PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING
AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL RELATING TO
THE ERECTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS DWELLING
AT FAR LAKES FARM, WHISTON/FOXT
MR. A. BYATT AND MRS P. HUGHES

CONTENTS

1.0	**INTRODUCTION**
2.0	**NATIONAL & LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**
3.0	**PROPOSED DWELLING**
4.0	**BACKGROUND TO THE FARM BUSINESS**
5.0	**LAND AND BUILDINGS**
6.0	**LABOUR REQUIREMENT**
7.0	**REQUIREMENTS OF THE ENTERPRISE**
8.0	**HEALTH AND SAFETY**
9.0	**ESSENTIAL CARE AT SHORT NOTICE**
10.0	**ANIMAL WELFARE**
11.0	**SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE PROPERTIES**
12.0	**SUMMARY**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- This document has been produced to support a Full Planning Application for the erection of an Agricultural Workers Dwelling at Far Lakes Farm, Whiston/Fox. The applicants are livestock farmers who operate solely from this site.

- Pre-application advice has been sought from the District Council and comments made have been taken into account with the preparation of the scheme and final report.

- The applicants seeks permission to reside on the site to tend to the existing livestock.

- This report clarifies why the farming business justifies the functional need for someone to live at the farm.
- The proposal is considered essential to allow a farm business to expand and remain as a sustainable entity. Furthermore, fulfilling a social role as part of a thriving rural community and by its very nature as a working farm, then it fulfils a key environmental role. Each of these three factors is a key component of any sustainable development.

- As a consequence of the above, it is vital that businesses like this are supported. In order to be able to continue to operate in a sustainable way then it is essential that an agricultural worker lives on site. The proposed development is considered to be commensurate with the functional requirement.

- In addition to addressing the functional and financial tests which are still of some relevance, this report clarifies the additional considerations that were taken into account when preparing the application.

- The proposal has been assessed against relevant national and local planning policies and it is considered to comply with their various requirements. Consequently, it is considered that the application should be supported by the local planning authority.

2.0 NATIONAL & LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- The NPPF was introduced on 27th March 2012 to replace the present many of the previous national planning policy statement and guidance documents. The purpose of planning, as clarified within the Ministerial Foreword to the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In addition to Local and Community plans, the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- The extracts from the NPPF which are relevant to this proposal are detailed below, in addition to the extracts from Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) that were relevant prior to it being replaced.

2.1 Achieving Sustainable Development

- **Paragraph 7** confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. These give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:-
- *"An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy*
- *A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities*
- *An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change…"*.
- In **paragraph 12** The NPPF confirms that proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved. However, at the heart of the NPPF is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development, "***which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-making"*.
- **Paragraph 14** confirms that for **decision-taking** this means:
- "*approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *Where the **development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission** unless:*
- *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as a whole; or* - *Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted".*
- **Paragraph 15** confirms that policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2.2 Core Planning Policies

- There are twelve core land-use principles that underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The principles are that planning should:-
- "*be genuinely plan led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings…;*
- *Not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*
- *Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of the area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth…;*
- *Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;*
- *Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*

- *Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the use of existing resources including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable energy resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);*
- *Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution…;*
- *Encourage the effective use of land by reusing that has been previously developed…;*
- *Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas; recognising some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation…);*
- *Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;*
- *Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport…;*
- *Take account of land support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all…".*

2.3 General Policies

- **Section 3 (paragraph 28)** of the NPPF is titled Supporting a prosperous rural economy. This states that:-
- "*Planning policies should* ***support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development****. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:*
- *Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;*
- *Promote the* ***development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses****…;*
- **Section 7** of the NPPF relates to the requirement for **good design**. In paragraph 56 it confirms that "*the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people*".
- **Section 11** relates to "**Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**". Paragraph 109 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:-
- "*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;…*
- *Minimising the impacts on biodiversity…*
- *Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability…".*
- **Paragraph 112** seeks to ensure the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land, none of which will be taken by this proposal.
- **Paragraph 123 relates to noise** and confirm that planning policies should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development. This proposal will not create any detrimental noise or other impact and is compliant with these requirements.
- **Section 12 of the NPPF is titled "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**". The essence of the various statements within this are that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. In this case there are no heritage assets impacted by the proposal.

2.4 Rural Workers

- **Paragraph 55** of the NPPF is most relevant to this application and it states that:-

"*To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities... Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated development 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…"*
- This paragraph is similar to the provisions of **Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7)** which related to permanent agricultural dwellings and which stated that:-

"*there will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work".*

- **Paragraph 3** of PPS7 dealt with permanent agricultural dwellings and stated that:-

*"New permanent dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on **well-established agricultural units**, providing:*
***(i)** there is a clearly established existing functional need…"*

- In accordance with the current planning framework (NPPF) and also that previously in place (PPS7), this report addresses the issue of the functional requirement for a rural worker to live permanently at the farm and hence why this proposal is compliant with not only planning policy, but also relevant welfare and health and safety considerations.
- **Local Plan Policy R2 - Rural Housing** states that *"A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere."*
- **Policy R2** section 8.8.11 notes that *"It is essential that all applications for planning permission for new dwellings in the countryside are scrutinised thoroughly to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances in accordance with paragraph 55 of the NPPF. In the case of occupational dwellings the proposal will be required to meet functional and financial tests to demonstrate the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside."*
- Reference in this Policy R2 confirms that applications should be considered in accordance with Paragraph 55 of the NPPF. Whilst comments regarding the functional and financial tests are noted, the NPPF should be the basis for any decision making regarding the special circumstances.

3.0 PROPOSED DWELLING

- Planning permission is sought for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling to house key worker for the business, Mr A Byatt

- The proposed siting of the dwelling allows for the applicant to oversee the welfare requirements of the cattle in the adjacent livestock buildings and secondly oversee access drive to his farm, thus reducing the risk of livestock, machinery and the equipment theft.

- The Pre application enquiry asked for consideration of the dwelling located further away from the existing settlements and in the openness of the land, The Planning Officer has queried whether a dwelling could be located in a more suitable location, the point has been considered and the application is for a dwelling that is within close proximity to the existing agricultural buildings and the neighboring residentials dwelling .

- The applicants need to live in close proximity to the livestock on their farms in order to be able to fulfill their duties and take the significant burden of work that is created by the enterprise. More specifically, he needs to meet the requirements to be available to provide the essential care at short notice that is required by the animals on the farm.

- The proposed farm business is of a size and scale to accommodate the applicant's livestock with the opportunity to increase livestock numbers over the following years.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO THE FARM BUSINESS

- Mr Byatt has farmed within Staffordshire Moorlands for nearly 40 years, with his last farm being the Moorlands Farm Park which was one of the first rare breeds farms within Staffordshire. Mrs. P Hughes is likely to be the next generation of the family to farm the land.

- Being a close to the livestock, the health status of the livestock is fundamental to its success and, therefore, it is imperative that care is on hand at all times.

- The increased number of calving cows at Far Lakes has led to an essential need for somebody to be resident on site.

5.0 LAND AND BUILDINGS

- Far Lakes Farm – 22 Acres (Occupied and owned by Mr Byatt)
- Fodder produced on the land is used for the commercial business.
- The land around Far Lakes is used mainly for the grazing of commercial cattle and livestock

6.0 LABOUR REQUIREMENT

- The breakdown of the livestock which are farmed by the family is detailed below. In addition (and based on labor requirements detailed within The Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book 72nd Edition published by Agro Business Consultants) are the total number of man days required per animal:-

STANDARD MAN DAYS CALCULATION -

Current Labour Requirements	**Per Unit**	**Unit**	**Total**
Commercial Cows	2	15	30
Store Cattle	1.75	35	62.5
Weaned Calves	0.81	30	24.3
Young stock	0.81	50	40.5
Field Work	0.5	20	10
Fodder making	3.6	120	432
Maintenance (20%)		113.36	
Total SMD Hours		**712.66**	

7.0 REQUIREMENTS OF THE ENTERPRISE

- Based on the size of the farming operation it is essential that a full time person is present on site at all times for both farms.

- It is particularly important that when cows are calving that they are checked at various periods throughout the night. The applicant's management routine is that cattle are looked at 10pm each night and when animals are close to calving they are checked again at 12pm and 2-3am. Depending on when the cows actually calve, this might mean that they remain with the animal.

- As the applicant currently resides away from the farm, this is creating a significant management burden and results in Mr Goodwin making various trips to and from the farm at unsociable hours.

8.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- As has been clarified above, this enterprise comprises a significant number of breeding animals.

- Whilst handling cattle, it is at such times that additional vigilance is required with animal welfare the primary concern.

- Farming is the most dangerous occupation industry in the UK with a significant number of injuries and deaths caused by cows and other livestock.

9.0 ESSENTIAL CARE AT SHORT NOTICE

- Should the applicant have to live away from the farm then this will consequently result in numerous trips to and from the farm each night. This is considered to be wholly unsatisfactory and certainly not supportive of a sustainable business. Similarly, at times when harvesting is being undertaken and when farmers work excessively long hours, then there will be a requirement for someone to manage the animals whilst the other ensures that crops are appropriately harvested and to to deal with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss. This is also a valid criterion which forms part of the functional requirement for a property at the farm.

- It is also important that someone is on hand at all times to ensure the protection of livestock from theft or injury by intruders. The farm is in an accessible position and it is therefore susceptible to potential thieves. With the increasing value of livestock over recent years cases of theft have risen greatly and it is therefore essential that there is someone at the farm to prevent this.

- Therefore based on the number of animals that are farmed and the nature of the enterprise then it can be clearly seen that there is a functional requirement for a worker to live at the farm for it to be able to operate on a sustainable basis.

10.0 ANIMAL WELFARE

- Maintaining animal welfare standards creates a management burden, particularly during the winter months and periods of inclement weather when the animals are housed. The farm buildings will be designed to provide a natural environment that ensures sufficient warmth, shelter and ventilation as necessary. The Farm Animal Welfare Council defines five ideals, known as the 'Five Freedoms', by which animal welfare should be tested. These five freedoms are as follows, and farm animals should have:- freedom from fear and distress; freedom from fear of pain, injury and disease; freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; and freedom to express normal behaviour.

- Each animal has easy access to both food and water. The cows are housed in the winter months, with bedding regularly replenished by the applicant to ensure the highest standards of hygiene and animal cleanliness. The cattle are kept in loose housing which are emptied once the cattle go out to grass in the spring. The farm yard manure is then cleared and spread onto the land farmed by the applicants, and this spreading is in accordance with the environmental cross-compliance regulations which the applicants are bound to comply with in order to be eligible for the Single Farm Payment subsidy scheme.

- Like most livestock farmers, the applicant has to ensure that sufficient space is available to cater for any animal movement restrictions. The new guidance based particularly around Tuberculosis testing, imposes certain time-periods and restrictions on animal movements on or off the farm.

- Letters from the applicants veterinary surgeon and the NFU have been included.

11.0 SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION

- Following a review, there are considered to be no suitable alternative properties in the locality which satisfy the requirement that this farm has for a permanent dwelling. The applicant has sought to identify alternative properties but there are none available meeting his requirements.

Alternative Properties Considered

- Whilst the issue of affordability is a key issue when determining the potential suitability of a property for an agricultural worker, of equal importance is the location of the property and whether it enables the applicant to provide essential care at short notice that is required. On this basis, a review of properties within a 1/2 miles of the farm has been undertaken as this is considered to be the maximum that could be reasonably expected for anyone to travel several times per day and night.

- Using the search facility on the Rightmove website (www.rightmove.co.uk), then a search of properties has been undertaken. There are currently no properties for sale which are considered suitable for a farm manager within a 1/2 mile radius of the farm.

12.0 SUMMARY

- The proposal seeks to achieve planning permission for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling at Far lakes Farm. The circumstances which have led an essential need for the dwelling are outlined above.

- Having reviewed all relevant factors, it is essential that there is a requirement for a permanent agricultural workers dwelling at the farm in order to appropriately manage the livestock and ensure that the animals have the care that they require.

- Full consideration has been given to the functional requirement for the dwelling and the principle that there is a requirement accommodation on the farm due to the size and nature of the enterprises.

- At a time when both the number of properties available in rural areas and investment in agriculture is extremely low, and more and more farmers are leaving the industry, it considered that this application should be viewed positively. Small scale, essential residential and agricultural development such as this which helps preserve an existing farming enterprise is considered to be the least obtrusive solution to ensure that the farm can continue to operate on a sustainable basis.

Moorland Veterinary Centre

St Luke's House, Vicarage Road, Leek, Staffs ST13 6AS
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Moorland Veterinary Centre

Re: A. Byatt & P. Hughes,
10A Junction Road,
Leek,
Staffs,
ST13 5QP.

Mon 14th August 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is a letter to confirm that we/I act as veterinary surgeons for the above mentioned clients and have done so for a number of years.

They currently keep an increasing herd of cattle, flock of sheep and three horses at Far Lakes, Park Lane, Foxt, S-O-T, Staffs and so, from an animal welfare point of view it is a necessity that a residential property be built at this site in order that the above mentioned clients can deal with any emergencies that may arise such as bloat in cattle, difficult lambings/caesarians in sheep and colic in horses etc to name a few. In view of the rural location of this land and often inclement weather at lambing time it is not always possible to get to this site from Leek.

I hope therefore, that you give the utmost consideration to our clients wish to build a residential property at the land at Far Lakes.

Yours faithfully

I S Elkington

I.S. ELKINGTON,

Mr A R Byatt
104 Junction Road
Leek
STAFFS
ST13 5QP

20 July 2017

To whom it may concern,

Planning Application for Dwelling at Lakes Farm, ST10 2NG

Mr A R Byatt is a member of the National Farmers Union (NFU) and has made me aware of the above planning application being submitted.

On a farm of Mr Byatt's size, which now stretches to just under 30 acres, with around 25 cattle and 10 breeding sheep, with plans to expand numbers to 100 and 30 respectively, it is now imperative that farm labour is to hand at all times of day and night due to ever increasing regulation and the dangers in the workplace. In 2010 there were 8.2 fatalities per 100,000 agricultural workers, with the National average for all industries being 0.5, meaning that farmers are 16 times more likely to die at work than any other profession. One person has died in an agricultural accident almost every week for the last 10 years, with major injuries up 40% from 2007-2010. The most common factor in these alarming statistics is the "Lone worker" syndrome, where people are working by themselves, with no one to provide assistance where necessary, or to reduce the risk of things going wrong. If Mr Byatt is living on the property his partner or a family member can either help him with difficult, dangerous jobs, such as handling cattle, or at least keep an eye out for him and make sure he is alright.

Mr Byatt has farmed thjs land for 8 many years now and does not wish to do this anywhere else, with no affordable housing available locally and any severe snow storms in winter making it impossible for Mr Byatt to be able to get to the farm with him currently residing in Leek, as the lanes can be treacherous and impassable for many days on the way to the farm. He had even been willing to try and purchase a neighbouring house when the occupant recently passed away, but the property will not be coming onto the market as a family member of the deceased is moving in. Therefore he would like to build a house for himself on his own land where he can look after his animals properly.

As he rears calves from 2 and 3 weeks of age they need to be constantly watched in their early life when they are at their most susceptible to disease and illness. It has proved more and more difficult to do this properly over the years with him living at his current address in Leek. Animal welfare is more than ever a concern and quite rightly so, which means more time needs to be spent with his livestock.

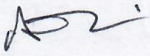
Mr Byatt, like all other farm businesses in this country, is heavily regulated by Cross Compliance rules for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and the code of Good Agricultural Practice, which means that they have to work long hours to comply with these standards and must be "at work" even when they are at home, with substantial amounts of paperwork to keep up to date, so it would benefit him greatly to be living there, as virtually every day of the year there are some cattle in the sheds that need looking after.

Another benefit of living on the farm is for security reasons, as rural crime is on the increase, with the 2016 NFU Mutual rural crime report showing that it costs the economy £42.5 million and has increased 15% in 12 months.

I hope that this planning application will be considered on its true merits, with this viable farming business being allowed to flourish and that Mr Byatt will be permitted to build a house for him and his family on the farm and for future generations who want to carry on the business and do the job as best they can.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Mr A M Dickinson
NFU Group Secretary.

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