

# **PLANNING STATEMENT**

**FAR LAKES FARM  
WHISTON**

**DECEMBER 2022**

**Site Address:**

Far Lakes Farm, Shaw Wall Lane, Whiston, Staffordshire, ST10 2HT

**Applicant:**

Mr A Byatt & Mrs P Hughes

**Proposal:**

Erection of Agricultural Workers Dwelling

**Planning Statement:**

**Date Issued:** 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Job Reference:** RDP/2022/139

**Report Prepared By:**

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr A Byatt & Mrs P Hughes to seek full planning permission for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling on land at Far Lake Farm, Shaw Wall Lane, Whiston.
- 1.2 The application follows on from the grant of consent for a temporary agricultural worker dwelling under application SMD/2018/0427 which has recently expired. The approved scheme comprised of a single storey timber structure located to the northwest of an existing agricultural buildings on the site.
- 1.3 In granting consent for application SMD/2018/0427 the Local Authority imposed a condition which requires the removal of the timber cabin by 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The stated reason for the imposition of said condition is as follows:

*“Permission is granted on a temporary basis only to establish whether there is a functional need for permanent on site residential accommodation at this agricultural holding”*

- 1.4 This current application seeks consent for a permanent agricultural workers’ dwelling on the site, located to the west of the existing cluster of agricultural buildings. An area of private amenity space will be created to the west of the dwelling with parking for three vehicles to its front / east. The dwelling will have a gross internal floor area of 123 square metres and its accommodation will comprise of an open plan lounge / kitchen / diner, utility, hallway, bathroom and three bedrooms. The dwelling is to be constructed from stone walls with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof above.

## **2 Site & Surroundings**

- 2.1 The application site is located within the rural area and forms part of an established agricultural holding located on the western side of Shaw Wall Lane, approximately 800 metres northeast of the village of Foxt. The applicant's land holding extends to some 75 acres.
- 2.2 To the southeast / east of the proposed dwelling lie three agricultural buildings. The two largest of those buildings are used for calf rearing whilst the smaller building is used as a fodder store. On the northern side of Shaw Wall Lane, works are ongoing to construct a lambing building as approved under application SMD/2020/0713. That building is also within the applicant's ownership.
- 2.3 Open fields extend to the west, southwest and southeast of the site interspersed by boundary hedgerows and trees. Beyond the south-eastern / eastern boundary of the site lies a detached dwellinghouse known as Newfields Cottage. Public Footpath Ipstones 51 runs in between the two. A further public footpath (Ipstones 50) runs in a westerly direction across the applicant's land from the vehicular access to the site. Neither footpath will be affected by the siting of the proposed dwelling.

### **3 Planning Policy**

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are of relevance to determination of the application.

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- *a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities*
- *quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers*
- *easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community*
- *increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce*

- *a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment*
- *development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings*
- *development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations*
- *support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.*

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved through a number of actions including:

- *Restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with Policy H1*
- *Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape;*

3.4 Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that (amongst other provisions):

- *new housing development should provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenure including a proportion of affordable housing as set out in Policy H3, and where appropriate housing for special groups, to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future population having regard to the Area Strategies*
- *All development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision.*
- *All new dwellings should aim to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation by seeking to achieve adequate internal space for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space standard and delivered to meet accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis subject to considerations such as viability and design.*
- *All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings.*
- *In the other rural areas only the following forms of housing development will be permitted*

- a) *Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H3*
- b) *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.*
- c) *Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.*
- d) *The conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.*
- e) *Proposals to redevelop previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.*
- f) *The subdivision of an existing residential dwelling provided it is not in an isolated location.*

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst other requirements):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area*
- *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance*
- *protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution*

3.6 Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to ‘Landscape and Settlement Setting’ and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. *Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence*
2. *Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence*
3. *Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds*

4. *Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape*
5. *Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.*

## **4 Other Material Considerations**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of the delivery of rural housing, supporting the rural economy and securing high quality design. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

### **Staffordshire Moorlands Design SPD (2018)**

- 4.2 This document sets out guidance aimed at securing good quality design and confirms that the architectural style of new development should be guided through an assessment and understanding of the character and context of the area. The content of the SPD has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the application.

## 5 Planning Assessment

### Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application site is located within the rural area wherein policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan make provision for the erection of new dwellings for agricultural workers where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and the need cannot be met elsewhere.
- 5.2 This application follows on from a previous grant of consent for a temporary agricultural workers' dwelling on the site (SMD/2018/0427). The Local Authority's delegated report accompanying that application commented that:

*"In support of this application the applicant has submitted an Agricultural Appraisal. This seeks to justify the proposal and focuses on the need to provide an on site presence to oversee the welfare requirements of the cattle and secondly, to oversee the access drive to the farm, to reduce the risk of livestock, machinery and equipment theft. The applicant is proposing to expand his business with increased suckler cows to 50 animals, supported by 25 replacements, and the store cattle increased to 60 animals and the ewe flock increased to 40. The proposed temporary worker's accommodation will therefore support an intention to expand the scale of the livestock activity."*

- 5.3 The Local Authority went on to conclude that:

*"the Council's Consultant concludes that the applicant is in a position to develop his enterprise to a scale and nature which could meet the functional need for a worker. If the approved*

*buildings were not implemented, previous concerns about the ability to develop the enterprise to a sustainable level would remain. A temporary permission would therefore allow the Council to monitor the delivery of the intended enterprise and, at the end of the period, to test the functional requirements of the enterprise and its economic sustainability”.*

- 5.4 This current application is accompanied by an updated Agricultural Appraisal which serves to confirm that the applicant’s business has continued to grow in a sustainable manner. The applicant now has a total land holding of 75 acres (increased from the 22 acres held at the time of the previous application) of which 34 acres are owned, and the remainder rented.
- 5.5 The Agricultural Appraisal furthermore confirms that the farm business currently farms 130 rearing calves per year. The calves are reared until 6 months upon which a proportion are retained by the farm as store cattle and bulls, the remainder being sold on. More calves are then bought in to be reared, with the business caring for over 600 head of stock each year.
- 5.6 Since the previous application for the temporary agricultural workers’ dwelling was approved the applicant has also secured consent for a fodder storage and lambing building on land to the north of the site on the opposite side of Shaw Wall Lane (SMD/2020/0713) which is currently under construction. This building will support the applicant in the re-introduction breeding ewes to the farm which will total 130 in number.
- 5.7 The Agricultural Appraisal incorporates a ‘Standard Man Days Calculation’ to demonstrate that the business generates a need for a full time worker. The calculation concludes that the existing business has an established labour

demand of 1.29 workers, and once the lamb enterprise is established in 2023 the labour demand will increase to 1.98 workers.

- 5.8 The Agricultural Appraisal goes on to demonstrate that there is an essential need for an agricultural worker to reside on the site for the purposes of feeding the stock and monitoring them for ailments and disease, and to provide support during lambing. The presence of an on-site worker is also essential for deterring rural crime, such as the theft of equipment.
- 5.9 The Agricultural Appraisal has also given consideration to matters of financial viability. The accounts for the business do not show large levels of profit for the last few years, but that is to be expected given the expenditure outlaid on the construction of new buildings, procurement of additional land, and the increase in the number of animals. The appraisal goes on to set out expected profit margins for the forthcoming years based on expected stocking levels and confirms that there will be sufficient profit to be able to cover the construction costs of the new dwelling. This point notwithstanding, it is also highlighted that the applicant has access to personal funds to put towards the costs of the construction of the dwelling. The cost of carrying out the development will therefore not threaten the viability of the established agricultural business.
- 5.10 The Agricultural Appraisal has furthermore considered the availability of alternative accommodation within a 1-mile radius of the site but contends that there is an overwhelming need for Mrs Hughes to reside **onsite** in order to provide the best possible duty of care to the livestock, helping to maintain the best possible health and welfare standards. Residing onsite allows for a clear visual sight and sound of the livestock, something living offsite would not allow to be achieved. It also provides a safeguard against rural crime.

- 5.11 Having regard to the conclusions of the Agricultural Appraisal it is concluded that an essential need for an agricultural worker to reside on the site has been demonstrated and that the need cannot be accommodated elsewhere, as the applicant needs to be within sight and sound of the animals. The proposed development consequently meets the requirements of policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan.

### **Design & Layout**

- 5.12 The proposed dwelling will comprise of a single storey structure, with an 'L' shaped form and is to be located to the west of the existing cluster of agricultural buildings in the interests of minimising its visual impact. The dwelling has a high solid to void ratio, with a strongly defined ridge line emphasised by gables. The projecting wing is furthermore subservient to the main ridge line of the dwelling. The building is to be constructed from natural stone with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof atop. Such materials are entirely appropriate to this area, with the scale, massing and design of the dwelling according with the recommendations of the adopted Design Guide SPD.
- 5.13 The siting of the dwelling to the west of the existing buildings serves to minimise its visual impact from Shaw Wall Lane, with the existing portal framed agricultural buildings being located in the foreground. In views from Public Footpath (Ipstones 50), the building will be read as part of the existing complex of buildings, and its single storey form will help to minimise its visual impact. The proposed development consequently meets the requirements of policies SS1, DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan in this regard.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 5.14 The nearest neighbouring occupier to this site lies to the east (Newfields Cottage) and the existing portal framed agricultural buildings are located in

between the two. The neighbouring property is sufficiently distant from the proposed dwelling that no conflict with the Local Authority's minimum interface distances will arise, and consequently the proposal will not detract from the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- 5.15 The proposed dwelling will also provide an acceptable level of residential amenity for the future occupants of the dwelling. An area of private amenity space is to be provided to the rear / side of the dwelling which will exceed the minimum required area of 65 square metres, and the dwelling will not be overlooked by any neighbouring properties. In addition, the gross internal floor area of the dwelling exceeds the minimum required floorspace as set out within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards. The proposed development consequently meets the requirements of policies DC1 and H1 of the Local Plan.

#### **Highway Safety & Parking**

- 5.16 The application site benefits from an existing means of vehicular access off Shaw Wall Lane which serves the existing farm buildings on the site. That access is to be shared with the proposed dwelling and benefits from reasonably good visibility on egress, being located on the inside of the bend in the road. The proposed dwelling is to be served by three parking spaces to meet the Local Authority's adopted parking standards. As a consequence, no severe residual impacts to highway safety will arise as a consequence of the proposed development. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal represents a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- *The accompanying Agricultural Appraisal demonstrates that there is an essential need for a full-time agricultural worker to reside on the site and that the proposed dwelling would amount to a sustainable form of development.*
- *The proposed dwelling is of a scale, massing, design and layout that will not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area.*
- *The proposed dwelling will not detract from the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers and will provide a satisfactory level of amenity for future occupants of the dwelling.*
- *The proposed development will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety within the locality.*

6.2 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Design Guide SPD.