased substantially from 113 to 310 dwellings per annum, underscoring the scale of under delivery and the growing housing need across the borough.
- 6.29 Although the proposed development is located outside a designated settlement boundary, it comprises a single agricultural worker's dwelling necessary to support a viable and established rural enterprise. It is therefore considered acceptable in planning terms. However, should the local authority disagree, this does not automatically render the proposal unacceptable. In light of the tilted balance, the key question is whether the adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

- 6.30 In this case, the harm is considered limited and does not override the clear benefits of the proposal, namely the delivery of a rural worker's dwelling to support a substantial agricultural operation and contribute to local housing supply, particularly in a context of escalating housing need.

Assessment Against Footnote 9 Policies (NPPF 2024)

Sustainable Location – Paragraphs 84, 110 and 115

- 6.31 While the application site does not lie within a defined sustainable settlement, its purpose is to provide on-site accommodation for a full-time agricultural worker managing 190 dairy cows and 178 other cattle, including year-round calving and milking. In this context, the location is inherently sustainable—allowing the key worker to live at their place of work and avoiding daily travel. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF recognises the importance of supporting rural businesses and facilitating essential rural worker accommodation, even where locations are remote.

Effective Use of Land – Paragraph 129

- 6.32 The proposal seeks to make effective use of land through the replacement of a dilapidated, redundant agricultural barn with a modest, purpose-built dwelling to meet an essential operational requirement. This constitutes an efficient and appropriate reuse of the site.

Well-Designed Places – Paragraphs 135 and 139

- 6.33 The design of the proposed dwelling has been revised following earlier feedback and incorporates locally appropriate materials, including natural stonework and slate tiles, to reflect the rural vernacular. The layout and form are sensitive to the surrounding landscape and AONB setting, and the dwelling is positioned to provide visual containment within the farm complex. The proposal meets the criteria for high-quality design and responds positively to its context.

**Summary of the Principle of Development**

- 6.34 The proposed development seeks consent for the erection of a single agricultural worker's dwelling in the Open Countryside and within the Forest of Bowland AONB. While residential development in such areas is generally resisted under Policy DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, exceptions are made where the proposal is essential for the purposes of agriculture. This application is firmly grounded in such an exception.

- 6.35 A detailed Agricultural Appraisal has been submitted in support of the application and clearly demonstrates compliance with the functional and financial tests required under Policy DMH3. The proposed dwelling is necessary to accommodate Mr and Mrs Moon, who are full-time, primary workers managing a substantial dairy enterprise. The day-to-day management, health, welfare, and security of this livestock operation require a constant on-site presence, which cannot be sustained from their current off-site accommodation in Bleasdale.
- 6.36 While two dwellings do exist on the holding, both are occupied by elderly uncles who are no longer capable of undertaking the more physically demanding and emergency tasks associated with modern livestock farming. As clarified in AG & P Jackson's independent report and case law (*Keen v Secretary of State*), it is not sufficient that dwellings exist, they must also be reasonably available. In this case, they are not. Furthermore, a local housing search confirms there are no suitable, affordable alternatives in close proximity.
- 6.37 The development also aligns with Policies DMG2 and DS1 of the Core Strategy. DMG2 supports agricultural development in the countryside where justified, and DS1 allows for rural housing to meet identified local needs. This proposal meets both tests: it supports a rural enterprise and meets an established need that cannot be addressed elsewhere.
- 6.38 Although the site is located outside of a defined settlement and within an AONB, these factors do not automatically preclude development, particularly where there is a pressing agricultural justification and where the design and siting are sensitive to the landscape. The proposal makes effective use of land through the replacement of a redundant barn, meets high design standards (informed by earlier officer feedback), and incorporates natural materials appropriate to the local vernacular, satisfying NPPF paragraphs 129, 135, and 139.
- 6.39 Crucially, should the council disagree with the above assessment, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged due to the outdated status of the Ribble Valley Local Plan and the recalculated housing requirement under the standard method. The latest Housing Land Availability Statement (May 2025) claims a 6.2-year supply, based on a deduction for past oversupply. However, this methodology is flawed as it seeks to reduce future housing requirements against an expired Core Strategy target, contrary to the purpose of the LHN. Case law and national guidance confirm that accounting for oversupply in this way is a matter of judgment, not policy, and must be treated with caution.

- 6.40 Given the increase in the housing requirement from 113 to 310 dwellings per annum, the tilted balance under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is clearly engaged. While the site lies in the AONB and outside a settlement boundary, the adverse impacts of granting permission are very limited, and there are not strong reasons to resist the proposal given the developments design and replacement of an existing building. The development supports a longstanding rural enterprise, provides essential on-site accommodation, involves no loss of valued landscapes or irreplaceable habitats, and includes ecological safeguards. Accordingly, there are no clear and demonstrable adverse impacts that significantly outweigh the benefits to the applicants and the long standing agricultural enterprise.

## **Design and Technical Considerations**

### **Design**

- 6.41 Policy DMG1 states that all developments must be of a high standard of building design, be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses and use sustainable construction techniques where possible.
- 6.42 The property has been designed to be in keeping with the surrounding area, in terms of the external appearance replicating the design of similar properties in the area. The layout of the proposal has been designed for the applicants to both create a family home and a space which can support the dairy business. It responds to comments provided within the previous application over the design of the development. The choice of materials is reflective of the area, and the size comparable to development in the area. The scheme has been carefully designed to ensure it respects the rural character of the area whilst providing high quality family home. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal will comply with Policy DMG1.

### **Highways Impact**

- 6.43 Key Statement DMI2 is in relation to traffic and highways safety. The policy requires that all development should be located to minimise the need for travel and that it should also incorporate good access by foot and cycle.



- 6.44 The proposal involves the construction of an agricultural workers dwelling. As a result, occupants will not have to commute to work because they will be living on-site. There will be limited trips associated with general comings and goings.
- 6.45 This resubmission is supported by a comprehensive Highways Report by Amni undertaken in March 2024 which directly addresses the previous reason for refusal concerning the adequacy of the proposed access arrangements and the lack of visibility information.
- 6.46 The proposed development will be served via an existing, established access onto Chipping Road. A full traffic and speed survey was undertaken, demonstrating that Chipping Road experiences low traffic volumes (an average of 477 vehicles over 24 hours) and has an excellent road safety record, with no recorded accidents in the vicinity over a 5-year period.
- 6.47 Visibility splays have been calculated based on recorded 85th percentile vehicle speeds (37.5 mph south-westbound and 41.0 mph north-eastbound). Using guidance from Manual for Streets, the required visibility splays of 59m to the left and 41m to the right can be achieved and are demonstrated in the submitted visibility splay drawings. These splays meet the standards for the measured traffic speeds, confirming that safe access can be provided.
- 6.48 The Highways Report also includes swept path analysis, confirms sufficient width for the access (6m as requested by the highway officer), and provides parking provision compliant with policy requirements.
- 6.49 The traffic generation from the proposed farm worker's dwelling is forecast to be minimal, fewer than one vehicle movement per hour in peak periods, and will not result in a significant impact on the highway network.
- 6.50 In summary, the revised submission provides robust evidence that the proposed access arrangements are safe and suitable for both the proposed dwelling and the ongoing agricultural use. The Highways Report demonstrates clear compliance with Core Strategy Policies DMG1 and DMG3, overcoming the previous reason for refusal.

## **Ecology and Protected Species**

- 6.51 Policy DME2 and DME3 states that development proposals should seek to enhance the local landscape and protect the existing landscape features such as woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees. Additionally, Policy DME3 states that developers are encouraged to consider incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity where appropriate.
- 6.52 A detailed bat survey has been undertaken at Wood Top Farm to support the proposed development, comprising a scoping assessment and multiple emergence surveys (July 2023 and May 2025), in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines.
- 6.53 The survey confirmed that the existing dilapidated barn has only low to medium potential for crevice-dwelling bats and low potential for void-dwelling or hibernating species. No evidence of current or historic roosts was found, and no bats were observed entering or emerging from the building during the surveys. A small number of pipistrelle bats were recorded commuting and foraging within the wider area, but the building itself does not support bat roosting activity.
- 6.54 The report concludes that the demolition of the barn will not harm bats or result in the loss of any high-value habitat. While a Natural England licence is not required, the demolition is advised to proceed with caution, ideally between late September and early April, to minimise any risk to transient bats.
- 6.55 Although no objections were raised in relation to ecology in the previous application, this updated assessment confirms there remain no ecological constraints to the development. The proposal includes recommendations to enhance biodiversity through features such as retained cavities or ridge access in the new building, in line with best practice.

### **Summary and Planning Balance**

- 6.56 The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the erection of one agricultural worker's dwelling. The development is justified by a clearly demonstrated functional and financial need, as set out in the accompanying Agricultural Appraisal and verified by an independent consultant (AG & P Jackson).
- 6.57 The applicants, Mr and Mrs Moon, are full-time workers managing a herd of 190 dairy cows and 178 young cattle on a year-round calving and milking regime. The operational intensity and welfare requirements of the enterprise demand continuous on-site presence. The existing

two dwellings on the farm are occupied by elderly uncles who can no longer meet the day-to-day demands or emergency requirements of the enterprise and are not reasonably available for use.

- 6.58 The proposed dwelling will enable the applicants to live on-site, ensuring the continued viability and security of this essential rural business and facilitating intergenerational farm succession. A detailed assessment against Policy DMH3 confirms compliance with the required tests, and the proposal is also supported under Policies DMG2 and DS1 for local need and agricultural development.
- 6.59 In design terms, the proposal has evolved in response to previous officer concerns. The new scheme proposes a modest, traditionally designed dwelling using local materials and appropriate siting to minimise visual impact. A Bat Survey and Highways Report demonstrate that there are no technical constraints to development. Access arrangements have been improved and now meet visibility standards and swept path requirements.
- 6.60 Although the site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and within an AONB, the development is policy-compliant by virtue of the agricultural need. Moreover, with the Local Plan being more than five years old and the housing requirement increased from 113 to 310 dwellings per annum, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF. RVBC's claimed 6.2-year supply is heavily reliant on a questionable deduction for oversupply against an outdated Core Strategy. Therefore, this figure should be treated with caution, and the tilted balance applies.
- 6.61 The limited and localised harm associated with the proposal does not significantly or demonstrably outweigh its substantial benefits: supporting a viable rural business, enabling farm succession, and delivering a rural dwelling that meets an essential need. Accordingly, the planning balance weighs strongly in favour of granting consent.

## **/7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 PWA Planning is retained by Mr & Mrs Moon to progress a full application for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling at Wood Top Farm, a well-established dairy farm in the open countryside and within the Forest of Bowland AONB.
- 7.2 The application presents a well-evidenced and policy-compliant proposal for a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at Wood Top Farm. The supporting Agricultural Appraisal and accompanying technical documents demonstrate that the development is essential to support the long-term viability of the farm and to facilitate continuity of care for the livestock through the next generation of farmers.
- 7.3 The proposal meets the functional and financial tests set out in Policy DMH3 and satisfies the requirements of other key policies in the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, including DMG1, DMG2, DS1, and DS2. The design is responsive to local context and AONB sensitivities, and all technical issues—namely highways and ecology—have been addressed through robust evidence.
- 7.4 When assessed against the wider policy framework, including the NPPF 2024, and in light of the tilted balance being engaged, the proposal represents sustainable development for which there are no overriding constraints. There are no strong reasons or demonstrable adverse impacts that outweigh the clear benefits of granting permission. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission be granted without delay.



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