

Director of Community Services
Ribbles Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA
(FAO Claire Booth)

Tel (01772) 533895
Email nick.bower@lancashire.gov.uk
Your ref CONCE3/2013/0445
Our ref CPG/EST/INB/PA/3/5/8640/LK
Date: 24 June 2013

Dear Ms Booth

**APPLICATION NUMBER 3/2013/0445
HIGHER FLASS FARM, SETTLE ROAD, BOLTON BY BOWLAND
GRID REFERENCE 790 530**

I refer to your consultation letter concerning the above planning application and have the following observations to make:

Introduction

A planning application has been submitted by Mr and Mrs Marsden for the conversion of a barn to farm residential accommodation. I undertook an inspection of the application site on 12 June whilst the applicants, together with their agent: Mathew Wyatt and Mrs M Capstick the owner of the land upon which the application refers to were also present. The information provided at the meeting, together with the written submissions made in support of the application, in particular the Agricultural Statement form the basis to this appraisal.

Background Information

The land and buildings at the application site has been owned by Mrs Capstick and her late husband for many years as well as their family before them. The dwelling which is located adjacent to the buildings had been included within the same ownership but was sold approximately 60 years ago. This dwelling has been advertised for sale approximately 15 months ago and the applicants made an offer to purchase it but the offer was not accepted. The same property has been advertised for sale recently and is currently for sale, but at a price higher than that it was advertised previously. I was advised that the applicants have not put an offer in on this occasion.

I N Bower
Estates Surveyor
Property Group, PO Box 26 •
County Hall • Preston • PR1 8RE

The applicants live in Clitheroe and Mrs Capstick lives at Chatburn. The applicants have taken an active role in the farm operations run from these premises after the death of Mrs Capstick's husband approximately four years ago. Up to then Mr and Mrs Capstick ran the farm operations from their address and had retired from a garage business they had run from Clitheroe. Mr and Mrs Marsden each have jobs outside of agriculture and manage the agricultural operations in their spare time. I understand the commute from Clitheroe to the application site is in the region of nine miles which is felt to be too time consuming in particular when the farm operations are intense such as during the lambing and calving period which is geared to coincide during the months of March and April.

There exists a traditional stone built barn together with two steel portal frame buildings which are utilised for cattle housing and storage and also sheep during lambing, but on an ad hoc basis. The applicants feel that following the erection of the second agricultural building which was completed recently that the traditional stone barn is surplus to the agricultural needs of the unit. In view of this, if permission is granted for the change of use of the barn it is felt that the agricultural operations will be unaffected.

Agricultural Land

Higher Flass Farm extends to 20.24 acres and provides the centre of agricultural operations as this is where the cattle are housed, sheep lamb and crops are stored. There are three blocks of rented land all rented on short term agreements comprising of:

1. Land at Green Woods, near Slaidburn 62.04 acres.
2. Land at Chatburn owned by Lord Clitheroe and extends to 17.65 acres.
3. Land at Saddlers near Newchurch owned by a relative of Mrs Capstick extending to 10.57 acres.

I was advised that the rented land has been held by Mrs Capstick for many years as such, it is felt unlikely that the current land situation will change.

Agricultural Enterprise

Essentially, the agricultural operations undertaken comprise of beef and sheep farming the details of which are as follows:

- a) a suckler herd of 15 British Blue beef cattle and a British Blue bred bull. The farm policy has been until recently to sell the progeny at two years of age, this has changed to the extent that the female calves will be retained for the time being as these are intended to be used to increase the number of suckler cattle which it is intended to increase by a further eight head;

- b) (i) a ewe breeding flock of 140 of mixed commercial breed ewes selling the progeny at finished weight;
- (ii) rearing of 40 gimmer hogs to over winter and sell as gimmer shearlings at approximately 15-18 months of age.

I was advised that it is anticipated that as a consequence of the increase in the suckler herd this ewe flock will have to be reduced based upon the current farmland area. In the applicant's opinion it is felt that the ewe flock will be reduced by 20 head.

Agricultural Buildings

There are three buildings consisting of two steel portal frame buildings and the application building. Brief details of each of these are as follows:-

1. A steel portal frame building measuring 21.5m x 9.5m providing straw bedded pens either side of an internal feed passage. One bay of the building provides storage of straw bales. This building has been erected for approximately 20 years and it is the applicant's intention to adapt the cattle housing to provide cubicle beds although this will depend upon whether the applicants are granted planning permission to extend the building south-westwards which will provide and under cover midden and undercover feed area.
2. A steel portal frame building 21.5m x 6m which adjoins the west elevation of the above building. The framework and exterior cladding has recently been completed leaving internal penning to be undertaken. This building will provide cattle housing and undercover feed area together with some storage.
3. Application building store built with flag roof. This is of traditional design and includes shippon housing and loft floor storage. There are also two lean-tos each have been used for cattle housing also. The applicants feel that the erection of the new building and the proposed works to the other agricultural building (1 above) will render this building surplus to the agricultural requirements of the unit.

Assessment

The basis of submission of this application is to meet the requirements of an agricultural need. The location of the application site is Open Countryside as such, I feel Local Plan policies G5 and H2 are relevant to the determination of this application. Under both policies reference is made to the requirement that the dwelling is essential for the purposes of agriculture.

I note that the agricultural appraisal undertaken in support of the application refers to the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) together with PPS 7 as the basis for assessment of the agricultural need and then appraises the agricultural circumstances of the applicant's farming operations against the five criteria referred to in paragraph 3 of Annex A.

The writer feels there is a functional need for someone to reside on the unit and justifies this opinion by referring to a range of tasks which the farming operations require. In addition, the emergency situations are referred to during lambing and calving periods together with the risks of theft owing to not living on the premises. I was advised by the applicant in the course of my discussion of an incident when a calf was lost owing to a problematic calving which was felt could have been avoided if there had been someone on site. It is evident though that the calving and lambing period relates just to a short period of time in the year and the numbers of livestock involved would not justify someone to be resident on site i.e. on a full time basis even for this short duration. I feel outside of this time the incidences of emergencies occurring on the application site would be rare.

The writer also considers the scale and nature of the agricultural enterprise relates to a full- time worker requirement and applies the Standard Data Analysis methodology to determine this. It is evident though in practice that the operations do not provide a full – time worker requirement as the applicants conduct these operations around their employment off the unit.

I have been provided with annual trading accounts over the last 3 years for the agricultural operations undertaken between Mrs Capstick and the applicants. The combined accounts demonstrate that the enterprise has operated at a profit over this time but the level of profit in my opinion would not fund the cost of the provision of the dwelling and also the profit is not sufficient to consider this to be a viable enterprise which is capable of sustaining a livelihood. I would advise that where an enterprise cannot meet these two requirements that the profit achieved is not sufficient to satisfy a financial justification.

Summery

I am of the opinion that the circumstances of this application do not meet the essential requirements of the Local and National Plan Policies.

I would be obliged to receive a copy of your Decision Notice in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David M. Baines". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Estates Surveyor
On behalf of the Assistant Director of Property