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FULL APPLICATION FOR THE SITING OF NO.10 CARAVANS FOR THE HOUSING OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS FOR A PERIOD OF 5 YEARS

at

Long Shoot, Gorse Lane, Tarleton,
Preston, Lancashire, PR4 6LJ

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This application is in respect of a full planning application for the Siting of No.10 Caravans for the housing of Seasonal Agricultural Workers for a period of 5 Years (the Proposal) at Long Shoot, Gorse Lane, Tarleton, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 6LJ (The Site).
- 2.2 The application is submitted on behalf of Bryans Salads (The Applicant) who farms the land at Long Shoot in conjunction with the rest of the agricultural holding across West Lancashire.
- 2.3 The existing and established horticultural business currently has an immediate operational need for the siting of 10 caravans to house seasonal workers to assist with planting and harvesting of the Applicants horticultural produce, and smooth operation of the agricultural business.



Produce grown by the Applicant across West Lancashire

3.0 AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE

- 3.1 The Applicant farms approximately 182.11 hectares (450 acres) of agricultural land based across West Lancashire. The land farmed is predominantly grade 1, as per the Agricultural Land Classification Maps for England and Wales. Please refer to the Site Plan attached for further information at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The main farm holding is located at The Poplars, Gorse Lane, approximately 750m from the Proposal Site, where Produce grown across west Lancashire, by the business, is packaged ready for distribution from the farmstead.
- 3.3 Following growing demand, the Applicant has taken the decision to expand their farming practices across West Lancashire due to the vibrant and fertile soils available within the locality. Previously, the Applicants agricultural holding extended to approximately 150ac. Due to the recent expansion of the business over the previous 6 months, the Applicant now farms in the region of 450ac following acquisition of some 300ac through short and long term agricultural tenancies.
- 3.4 Due to the nature of the farming enterprise, and the use of double/triple cropping by the Applicant, the land farmed in reality is now approximately a colossal 1000 acres (247.10 hectares) in total.
- 3.5 The Applicant has recently employed the services of a new farm manager to assist the business going forward due to the increasing demand of the horticultural sector. Due to the impacts of Covid-19, coupled with Brexit and the rapid increase in land farmed, there is now a drastic shortage of agricultural/horticultural workers available to the business for planting and harvesting of salad crops.
- 3.6 Following on from 3.5 above, the only option available to the Applicant is the use of seasonal agricultural workers, coming to the UK on work visas.
- 3.7 Due to the immediate needs of the Applicants business, the Applicant sought assistance from the minister responsible for seasonal agricultural workers, Victoria Prentis MP, who is also the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Farming, Fisheries and Food.

- 3.8 Ms. Prentis MP has responded directly referring to the Applicants business stating that *"DEFRA understands the challenges faced by salad producers in recruiting labour, particularly during this difficult time"* Ms. Prentis goes on to describe the Seasonal Workers Pilot, of which the Applicant is a part of, which aims to grant seasonal agricultural workers visas to 30,000 much needed seasonal workers in the UK.
- 3.9 Ms Prentis MP goes on to state that *"The expanded Seasonal Workers Pilot will continue to operate in the edible horticulture sector, to support farmers growing UK fruit and vegetables. This is the sector of agriculture which has the highest dependency on seasonal labour needed to ensure critical food supply chains in the UK are maintained."*



Agricultural workers who are imperative to the success of the Applicants agricultural business.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 There has been a number of applications relating to the site submitted in previous years. The ones relevant to this Proposal are outlined below;
- 2014/0268/FUL - Construction of a replacement agricultural building, glasshouse and improvements to existing highway access
 - 2015/1078/CON - Approval of details reserved by condition nos 4, 12 and 13 on planning permission 2014/0268/FUL relating to a landscaping scheme, a scheme for replacement nesting swallow opportunities, and a scheme for replacement barn owl nesting opportunities.
- 4.2 At current, under 2014/0268/FUL there is currently extant planning consent for a large 4121.60m² block of glass houses to be erected on the site.
- 4.3 The glass house permitted under 2014/0268/FUL has an eaves height of 3.80m and a ridge height of 4.60m.
- 4.4 Due to the Applicant taking on a further 300 acres in the locality, there is now no immediate need for the permitted glasshouses under 2014/0268/FUL.
- 4.5 With regards to the landscaping scheme approved under 2015/1078/CON, due to the uncertainty over the installation of the glasshouse, the Applicant has held off from doing the landscaping scheme until all works were to be completed on Site. As above, due to changing demands of the business in acquiring 300 acres of farm land, there is now no immediate need for the glass houses and the site area under 2014/0268/FUL can be better utilised by the Proposal under this Application.
- 4.6 Please refer to the approved Landscaping plan attached at **Appendix 2**, which details the glass house in comparison to the site, and the approved landscaping for the Site.

5.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 This application has been submitted for the Siting of No.10 Caravans for the temporary housing of Seasonal Agricultural Workers, for a period of 5 Years as per the Proposed Location Plan attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 5.2 The Proposal includes the stripping of topsoil on unproductive agricultural land, and the creation of a hard standing area and appropriate facilities for the siting of no.10 static caravans.
- 5.3 The Proposal also provides the installation of an above ground septic tank along with gas tanks for the Proposals heating and drainage systems. The Proposal will make use of the electricity and water services readily available on the site.
- 5.4 Waste collection for general waste will be weekly in accordance with the businesses current commercial waste collection scheme, and the septic tanks will be cleared and emptied when required in accordance with all relevant standards.
- 5.5 The Proposal utilises the permitted and extant landscaping schemes permitted under 2015/1078/CON, which have been amended to reduce the impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Please refer to **Appendix 4** which details the amendments to the permitted landscaping schemes which reduce the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt.



long range views of the Proposal Site following landscaping works (for identification purposes only)

- 5.6 To further screen the Proposal, the Applicant proposes to install a grassed-over earth bund to shelter and screen the Proposal from view. This earth bund will run along the inside of the landscaping proposal and provide immediate screening of the Proposal, minimising any potential impacts arising from the development. Please refer to **Appendix 4** which details the earth bunds location in relation to the proposed landscaping scheme.
- 5.7 The earth bund will be created from clayey unproductive soil where the Proposal is located. This removes any need to import/export any material to or from the Site for this purpose. Following creation of the earth bund, a porous hardstanding area will be laid to act as a soakaway and drain any surface water run off from the Site.
- 5.8 Due to the rapid demands of the business, the staff are due to arrive in the UK w/c 7th June and as such there will be an immediate requirement to house these essential agricultural and horticultural workers.
- 5.9 The Applicant has sourced seasonal workers through the government scheme which intends to introduce 30,000 agricultural workers for the coming season. The scheme grants visas to allow workers to be employed in “edible agriculture” only which are tied to each business therefore providing assurances to the Applicants business.

The current issue with sourcing and utilising agency staff (notwithstanding the fact non are currently available) is that due to the current high demand, workers can “pick and choose” which jobs they continue with, which leads to higher levels of workers not showing up for work. This leaves employers, like the Applicant, stuck without a workforce, but at the same time stuck with an unreliable workforce due to the business’s dependency on them.

As the workers under this scheme are tied to the business through their visas, the Proposal offers assurances to the Applicant that they will have a reliable workforce, on which they can depend.

- 5.10 As the workers are on 6 month visas, normally they do not purchase or own vehicles and as such there will be no requirement for parking at the site. The workers will be collected for work every morning by the Applicant and taken to their place of work. The Applicant will also run weekly journeys to Southport for free, to the workers so that they can purchase groceries and supplies for the weeks ahead thus minimizing any potential impact on the highway network in the locality.
- 5.11 Due to the Applicant taking on a significant amount of land for the coming growing season, there is no immediate need for the Glass House as permitted by 2014/0268/FUL. The Proposal will therefore reduce the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

- 5.12 The Proposals Location within the site has been considered at great length. Whilst considering the extant planning permission for the green houses and the approved landscaping scheme, the Applicant has decided on the location shown on the Proposed Location Plan at Appendix 3 to be the most suitable.
- 5.13 Please refer to Appendix 5 which details long term plans for the site incorporating the addition of a second agricultural building (subject to planning permission) which has been taken into account when deciding on the location of the Proposal.
- 5.14 With regards to the Proposals impact on local residential amenity, the neighbouring property houses agricultural workers and there are in excess of 10 caravans within 300m of the application site, used for the housing of seasonal agricultural workers. In addition to this, the neighbouring properties are agricultural in nature and will be shielded by the proposed landscaping scheme, as such it is not anticipated that the Proposal will have a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.
- 5.15 Due to the nature of the Proposal and the way it has been designed, should the need no longer be required to house agricultural workers in future, the Site could readily revert back to agricultural use/bare land, despite its low agricultural value.
- 5.16 There is clearly an identified and continued need from this established business to house agricultural workers through the Proposal.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 The site is located within West Lancashire and is designated under the following policies under the current adopted West Lancashire Borough Council Local Plan 2012-2027:

- EN2.6.i – Landscape Character
- Greenbelt

6.2 Following the above, the following policies have been considered.

- Building a strong competitive economy
- West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 (DPD)
 - Policy RS5
 - SP1 - A Sustainable Development framework for West Lancashire
- SPG - Accommodation For Temporary Agricultural Workers
- National Planning Policy Framework
 - Green Belt
 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

6.3 West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027

Greenbelt

- 6.3.1 The Local Plan is silent on Green Belt policy and therefore the latest National Planning Policy Framework will be referred to at 6.5 below.

EN2.6.i – Landscape Character

- 6.3.2 Due to the consideration in the Proposals design, location, existing development and the nature of the Proposal, the development maintains the distinctive rural and agricultural character and visual quality of the area. Developments such as the Proposal are common features in the local area with a number of farms siting caravans for the housing of seasonal agricultural workers. The landscaping scheme will shield the entire site from view and therefore enhance the landscape character of the area.

Policy RS5 – Accommodation for temporary agricultural workers

- 6.3.3 *"The provision of non-permanent accommodation, appropriate to both the identified need and the location, will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that;*

- i. *there is a requirement to provide accommodation for a clearly identifiable need for temporary agricultural/horticultural workers.*

Due to the recent expansion of the business in both land farmed and demand, there is a clearly identifiable need for providing accommodation to agricultural/horticultural workers.

- ii. *There are no existing buildings in the locality which are suitable, or capable of being made suitable, for accommodating temporary workers*

There are no existing buildings in the locality which are suitable, and all buildings owned by the Applicant are at full capacity and are required to suit the needs of the business.

- iii. *The site chosen is the most suitable in the locality, taking in to account other policies in this local plan*

The Proposal Site is the most suitable on the holding as it will be screened by the existing building and approved landscaping plans under 2015/1078/CON. The Proposal Site is also within walking distance of the main farmstead.

iv. *Any impact on visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety, landscape, wildlife and countryside character is minimised to an acceptable level*

- The impact on visual amenity, landscape and countryside character will be minimised to an acceptable level by the landscaping scheme to be installed under this proposal.
- The impact on residential amenity is negligible due to the location of the proposal. Under 2014/0268/FUL there were comments within the case officers report which stated that the “proposed development would not cause significant harm to the amenities of neighbouring residents through noise and disturbance”. We are of the opinion that the Proposal under this application will have less of an impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents. Additionally, the site is to be located to the rear of the existing agricultural building and to be screened by landscaping thus reducing any impact on residential amenity to an acceptable level.
- Due to the Proposal being used by migrant workers, typically they do not own cars as they are only based in the UK for a period 6-8 months. As such it is not considered that there is any impact on the safety of the highway network.
- The Proposal site is a parcel of unproductive agricultural land which has been used for the storage of equipment. Due to its frequent use over the past couple of years, as effectively an extension of the yard, there is not deemed to be any impact on wildlife. The Proposed landscaping scheme will have a positive impact providing habitat and wildlife corridors resulting in an overall positive impact from the Proposal.

v. *Proposals include measures to protect the character of the local area, including retention of existing trees and hedges, implementation of landscape planting, improvement of any damaged or derelict land involved and improvement of boundary treatments*

The Proposed landscaping will enhance the character of the local area, and will retain all existing trees and hedges on site including the addition of those as highlighted on the landscaping scheme. Whilst the land is agricultural in nature, the parcel of land is very heavy and clayey and not suitable for fresh produce production and therefore will make effective use of this “derelict” land.

The Proposal accords with Policy RS5 of the Local Plan.

6.4 **WLBC SPG - Accommodation For Temporary Agricultural Workers**

- 6.4.1 Referring to the SPG for accommodation for temporary agricultural workers, the SPG advises farmers undertake the following sequential approach;

"Look to see if you can find accommodation in an existing house(this includes agricultural workers and other rural dwellings), hotel, other types of residential building (such as a care home) or an established caravan park."

Due to current prices (both freehold and leasehold), quantity of accommodation required and the immediate need, it would not be feasible for the Applicant to house such a number of workers in line with the above. As such the remainder of the SPG has been referred to;

- 6.4.2 • *If none are available, check if you can convert any existing buildings either on or off-site.*

There are no buildings on the entire holding which would be suitable for conversion.

- 6.4.3 • *If that is not possible try to find a site for your accommodation that is not in the Green belt. Look in the local village or town or on the edge of the village or town.*

There are no sites on the holding which are not located in the Green Belt. There are also no properties available which would be suitable for accommodation in the local village.

- 6.4.4 • *If there are no sites available in or on the edge of a village or town, then the chances are that the site will be in the Green Belt where Government and local policies do not allow caravan sites or residential buildings. You will need to convince the Council that there are very special circumstances and that you have looked at all other alternatives before we can even consider granting permission for any accommodation in the Green Belt. You will also need to show that your proposed site is the most suitable within your own land holding.*

As described herein, the proposed site is the most suitable on the entire holding. It is within walking distance of the main farmstead and the Proposal will be screened by the existing development on Site.

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- 6.4.5 • *Whatever site is identified the operator must consult local residents prior to submitting a planning application and amend the proposed scheme to take account of their views. This could involve, for example, changing the location or orientation of the development, amending the means of access or improving screening etc.*

Local residents would be consulted however it is not anticipated there will be any issues with the Proposal due to the non-intrusive nature of the Proposal and the fact that properties surrounding the proposal site also house temporary agricultural workers.

- 6.4.6 • *The operator must ensure compliance with all other regulations, such as the caravan sites standards and the drainage requirements of the Environment Agency, Building Regulations etc. If an Environment Agency licence is required, this shall be included with the application for planning permission.*

All other regulations will be complied with.

- 6.4.7 • *Adequate arrangements must be made for the disposal of refuse and sewage from the site in order to avoid causing pollution to the environment and nuisance to neighbours.*

Sewage will be disposed of by way of a septic tank on site which will be emptied regularly when required. Refuse will be disposed of by commercial waste collection services used by the business.

- 6.4.8 Following the sequential test as advised by the LPA, the only option available to the applicant with minimal impact on local receptors and the Green Belt, is the Site and Proposal as per this application.

6.5 **National Planning Policy Framework**

6.5.1 Greenbelt

6.5.1.1 The Local Plan is silent on Green Belt policy and therefore the latest National Planning Policy Framework will be referred to. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF 2019 states;

“A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

a) buildings for agriculture”

6.5.1.2 Whilst the Proposal is not strictly a building for agriculture and the site is located within the Green Belt, careful consideration should be given to the siting of mobile homes for seasonal agricultural workers. The Proposal should be limited in scale in order to minimise any potential impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

6.5.1.3 To limit any potential impact, the Councils SPG ‘Accommodation for Temporary Agricultural Workers’ (updated January 2007) recommends that accommodation is hidden or screened from views so that the accommodation does not spoil the visual amenity of the countryside.

6.5.1.4 In order to minimise any impact upon the Green Belt, the proposal is limited in scale to no.10 caravans and will be screened from view by the earth bund and proposed landscaping scheme, in addition to being screened by the existing building on site.

6.5.1.5 In addition to the above, it is noted that the Positioning of the proposal means that it would encroach on undeveloped agricultural land (albeit very clayey and not suitable for fresh produce production being left out of rotations). The Proposal is however going to be sited to the rear of the existing building and yard area and given the character and appearance of the surrounding area would not be seen in isolation, but in the context of a wider area which incorporates numerous agricultural developments of similar nature.

6.5.1.6 There is a need established and proven from an operational point of view and the development is not incongruous to the local landscape, it is shielded from view and will improve views on green belt by shielding the entire site from view.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 6.5.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, outlined in paragraphs 10 & 11 of the framework which states that *"at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development"*.

The Proposal will allow the expansion and development of this sustainable, established business through a temporary consent which land could readily revert back to agricultural use in future if required.

Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

- 6.5.3 Other policies within the NPPF offer support to the Proposal. Paragraph 83, Supporting a prosperous rural economy states that;
"Planning policies and decisions should enable:
a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas;
b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses"
- 6.5.4 it is evident that the applicant requires additional seasonal accommodation facilities to ensure the continued growth of this key rural business. The proposed development would enable the business to continue to grow and thereby comply with the support advocated within the NPPF

6.5.5 The NPPF contains the following paragraphs which are material to the assessment of this application;

Paragraph 38	Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way.
Paragraph 80	<i>“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. <u>Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth</u> and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation⁴⁰, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”</i>
Paragraph 83	<i>“Planning policies and decisions should enable:</i> <i>a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas...</i>
Paragraph 84	<i>“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.”</i>

7.0 HIGHWAYS

- 7.1 Access to the Site is provided by an existing access on to Gorse Lane, a 60mph highway.
- 7.2 Due to the Proposal being for the housing of seasonal agricultural workers, it is not anticipated there will be any detrimental impact on the safety of the local highway network. This is due to the fact that visas are for 6-8 months and historically workers who have been to the farm under similar schemes have not purchased vehicles and instead utilised car sharing, buses or local taxi companies.
- 7.3 Due to the location of the Proposal in relation the remainder of the farmstead, occupants will be within walking distance of the main site should they be required to attend. The workers housed by the Proposal will be collected via the Applicants minibus, and taken to their place of work across the 450ac holding across west Lancashire. Once the operations (whether planting, harvesting etc.) are complete for the day, the occupants will be returned to the Site by way of the Applicants minibus once more, in order to reduce any potential impact on the local highway network.
- 7.4 The Applicant will also do weekly trips to Southport taking the Occupants so that they can undertake their weekly shopping to stock up on food and household items for the week ahead in order to again minimise the frequency of highway movements from the Site.
- 7.5 The access to the development would not compromise highway safety due to utilisation of existing access and the distance of the site from the highway.
- 7.6 In addition to the above, adequate visibility splays are achievable from the existing access.
- 7.7 It is not anticipated there will be any detrimental impact on the safety of the local highway network following the Proposal under this application.

8.0 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT

- 8.1 In order to reduce the overall impact of the Proposal a landscaping scheme has been derived to screen the Proposal and wider Site from view. Please refer to **Appendix 4** for further information regarding the Proposed Landscaping Scheme.
- 8.2 Having regard to the approved landscaping scheme under 2014/0268/FUL and 2015/1078/CON which was deemed acceptable and sympathetic to the general character and appearance of the site and wider area by the LPA at the time, the Proposed Landscaping has mirrored and gone over and above that approved under the previous applications.
- 8.3 The Proposal now incorporates the planting of a further 70 trees to screen the Site from view and restrict the Proposals impact on the Green Belt. Please refer to the images below showing the site as existing compared to following the approved landscaping scheme.



Distant view of the site currently



Distant views of the site following the proposed landscaping

For illustration purposes only

8.4 The Landscaping Scheme provides the addition of the following;

	<u>Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Specification</u>
Hedgerow	Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)	265m	0.6 – 0.9m 3 to 5 shoots
Hedgerow Planting	Populus tremula (Aspen)	9	1.2 – 1.5m feathered whip
	Quercus robur (Oak)	5	1.2 – 1.5m feathered whip
	Alnus glutinosa (Alder)	5	1.2 – 1.5m feathered whip
Copse A	Alnus glutinosa (Alder)	50	1.8 – 2.4m feathered Standard
	Quercus robur (Oak)	20	1.8 – 2.4m feathered Standard
Copse B	Alnus glutinosa (Alder)	50	1.8 – 2.4m feathered Standard
	Quercus robur (Oak)	20	1.8 – 2.4m feathered Standard

Please refer to Appendix 4 for further information.

8.5 All trees are to be planted in suitable weather conditions between October 2021 and to be completed prior to the commencement of the bird nesting season in March 2022.

8.6 Trees will be planted at random in groups of 3m centres and will feature a bio-degradable mulch mat.

8.7 Please refer to **Appendix 4** for further information regarding the Proposed Landscaping Scheme.

9.0 DRAINAGE

9.1 The Proposal is located in an area designated as Flood Risk Zone 1.

9.2 As per national guidance;

"You don't need to do a flood risk assessment if your development is in flood zone 1 and:

- smaller than one hectare

- is not affected by sources of flooding other than rivers and the sea, for example surface water drains"

9.3 Flood Risk Zone 1 is described as having a low probability of flooding, better described as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding.

9.4 The Proposal is to be located on an area of porous hard standing material with a geo textile membrane below. The hard standing will act as a soak away and any surface water run off will be diverted in to the existing irrigation pit and ditches on site.

9.5 The sewage generated from the site will go into the septic tank on site and will be emptied at regular intervals by private collections.

9.6 The Proposal poses less drainage and flooding issues than the extant permission for the previously permitted glass houses on the site, therefore coupled with the above, no drainage issues are anticipated due to the design and location of the Proposal.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Proposal seeks permission for siting of 10no. caravans for the housing of seasonal agricultural workers.
- 10.2 The Proposal is deemed as acceptable in principle which should not unduly detract from the openness of the Green Belt, the visual amenity of the surrounding rural area or the amenity of nearby residents.
- 10.3 The Proposal accords with local and national planning policy and as such we kindly request that the Local Planning Authority grant permission for the Proposal as requested.