

Agricultural Statement

Mr & Mrs J Marsden

Higher Flass Farm, Bolton by Bowland

Planning Application for an
Agricultural Worker's Dwelling to serve
Higher Flass Farm, Bolton by Bowland

DAVID HILL

The New Ship • Mill Bridge
Skipton • BD23 1NJ

T: 01756 795621

F: 01756 795622

email: info@david-hill.co.uk

www.david-hill.co.uk

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report appraises the need for an agricultural worker's dwelling to serve Higher Flass Farm, Bolton by Bowland.
- 1.2 This report is based on observations made and information obtained from the applicants during an inspection of the holding on 3 April 2013.

2 Background

- 2.1 Higher Flass Farm has been owned by the applicant's family for the last ninety years. The applicants run a beef herd and sheep flock on the holding. Over the years the applicants have made significant investment in the farm, including constructing new agricultural buildings and increasing livestock numbers, which demonstrates their commitment to farming at Higher Flass Farm now and in the future.
- 2.2 The original farmhouse at Higher Flass Farm was sold over sixty years ago. Since then there has been no onsite living accommodation.
- 2.3 The beef and sheep enterprises on the holding have expanded to the stage where in order for the animals to be properly cared for, and before any further growth can take place, it is necessary that a dwelling accommodating a key worker is located near to the farm buildings. The proposal is to convert the traditional barn which is adjacent to the farm buildings to provide accommodation for an agricultural worker.

3 The Farmland

- 3.1 The farm extends to approximately 110 acres (45 hectares), of which 20 acres (8 hectares) is owned and the rest is rented. The main farm holding is at Higher Flass Farm, with additional blocks of land near Slaidburn, Chatburn and Newchurch in Pendle. This is detailed fully in the table below. Plans of the land are included in Appendix A.

Land	Ownership	Area (acres)
Higher Flass Farm, Bolton by Bowland	Owned	20.24
Land at Greenwoods, near Slaidburn	Rented	62.04
Land at Chatburn	Rented	17.65
Land at Saddlers, near Newchurch	Rented	10.57
TOTAL		110.50

- 3.2 Higher Flass Farm has been owned by the applicants and the applicant's family before them for the last ninety years.
- 3.3 The land at Greenwoods near Slaidburn and the land at Chatburn have been rented by the applicants on annual grazing licences for the last ten years, and were rented by the applicant's family before then. The land at Saddlers, near Newchurch is owned by the applicant's family and has been rented from them for the last 15 years. This demonstrates that, although part of the farm holding is rented, that it has been farmed by the applicants for a relatively long time and there is nothing to suggest that they will not continue to do so.
- 3.4 The applicants are always looking to rent or purchase additional land in the locality to increase size of the farm holding, and regularly put in tenders for farmland.

- 3.5 The applicants claim the Single Payment Scheme on the entire farm, except the land at Greenwoods. The land at Higher Flass Farm is included within an Entry Level Stewardship environmental agreement.
- 3.6 The land is all grassland ideal for the beef and sheep enterprises. Around 18 acres is cut once for silage, which is stored as large round bales for winter fodder for the cattle. Around 10 acres of grassland at Higher Flass Farm is conserved to produce hay for the sheep flock.

4 The Farming System

- 4.1 At the date of inspection the holding was stocked with the beef herd of 15 suckler cows plus bull and calves. There was also the sheep flock of 140 breeding ewes plus hoggs, rams and lambs.

4.2 Sheep Flock

The sheep flock has expanded over recent years and now consists of 140 Texel cross and Mule breeding ewes. These are put to various continental breed rams, including the Texel, Charolais and Beltex, to produce crossed offspring. Lambing takes place indoors from the end of March. The lambs are reared on the farm and fattened and sold at around 40Kg liveweight through Gisburn and Bentham auction markets. The applicants breed their own flock replacements and so there were also 40 hoggs on the holding at the time of inspection.



Photograph One: Ewes at Higher Flass

4.3 Beef Herd

The beef herd consists of 15 British Blue and British Blue cross beef suckler cows. The cows are put to the British Blue stock bull. Calving takes place throughout March and April. The calves are finished on the farm to around 24 months of age and are then sold through Gisburn auction market.

Most of the female calves are retained as the applicants are in the process of increasing the herd to 25 cows. Breeding their own stock is a long process, but operating such a 'closed' herd system potentially avoids bringing in disease. However, it is difficult to increase numbers to the farm's full capacity without being based onsite (discussed in more detail in Section 8).



Photograph Two: Cow and calf at Higher Flass

5 The Farm Buildings

5.1 The applicants have erected modern farm buildings at Higher Flass Farm as follows:

- 75' x 33' cattle building constructed 22 years ago from concrete block, timber boarding and fibre cement sheets comprising several loose pens with a central feeding passage for housing the cattle overwinter, calving pens and covered straw storage.
- 75' x 20' youngstock building constructed this year from concrete panel, steel sheets and fibre cement sheets to the roof, currently laid out in large straw bedded pens and several smaller individual pens for lambing time, and then will be used for rearing and finishing calves and lambs during the rest of the year.

5.2 There is also a traditional stone barn at Higher Flass, shown in photograph three below, which has cow stalls, hay storage and general storage for machinery, equipment and tools. There are no buildings on any of the rented land.



Photograph Three: Traditional barn at Higher Flass

6 Labour Requirement

- 6.1 Based on the current stocking levels there is a labour requirement of 0.95 labour units per year at Higher Flass Farm. Appendix B provides details of this Standard Labour Requirement calculation. The applicants intend to increase the stock numbers to maximise the full potential of the holding, but cannot safely do so until there is onsite accommodation in order to care for the livestock. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.
- 6.2 The farm is run by the applicants, Mr and Mrs Marsden, and Mrs Marsden's mother and the applicant's sons also help out.
- 6.3 All farming operations are carried out by the on-farm labour, including all calving, lambing, clipping, dipping, walling and hedging. Contractors are only used to bale the silage crop. Mrs Marsden completes all the paperwork for the farm.

7 Dwellings

- 7.1 There is currently no dwelling serving the farm. The original farmhouse at Higher Flass Farm was sold over sixty years ago when funds had to be raised in order to pay out a step-parent. When this house has become available for sale the applicants have tried to purchase it, but it last sold to a developer for over £380,000, which in the applicant's opinion was more than it was worth and was too expensive for them to match.
- 7.2 Since then the house has been on the market in February 2012 at a guide price of £499,950, and has recently come back onto the market at a guide price of £495,000. The applicants are unable to raise this level of funds and conversion of the barn is a more viable option.
- 7.3 The applicants have also looked to purchase houses in the locality, but they have all been very expensive and this wouldn't solve the issue of needing to be based onsite to care for the livestock.
- 7.4 The applicants have to travel to the farm every day from their home in Clitheroe, 9 ½ miles away. During calving and lambing time this can be several times throughout the day and night, and at all other times is at least twice a day. The applicants have previously used a caravan as temporary accommodation. Mr Marsden is currently resorting to sleeping in his car at the farm so that he can be onsite to care for the animals.
- 7.5 The farm has now reached the stage where it is no longer acceptable to have no workers living onsite, in terms of providing 24-hour care for the livestock, to deal with emergencies quickly and to ensure security of the livestock and machinery. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.

8 Assessment of Need

- 8.1 This application is analysed in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which came into force on 27 March 2012. The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should promote sustainable development in rural areas but *“avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside”* (paragraph 55).
- 8.2 The NPPF gives no detail as to how this “essential need” should be assessed, and so we have analysed the proposal in relation to Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, which sets out detailed criteria that such an application must meet in order to satisfy an essential functional need. Although this guidance was superseded on 27 March 2012, in the absence of any subsequent guidance it is still deemed relevant.
- 8.3 Annex A of PPS7 sets out five tests that must be satisfied in order for an application to be approved. There is emphasis on *existing* activities on the unit and so this report is based solely on the stocking rate as at April 2013. We would comment on the five tests set out in the Annex as follows:

8.3.1 *There is a clearly established existing functional need*

The Annex defines this as the need to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for a worker to be available at most times and it goes on to give an example of animals requiring essential care at short notice. The proposal for an agricultural worker’s dwelling at Higher Flass Farm fulfills a functional need for the following reasons:

- The proposed dwelling will be a conversion of the barn which is located adjacent to the modern farm buildings used for calving and lambing and accommodating livestock throughout the year;
- The worker in the house will be able to give 24 hour supervision to the livestock, which is essential for their welfare and to deal with emergencies;
- A constant presence will improve the security of the livestock and agricultural machinery and equipment.

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007 No. 2078) states in Schedule 1 Paragraph 1 that *"animals must be cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence"*.

A 'sufficient number of staff' is interpreted as being at least one worker to carry out tasks effectively and safely and avoid causing distress to the animals and injury to the workers themselves.

The main duties of the worker in this location would include:

- Feeding the animals and ensuring they have clean water at all times;
- Cleaning pens out and replacing with clean bedding when housed;
- Formulating diets for the animals dependant on the season;
- Running the bull with the cows;
- Selection and grouping of ewes to run with the rams;
- Periodic rudding of the rams;
- Observing and assisting problematic calvings and lambings;
- Hand-rearing orphan calves and lambs;

- Catching and treating ill animals;
- Moving animals between fields and buildings;
- Ear-tagging and marking animals for identification;
- Foot-trimming and administering medicines such as doses;
- Assisting the vet;
- Clipping, dipping and marking of sheep;
- Weaning the offspring and sorting animals into age groups;
- Regular weighing, grading and assessment of youngstock;
- Loading animals into trailers for transportation to market;
- Unloading new purchases, bulk feed, fodder, bedding and medicines;
- Checking of stock and observation for any potential problems;
- Field operations such as muck and fertiliser spreading, spraying rolling and harrowing, mowing and hay-making;
- Checking and repairing boundaries where required, including walling, hedging and fencing;
- Maintaining buildings, equipment and machinery.

It is important to be able to observe and inspect the cows and calves, sheep and lambs at regular and frequent intervals to ensure that they receive proper care and attention. Pregnant cows and ewes require regular observation during calving and lambing time. Quite often the cow or ewe will require assistance to ensure that the calf or lamb survives and to reduce any unnecessary suffering to the mother.

It is very important for the worker to be onsite at most times to assist in emergencies. Such emergencies may include problematic calvings and lambings described above, but also rescuing escaped, trapped or injured animals which can occur at any time of year. The farmyard and buildings are located adjacent to the Settle Road and escaped animals could be potentially very dangerous.

As the applicant's do not live onsite inevitably animals die because the applicants cannot always be there to give essential care at short notice or to deal with emergencies. The applicants are desperate that this situation does not continue.

The buildings at Higher Flass Farm are easily accessible from the Settle Road and the applicants are concerned that without an onsite presence that it will become susceptible to thieves. Indeed, the applicants purposefully keep old machinery and equipment because they know that if they purchased anything new that it would be stolen within a couple of days. Livestock values have rapidly increased over the past couple of years and incidents involving stolen ewes and lambs are now quite common. A dwelling located at Higher Flass Farm would help secure the farm and deter thieves.

The applicant's currently have to travel to the farm from their home several times throughout the day and night to check and care for the livestock. This becomes particularly difficult in poor weather and was a grave concern during the last few months when the applicants struggled to get to the farm to care for the livestock due to the snow. Issues with sheep accommodated outdoors caused by poor weather are compounded when the applicants cannot get to the farm to deal with problems and get the stock into shelter. The numbers of journeys would be much reduced and any problems with the livestock could be dealt with quicker before causing suffering to the animals if the applicant's lived onsite.

8.3.2 *The need relates to a full-time worker*

The Standard Labour Requirement calculation in Appendix B demonstrates that the farm at the current stocking level generates labour

for 0.95 workers. Generally in order to satisfy a functional need the labour requirement will be over 1.0 workers, however in this case it would be unreasonable to expect the applicant's to expand any further in order to reach the level of 1.0 workers before onsite accommodation is provided. The current arrangement already presents welfare issues and the applicants are not prepared to increase the stock numbers any further until they can be based onsite to care for the animals.

8.3.3 The unit and agricultural activity have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them and have a clear prospect of remaining so

The applicants have farmed at Higher Flass Farm in their own right for the last ten years. By having two main enterprises Higher Flass Farm is not wholly reliant upon either the beef or lamb market, which spreads potential risk.

8.3.4 The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned

The farm has reached the level that many of the criteria detailed in 8.3.1, such as welfare regulations and security, cannot be adequately met by the workers living nearby, be that in Clitheroe or any neighbouring village to Higher Flass Farm. It is necessary that at least one worker is based on site. Section 7.1 discusses this in more detail.

8.3.5 Other planning requirements

The location of the proposed dwelling is ideal because it is adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings, which facilitates maximum care and

assistance for the animals as described in 8.3.1. The location within the farmyard also provides a useful management base for the farm.

The applicant's currently have to travel to the farm from Clitheroe several times throughout the day and night to check and care for the livestock. This is not sustainable in the long term. By providing onsite accommodation the number of journeys to and from the farm would be significantly reduced.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The applicants have demonstrated their commitment to farming in this area and have built up a beef herd and sheep flock and invested in the holding, including constructing new agricultural buildings.
- 9.2 The appraisal demonstrates that the farm has reached the level where onsite accommodation for an agricultural worker is required in order to provide essential care at short notice and deal with emergencies. The standard labour requirement shows that the labour generated by the farm is 0.95 workers, and it would be unreasonable to expect the applicants to increase livestock numbers any further until the necessary onsite accommodation is provided.
- 9.3 This report provides analysis in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework and demonstrates that there is a genuine need for dwelling to serve the holding.

10 Disclaimer

- 10.1 This report has been prepared for the applicants, Mr and Mrs Marsden, for the purposes of supporting a planning application to the Local Planning Authority for an agricultural worker's dwelling. Details on the farming system have been supplied by Mr and Mrs Marsden.

Date.....26 April 2013

Signed.....

Caroline Sunter BSc (Hons) MRICS

Rural Chartered Surveyor

David Hill

The New Ship

Mill Bridge

Skipton

North Yorkshire

BD23 1NJ

Appendix A Plans of the land

Owned land is shown edged in red and rented land is shown edged in blue.

Land	Ownership	Area (acres)
Higher Flass Farm, Bolton by Bowland	Owned	20.24
Land at Greenwoods, near Slaidburn	Rented	62.04
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Land at Saddlers, near Newchurch	Rented	10.57
TOTAL		110.50

Appendix B Labour Calculation

The following is calculated using data from The Agricultural Budgeting & Costing Book 75th edition November 2012. Figures reflect the average time spent per animal or hectare per year.

LIVESTOCK

Beef Herd

15 suckler cows, inc calves at foot	26 hrs/hd	390	
1 stock bull	26 hrs/hd	26	
30 calves finished to 24 months	12 hrs/hd	360	
			776 hrs

Sheep Flock

140 breeding ewes	5.2 hrs/hd	728	
4 rams	5.2 hrs/hd	21	
40 hoggs	2.9 hrs/hd	116	
			865 hrs
			1641 hrs

LAND

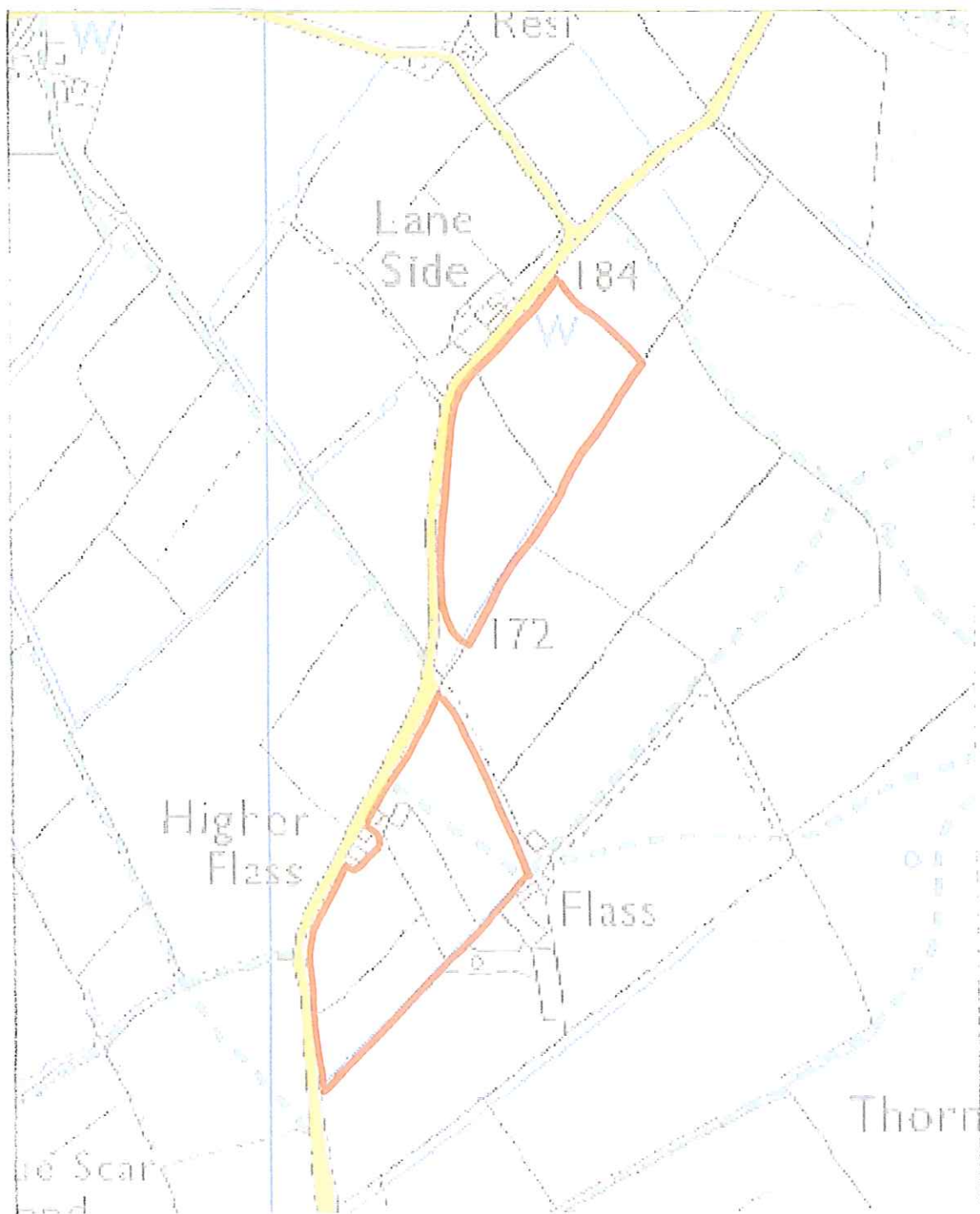
7.28 ha meadow (1 cut big bale silage)	6 hrs/ha	44	
4.05 ha meadow (1 cut hay)	6 hrs/ha	24	
33.39 ha pasture	3.1 hrs/ha	103	
			171 hrs

Enterprises Total	1812 hrs
15% addition for maintenance and management	272 hrs

Total Labour Requirement **2084 hrs**

1 Labour Unit = 2200 Man Hours

Total Labour Units **0.95**



SCALE.....

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Appendix A

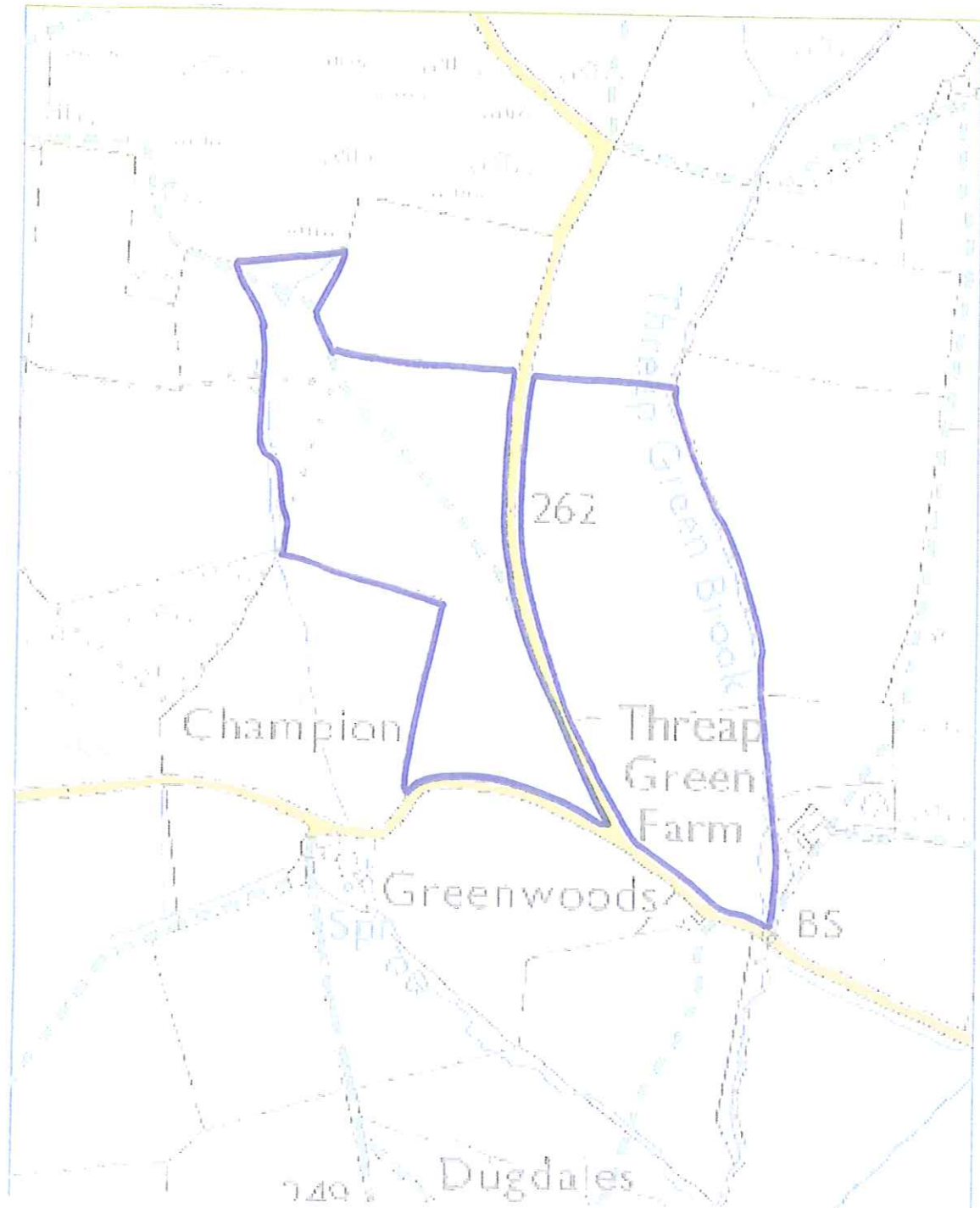
Higher Flass Farm

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The New Ship • Mill Bridge
Skipton • North Yorkshire • BD23 1NJ

T:01756 795621 F:01756 795622
@info@david-hill.co.uk www.david-hill.co.uk

DAVID HILL
PROPERTY CONSULTANTS



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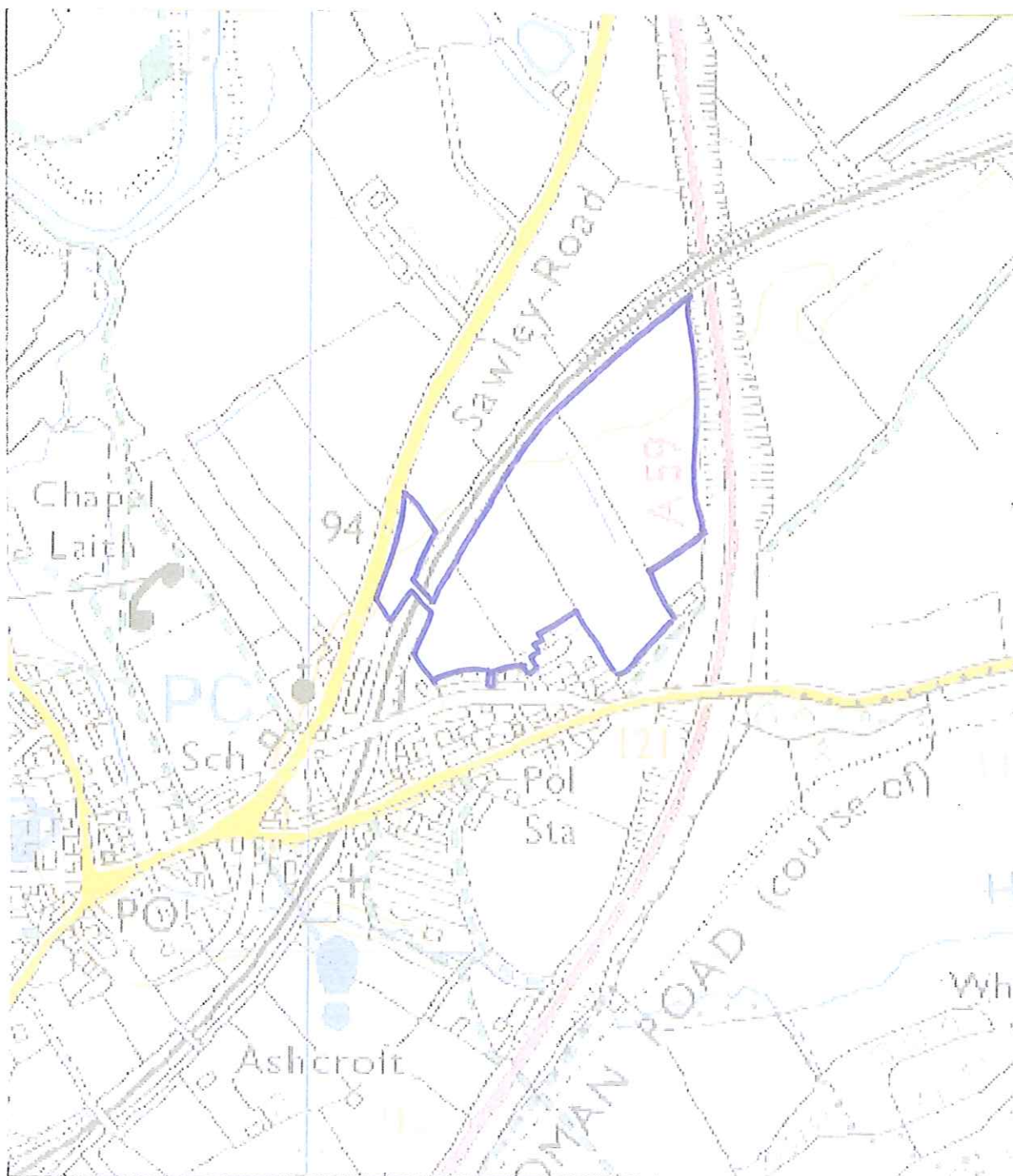
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Land at Greenwoods Near Slaidburn

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The New Ship • Mill Bridge
Skipton • North Yorkshire • BD23 1NJ
T 01756 795621 F 01756 795622
@ info@david-hill.co.uk www.david-hill.co.uk

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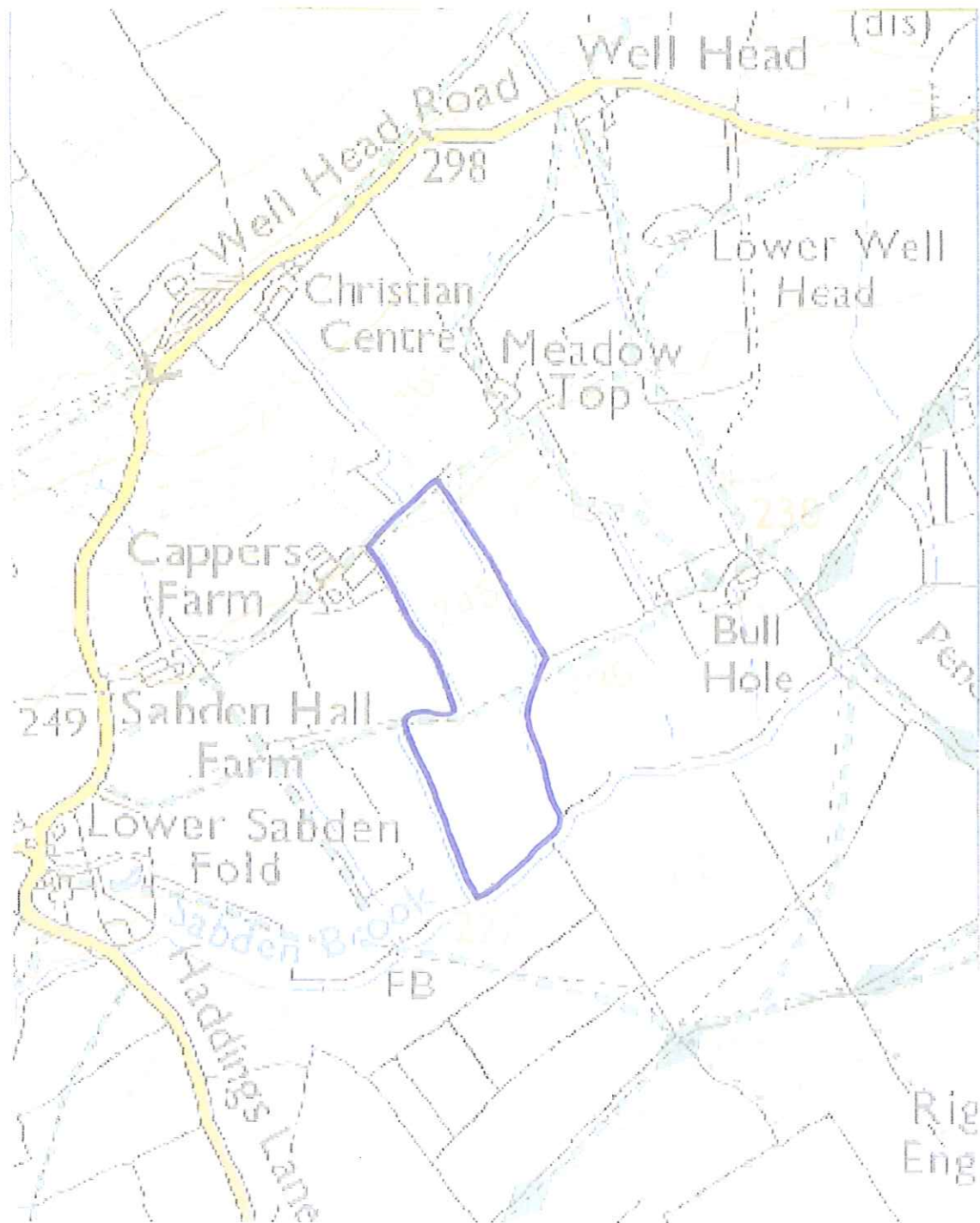
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Land at Chatburn

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The New Ship • Mill Bridge
Skipton • North Yorkshire • BD23 1NJ
T:01756 795621 F:01756 795622
@info@david-hill.co.uk www.david-hill.co.uk

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Land at Saddlers near
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T 01756 795621 F 01756 795622
@ info@david-hill.co.uk www.david-hill.co.uk

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