

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

SITE: LOWER MONUBENT FARM, HELLIFIELD ROAD, BOLTON BY BOWLAND

PROPOSAL: REMOVAL OF CONDITION 1 ON PLANNING APPROVAL 3/2009/0352 TO ALLOW THE DWELLING TO BE OCCUPIED AS A PERMANENT AGRICULTURAL WORKERS DWELLING AND RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGE

1.1 Lower Monubent Farm is located to the north of Bolton by Bowland and accordingly within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The property is accessed via a farm track from Hellifield Road which passes approximately one mile to the east. Lower Monubent Farm was purchased by Mr and Mrs Berry in 2005 and comprised Lower Monubent Farm Cottage and, some 100m to the south of the dwelling, a portal frame agricultural building and a slurry store, together with approximately 33 acres of land. The initial cottage was sold off due to financial pressure created by incurring an unrecoverable loss, a point acknowledged previously reviewed and accepted both by the authority and the Planning Inspectorate in early 2010. Subsequently living accommodation was created within a relatively small area of a portal frame building on site. Shortly after completing the new living accommodation a further 100 acres became available to my clients to increase the size of the holding. Planning consent was sought for the retention of the living accommodation under reference 3/2009/0352 for a temporary period of 3 years. This was subsequently refused by Ribbles Valley Borough Council on 10th September 2009 and was also the subject of an Enforcement Notice, both matters being co-joined in an appeal whereby the Enforcement Notice was quashed and planning consent was granted subject to two conditions as set out below:

1. *The permission hereby granted shall be for a limited period of 3 years from the date of this decision. The residential use shall be discontinued and the building restored to its former condition (or such condition as may have been previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) on or before the end of a three month period after the expiry of this 3 year temporary period.*
 2. *The occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely, or mainly working, or last working, at Lower Monubent Farm in the mixed agricultural, equestrian and agricultural contracting enterprise, or to a person solely or mainly working in the locality in agriculture or forestry, including, as the case may be a widow or widower of such a person, and to any resident dependents.*
- 1.2 It is condition no.1 which it is now sought to effectively remove thereby allowing the dwelling to be occupied as a permanent agricultural workers dwelling.
- 1.3 During the past 3 years then it has been the objective of Mr & Mrs Berry to develop the agricultural enterprise element of the overall holding with a corresponding decrease in the agricultural contracting business whilst maintaining the equestrian elements at the initial levels. The primary agricultural activity now centres around a sheep enterprise which has now expanded to a scale whereby there are now a total of 262 breeding ewes and 5 rams. They are presently in the midst of their lambing season and expect to produce in the region of 390 lambs in the coming weeks. Clearly this has taken a substantial investment to increase stocking levels but the attached accounts demonstrate that notwithstanding this level of investment my clients have still been able to take out a living wage from the business.
- 1.4 There was to be a further strand to the development of the business with the rearing of dairy replacement cattle but this would of necessity required a substantial investment in terms of the provision of new buildings on the holding. Given the substantial investment in increasing sheep stocking levels

then at this point in time it has not been financially possible to make the capital infrastructure investment to construct the new portal frame cattle housing buildings in order to exploit this additional source of income and given the fact that the 2010 appeal decision was for a temporary period it was considered more appropriate to focus in the short term on developing the sheep enterprise to a viable level to adequately demonstrate that the business was being founded on a sound financial basis whereby it would justify the permanent retention of the dwelling on site.

- 1.5 Assuming that the Council are satisfied with the development of the agricultural enterprise and that consent is forthcoming for the removal of this temporary restrictive condition then going forward my clients would seek to make the necessary additional investment in the holding with the development of permanent buildings which could exploit the contract cattle rearing element of their overall business plan. This is a business decision ratified by my client's agricultural business manager who has verbally expressed the view that the bank would be more comfortable regarding advancing further capital monies into the farm once permanent consent was forthcoming for the retention of the onsite living accommodation on the holding. It is accepted that the consents initially obtained for these buildings have since lapsed and it would be the intention to submit applications for their reinstatement on the successful outcome of this particular application.

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