

**Heritage Asset Statement**  
**Higher Flass Barn, Settle Road,**  
**Bolton by Bowland**



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Asset Statement supports a full planning application for the conversion of Higher Flass Barn to agricultural workers' accommodation and should be read alongside the submitted Plans, Planning Support Statement, Structural Survey and the Agricultural Statement.
- 1.2 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *"in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*
- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
  - *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
  - *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness".*
- 1.3 Consultation responses to a previous application (Ref: 3/2012/0813) indicate that the barn was regarded to be of historical interest by Lancashire County Council's Archaeology Service. The below details will therefore describe the scale and significance of the heritage asset to be affected by the proposal; allowing the LPA to make a balanced judgement on the potential impact of the conversion, in line with current national guidance.

2. The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset and putting it to a viable use consistent with conservation
- 2.1 Higher Flass Farm consists of a dwelling and several agricultural structures, accessed from Settle Road (B6478), to the south of Wigglesworth. The farmhouse currently forms a separate residential unit to the south of the site; however the land, with a large shippon building, traditional barn and yard remain in active agricultural use. The farm is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 2.2 Paragraph 5.13.2 of The Ribble Valley Local Plan recognises traditional built stone barns as *"very much a part of Ribble Valley's character and heritage"*. The paragraph furthermore states *how "the objective of allowing conversions is to keep these buildings well maintained and protect them as a feature within the landscape for future generations"*. Through Policy H16 (paragraph 5.13.10) a clear distinguishment is made between traditionally constructed barns which are worthy of retention and modern farm buildings which are less so.
- 2.3 The barn, subject to the application is depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 (Yorkshire Sheet 166), surveyed 1849-50. During the determination of a previous application under LPA Reference 3/2012/0813, the building was considered by Lancashire County Council's Archaeology Services to be of 'some historical interest', dating probably to the early years of the 19th century. The consultee noted that the period 1750-1880 has been recognised as the most important period of farm building development in England.
- 2.4 Following internal and external site inspection, it is perceived likely that the barn was constructed for the purposes of hand threshing. The barn at present consists of the principle structure with a single threshing floor which has been internally divided. Three later additions have been erected to the north, south and west.



Figure 1: Eastern Elevation

- 2.5 The principle structure is 7m to ridge height and features an unbroken slate roof at 3.3m to eaves on the eastern elevation and 4.5m on the western elevation. The service yard of the farm is located to the east of the site and therefore the main features of the barn are located to the eastern elevation. This includes the large barn doors which are inset, providing an external porch. The porch also provides access to a small, storeroom which is separate to the main internal area. A further doorway is present to the southern part of this elevation which appears to have been created at a later date. The roof of the eastern elevation features only one small opening.



Figure 2: Western Elevation

- 2.6 The western elevation is less exposed due to the presence of a tall hedge along the boundary of the highway and the modern extension. The roof again features only one glazed opening but to the elevation, four air vents historically existed at a height of 4 metres from the ground. Whilst three of these vents are visible, it is apparent that one has been covered. At ground level, this elevation features a single doorway (not externally visible) which currently leads into the extended part of the barn.
- 2.7 The north gable elevation features only two small high level vents. These are also present on the south gable, along with three ground level windows. Due to the presence of the modern side addition, only one of these windows is currently exposed.



Figure 3: North Elevation



Figure 4: South Elevation

- 2.8 It is apparent from internal inspection that the agricultural use of the barn has evolved over time. The use for hand threshing eventually ceased and the layout was divided for handling of livestock. Due to its age and condition the barn now serves a very limited purpose, being utilised for the storage of hay and some farm equipment.



Figure 5: Internal View



Figure 6: Barn Roof and Timber Beams

- 2.9 Looking at the recent extensions, the addition to the northern elevation is accessed externally and is only 6 metres in depth and 3.5m in height with a shed roof. Materials consist of breeze block walling coated in external render and the roof is corrugated asbestos. Asbestos sheet roofing is also a feature of the western extension which is slightly taller at 3.5 metres and stretches the length of the elevation.
- 2.10 The rear extension (to the west of the barn) is accessed by two large gates to the north and south and is principally constructed of corrugated iron. The third and most recent addition is to the south of the barn is at 5m in depth and 3.5m in height. The structure is constructed of breeze blocks with corrugated iron roofing which also covers the upper half of the elevation. Access is made externally.
- 2.11 Whilst the barn is not listed, the original structure is regarded a Heritage Asset. It is therefore relevant to look towards viable means of securing an active role for the barn which preserves and enhances the agricultural character.

2.12 The Structural Report submitted with the application identifies that works are required to improve its soundness for any use future use (including a continued agricultural role). It also recognises that if works are not undertaken then it is likely that the barn will in time collapse. Given that the barn is utilised only for the storage of hay and basic equipment, structural works undertaken as part of the conversion present an opportunity for the long-term conservation and enhancement of the barn. This would not be achieved through either continuation of its present function or a use other than a residential accommodation.

3. The positive contribution that conservation of the heritage asset can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality

3.1 Since Higher Flass Farmhouse is within separate ownership to the agricultural enterprise, workers currently travel to the farm from outside the area. Agricultural activity at Higher Flass Farm is currently expanding and in 2011, Ribble Valley Borough Council approved an extension to the existing shippon building through application reference 3/2011/0658. Due to its age and condition, intensive use of the traditional barn has now ceased and it is principally used for the storage of hay and equipment. Whereas investment into the structural condition would be unlikely to be forthcoming in its present role, conversion to accommodation represents the most viable means for the long-term protection of this heritage asset.

3.2 Conversion of the barn to agricultural workers accommodation would allow for a presence to be maintained at the farm for its continued full-time operation, offering benefits to the keeping of livestock and security. Further to supporting the expanding business, this would ultimately reduce the number of car journeys to the site from outside the area in accordance with wider spatial planning aims.

4. The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- 4.1 The principle building will create residential floorspace across two levels. The plans submitted to the LPA for consideration reflect the outcome of pre-application discussions held in April 2013. Should the LPA feel that further amendments are required; the applicant's are more than willing to consider these if presented during the determination period.
- 4.2 Structural works to roof, gable elevations and archway of the barn will use reclaimed materials, improving the building's quality to a standard where it may continue to be used safely in accordance with the Structural Report. The extent of re-build works were not previously assessed as substantial in the context of Local Plan Policies H2 and H16 during the determination of application reference 2/2012/0813/P.
- 4.3 The various extensions that have been added throughout the barn's history are seen to detract from the traditional rural characteristics of the principle structure. The submitted application drawings intend to remove these elements to the south and west in order to restore the barn and increase its prominence as a Heritage Asset. This will be of substantial benefit to the wider AONB setting which is promoted through Local Plan Policy ENV1. To the south, this will expose existing ground floor windows.
- 4.4 The extension to the north will be re-built to form a garage using stone and slate roofing to match the materials and character of the main building. This addition will be inset from the rear elevation to ensure that it does not appear as an original feature.
- 4.5 Pre-application discussions concluded that the LPA would prefer for the first floor windows to the western elevation to be of an 'arrow slit' style. It was brought to the Applicant's attention however that these openings would not satisfy Building Regulations and openings to these bedrooms have been redesigned to comply with these requirements. Despite these alterations, the openings have been kept to a minimum in order to preserve the buildings historic agricultural appearance. A

window will also be created to the ground floor kitchen at the western elevation to ensure a satisfactory level of daylight for occupants.

- 4.6 To the principle eastern elevation, the wagon entrance will be glazed to allow light into the property. A door has been required here to meet Building Regulations standards, although given the nature of the business, it is anticipated the most commonly used access will be to the north (leading into the utility rooms). The wagon entrance glazing has been inset very slightly, however the extent of this has been limited by the need for internal space to allow for a hall and stairwell. Two new rooflight openings will be created (also retaining the existing opening). The rooflight serving the bedroom has again been required to meet 'escape requirements' under Building Regulations. It is perceived that these are still minimal enough in size and number to respect views of the barn from the public footpath to the north-east.
- 4.7 The conversion of the barn will ensure the removal of the caravan within the planning application site, further enhancing the overall setting of the heritage asset. A private residential garden will be created in the place of the western extension, which will continue to be well-screened from the tall hedge along the boundary with the highway; retaining the former agricultural character when viewed from the road.

**JWPC Limited**

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