

# **Design and Access Statement**

**In Support of a Planning Application for**

**Removal of a temporary agricultural  
workers static caravan and replace with  
permanent agricultural workers dwelling**

**at  
Roecroft  
Ulnes Walton Lane  
Leyland  
PR26 8LT**

**John Barlow  
22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024**

## **Background**

The farm business, Barlow Brothers, is owned by Michael Barlow, John Barlow and Sam Barlow, and has been operating for 83 years across three sites: Roecroft Farm, Denzies Farm and Littlewood Hall Farm.

Historically, Roecroft Farm was a vibrant working farm with two agricultural buildings and a farmhouse, and later a farm worker dwelling. Following family deaths and changes in circumstances, the buildings and dwellings at Roecroft Farm were transferred out of the ownership of Barlow Brothers, leaving the land only.

Denzies Farm consists of two buildings which housed 100 store cattle. These buildings are accessed through a thriving industrial site owned by a third party, which has a huge volume of traffic from business and private vehicles, trailers, delivery wagons etc. Site restrictions mean the agricultural buildings cannot be accessed 24 hours a day.

Littlewood Hall Farm is a tenanted farm. Here there is a mix of housing for dairy cattle and the suckler herd. The number of livestock has vastly outgrown the available housing and the enterprise is unable to keep the dairy and suckler herds separate, which is recommended to facilitate the ongoing monitoring of livestock, disease prevention and management of the animals.

Due to the issues at Denzies Farm and Littlewood Hall Farm, the beef cattle were moved to Roecroft Farm. An agricultural livestock building was approved on the site in 2020 with a further application to increase the size of the building approved in 2022. Permission was granted for the siting of temporary agricultural worker dwelling in the form of a static caravan on the site in 2023.

## **The Site**

The application site is located to the south of an open field, off Ulnes Walton Lane, 380m north of its junction with Southport Road. There is an existing field access from Ulnes Walton Lane that is proposed to be used as the vehicular access point for the dwelling.

The surrounding land is predominantly open agricultural land with hedgerows and interspersed trees to field boundaries.

The application site is located in the Green Belt at Ulnes Walton.

## **Relevant Planning History**

Outline planning application for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwellinghouse. All matters reserved, except access.

Ref. No: 19/00573/OUT | Status: Application Withdrawn

Erection of calf rearing building, with internal access road and hardstanding

Ref. No: 19/00625/FUL | Status: Application Withdrawn

Outline planning application for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling. All matters reserved, except access.

Ref. No: 20/00146/OUT | Status: Refusal of Outline Planning Permission

Erection of agricultural livestock building and construction of vehicular access and manoeuvring areas

Ref. No: 20/00226/FUL | Status: Full Planning Permission

Outline planning application for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling. All matters reserved, except access

Ref. No: 20/00954/OUT | Status: Application Withdrawn

Section 73 application to vary condition no. 5 (approved plans) attached to planning permission ref: 20/00226/FUL (Erection of agricultural livestock building and construction of vehicular access and manoeuvring areas) in order to alter the dimensions and position of the building

Ref. No: 22/01156/FUL | Status: Full Planning Permission

Temporary agricultural worker static caravan (retrospective)

Ref. No: 23/00751/FUL | Status: Full Planning Permission

## **The Proposal**

The applicant applies for the removal of the temporary agricultural workers static caravan, to be replaced with a permanent three-bedroom agricultural workers dwelling.

## **Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework restricts development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances applies:

a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;

b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;

c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;

d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or

e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:

- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and
- would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
- would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

National guidance on Green Belt is contained in Chapter 13 of the Framework which states:

142. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

143. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

152. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

153. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

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

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
  - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
  - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

Policy HS10 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 relates to agricultural worker's dwellings in the countryside and covers circumstances where accommodation is required to enable agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other rural based enterprises.

This policy states that outside the defined settlements and existing urban areas shown on the Policies Map, the erection of a new dwelling will only be permitted when accommodation is required to enable agriculture, horticulture, forestry (or other

rural based enterprise) workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work.

HS10a) sets out that the following:-

New permanent dwellings will be allowed to support existing agricultural or forestry activities in well-established agricultural or forestry units provided that:

- i. There is a clearly established functional need;
- ii. The functional need relates to a full time worker or one primarily employed in agriculture, forestry or rural based enterprise activities;
- iii. The unit and the agricultural or forestry activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;
- iv. The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling on the unit or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available; and
- v. The siting of the proposed dwelling is well related to the existing farm buildings or its impact on the landscape could be minimised.

### **Policy Assessment**

The development does not fall within any of the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would therefore result in harm to the Green Belt and there would have to be very special circumstances to justify the grant of planning permission that would outweigh that harm.

The special circumstance in this instance is the essential need for a worker to reside on site to ensure that the welfare of the animals in the applicant's care is maintained at all times.

The National Planning Policy Framework recognises that an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently on or near a site of agricultural work in the countryside and Policy HS10 of the Chorley Local Plan which sets out the criteria for Rural Workers Accommodation in the Countryside:

#### **i There is a clearly established functional need:**

The enterprise at Roecroft requires a high level of supervision with a high functional need for the Applicant to be on hand to deal with instances that require urgent and immediate action, particularly those instances that occur outside of normal working hours. Any shortfall in supervision at a critical moment could result in the loss of the livestock, with a consequential knock-on effect on farm profitability (and hence sustainability).

In winter months the suckler cows and their calves will be housed in the farm building where they will need feeding, usually twice per day. Health checks are usually made at such times.

Feeding, cleaning out and the usual livestock management tasks with cattle are normally carried out during normal working hours, although there are instances where some animals need to be treated outside of normal working hours. Should livestock become ill, they will require isolating from other livestock to avoid the illness spreading. Once isolated the animal must be regularly monitored and many require treatment around-the-clock.

The suckler cows will give birth each year, the majority of these being outside of normal working hours. During the birth cows can suffer a number of complications which can prevent the birth from taking place. Mothers can be particularly volatile when calving as it is a high stress situation for them. Limousins and Simmentals are particularly large varieties with a notorious reputation for being short tempered, which makes calvings particularly hazardous. Labouring mothers should only be left unattended for three hours at a time. If the applicant cannot live on site he would need to go to site up three times a night when a mother is calving. This is not feasible give the number of calving which take place each year.

The embryo harvesting process involves obtaining a reference heat from the cattle to indicate when ovulation is due to occur. A series of 15 timed injections are then administered to encourage multiple ovulations. This happens over 10 days. The animals are then artificially inseminated on 6 occasions. This occurs every 8 hours for two days. One week after insemination, a specialist team is then brought in to complete the removal of the embryos. On average, they have one session per month, with multiple animals treated at a time. The precise timing of this process is incredibly important for success, and this can only be achieved through the provision of a 24-hour worker on site.

In the event of an emergency, it is essential for the applicant to be on site. A swift response time is vital to ensure the health and safety the animals under his care. Cows are large animals and accidents can happen in a short amount of time, causing potential injury to other livestock. It is important that livestock are closely managed, and an on-site presence is vital to facilitate this. In the interests of animal welfare and economic viability, the farm requires 24/7 on site presence.

Farms can be vulnerable to theft and intrusion. The high value of the livestock at Roecroft make them a particular target for crime. Having a permanent presence on the site will increase the security of the site and vastly reduce the risk to the business.

**ii The functional need relates to a full time worker or one primarily employed in agriculture, forestry or rural based enterprise activities:**

The Applicant provides the majority of the labour at Roecroft. Barlow Brothers employ two other full time workers, Sam Woolridge and Jill Mortimer. However, as a dairyman, Sam spends the majority of his time at Littlewood Hall Farm with the dairy herd, and Jill works across all three of the Barlow Borthers farm sites.

In addition to the general husbandry involved with the cattle, John is involved in embryo sales and artificial insemination.

John produces high value, pedigree calves through selective artificial insemination and embryonic transplantation. He specialises in prestigious Limousin and Simmental breeds. These calves are sold at varying ages, but most commonly are kept on the unit until they are 14-22 months old. The applicant is a highly regarded breeder, with these animals being sold for an average of £5,400.

The applicant also harvests eggs for artificial insemination in laboratory conditions. The fertilised embryos are then sold on and implanted into the purchasers' cattle. This is a lucrative source of income for the business with the applicant selling around 250 embryos a year to purchasers worldwide.

It is clear that the embryo harvesting, and artificial insemination procedures are a complex and time-consuming process that require 24-hour supervision to achieve, and the labour required is substantial.

It was established under Application No. 23/00751/FUL, application for a temporary agricultural worker static caravan (retrospective), that there clearly has been an established enterprise operating from the site and that the functional requirement would equate to one full-time labour unit to be close to the agricultural buildings to ensure the welfare and viability of the calf and cow during the birth process. It is therefore considered that criteria i and ii are met.

iii The unit and the agricultural or forestry activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so:

Barlow Brothers has been established for many years and is a successful farming enterprise. The proposal is required in response to the restructuring of that business and the care of the livestock at an alternative site. In the interests of confidentiality, the accounts have not been included here. A summary of the accounts can be made available for inspection if required.

iv The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling on the unit or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available:

The only dwelling on the site is a temporary caravan which the applicant is seeking to replace with the proposal.

Rightmove search has been carried out on the following criteria:

Under £150,000	As this is the cost to build new
4 Bedrooms (or three bedrooms plus office space)	To ensure appropriate living space for the applicant
Within 1 mile	To enable swift responses in the event of an emergency
Within a 10 minute drive	To enable swift responses in the event of an emergency
With garden and off road parking	Larger vehicles should have dedicated parking with the property
No buying schemes	Full ownership to ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable
Freehold	To ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable
No shared ownership	To ensure that there are no long term expenses that the worker will have to pay to ensure living there is affordable

The result has shown that there are no suitable properties close to the site:-

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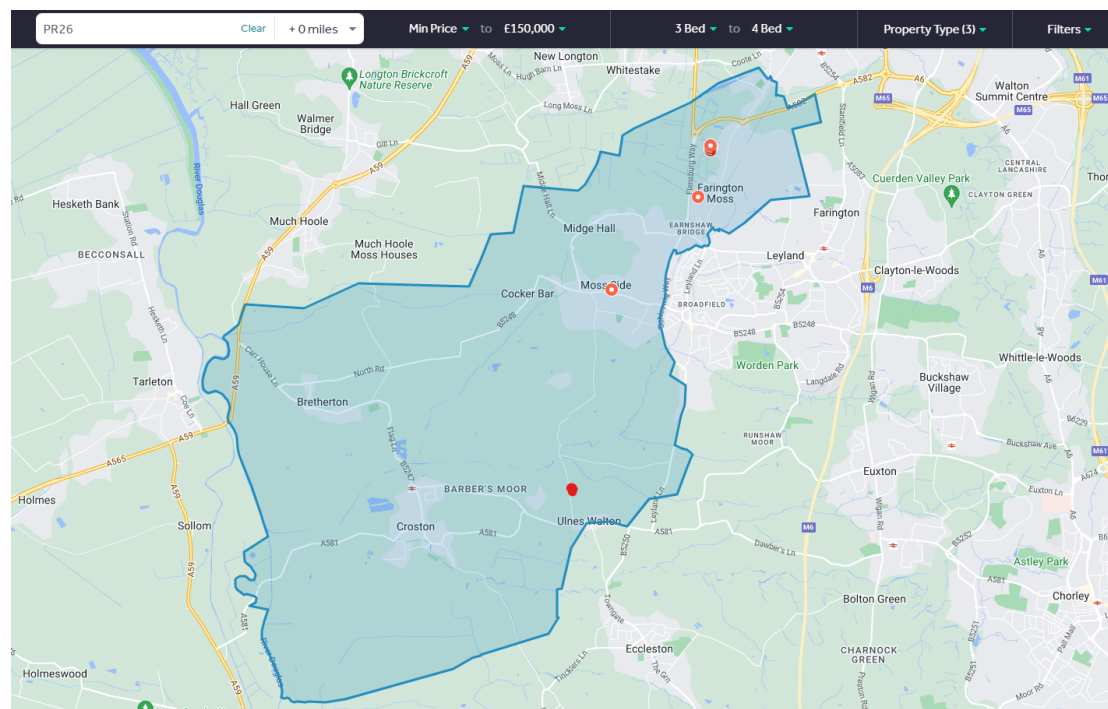
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A widening of the search to the area of PR26 did not reveal any properties within close proximity to the site:-



In any event, the use of existing accommodation in the wider area is not practical due to the long labour hours required on the farm, nightly checks, prevention of crime and



the 24-hour cover required for farm and livestock. Properties off the site would not meet the functional requirements of the farm as they would not be within sight and sounds of the animals.

v The siting of the proposed dwelling is well related to the existing farm buildings or its impact on the landscape could be minimised:

The proposed siting of the dwelling is to the immediate west of the existing approved static caravan, which will be removed following completion of the development. The property will be shielded from view by the existing hedgerow to the southern boundary. The dwelling will be in close proximity to the existing agricultural buildings and will therefore be viewed in the context of an agricultural unit.

The nearest residential dwelling is Walton Lodge, located 50m to the north east on the opposite side of Ulnes Walton Lane, with Marsh House nursing home a further 100m away. Given the distance to neighbouring properties it is not considered the proposal would have a harmful effect on neighbour amenity.

## **Conclusion**

We consider that this Design & Access Statement demonstrates that the proposal represents sustainable development and is in compliance with the NPPF and Chorley Borough Council Local Plan, and therefore planning permission should be granted.