

Head of Planning and Development
Rochdale Council
Number One Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU
FAO Mrs R Carney

BY EMAIL

8 December 2022

Dear Mrs Carney

LPA Ref : 22/01216/FUL- Bank Top Farm, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AU

I refer to the above planning application and hereby provide further information that should be fully considered in supplement to the previously submitted information:

- Economic and business viability
- Local educational aims and support
- High quality design and wider areas considerations
- Wide ranging support

Economic and Business Viability

As outlined in the Planning Statement and Economic Diversification Statement, the proposal is an essential diversification development to support the ongoing financial viability of the farm business and its operations, and to enable the maintenance and expansion of the Farm and Pete's Meats sales business.

We note that for a recent proposal for Green Belt development at Birch Industrial Estate (LPA ref : 22/01148/FUL), the economic circumstances of the business to be retained on the site were given very significant weight to the planning balance. It is considered the application proposal at Bank Top Farm has a similar economic requirement context that is tied to the location to support and ensure the ongoing viability of the farm and meat businesses and to enable a level of extended and new employment (job creation) at the farm.

The owner of Pete's Meats is currently required to supplement employment and income with further off-site employment given the current limited facilities for the meat business and its sales outlet operation at weekends/ on-line only. As a young farmer, and along with the associated family members who are also required to undertake other employment to support the farm viability, it is their aim to maintain the farm business and operations into the future which can only realistically be achieved by the proposals.

It is considered that this represents a clear VSC and the sites edge of urban but Green Belt location, should not fetter this aim for a local business maintenance and expansion, that is also in line with a clear policy aim of the adopted Core Strategy (policies E2, E5 and E6) and NPPF to support businesses.

Local Educational Aims and Support

The proposed inclusion of a community element is a further VSC to be highly weighed in the planning balance.

Alongside a facility for local groups to hire and meet within the upper floor room, for which at least 10 groups were referenced as having potential/ interest for use of the facility in the public consultation exercise undertaken prior to the application submission, the applicant has an educational remit for the element.

The applicant (Mrs Davies) is certified in Farm Education Training and the enclosed letter of support from LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) confirms the significant governmental emphasis that is placed on children being educated in food origin and the environment and sustainability, and for opportunities for children to visit farms and facilities for such education. Specifically, it confirms the National Curriculum, at all Key Stage levels, has objectives that can be achieved through experiential learning, either on farm or in a classroom setting, that could also utilise the on-site room proposed.

The applicant is also in contact with Rochdale Council Educational Visits Team and 'Learning Outside the Classroom Team', to discuss options for developing programmes and material for the Farming and Countryside sector of the Council's Educational Programme, and for making the necessary Quality Badge submissions for leading and delivering out of school courses and visits.

In addition, the Littleborough Holy Trinity Primary School Headmaster has confirmed support for the proposal and indication that the school would like to utilise the room and farm for educational visits and support.

There are also 2 further primary schools in Littleborough and Smithy Bridge and 12 other primary schools within 3 miles of Littleborough along with pre-schools and nurseries and many other playgroups who could utilise the facility. It would therefore form a clear opportunity for providing a facility to local education establishments (as well as to wider area schools and groups).

The supporting letter from NFU (National Farming Union) to the application (appendix of the Economic Diversification Statement) also outlined that facility closures at Chamber House Urban Farm and Sheephouse Farm has severely compromised the opportunity for such farm-based education in the Rochdale area.

This is a clear VSC to support the proposal that would align with national aims for food education and enhancing environmental and sustainability understanding in learning and local policy considerations for community improvements within policy C8 of the CS.

High Quality Design

The applicant has been keenly aware of the local context and materials vernacular of the area and required the development team to devise a high quality building that would complement and assimilate with the local surroundings.

The proposed building is therefore of a high quality design in terms of being set into the slope of the site and landform and minimizing height and size so as to respect the Green Belt location. The use of natural and local materials and a green roof element also respects the local vernacular and will enable the building to assimilate with the local context over time as the timber element weathers, local stone ages, and the green roof establishes.

It is referenced that as an agricultural site, the owners could have determined that a much cheaper and highly functional but lower quality agricultural building could have been proposed in this location; as an agricultural building and appropriate development in the Green Belt. However a building of this form would not enable the quality of design and visual contribution to the setting that the proposed building would bring.

We also note that in the recent proposal for the replacement industrial unit at Birch Industrial Estate a wider visual context was considered, accepting likely future development on adjacent land pursuant to an industrial allocation (Northern Gateway area), which was given some weight in the assessment of visual considerations in the planning balance.

In this respect, it is relevant that planning permission has been granted for significant residential development to the immediate north west of the site, including to the Hollingworth Road frontage, and the land is subject to a current planning application for residential development. The site is also proposed for allocation in the emerging Places for Everyone Plan, whilst land further to the south is also proposed for allocation. It is therefore considered that a likely future visual and built context to the application site should also be a factor weighed in the planning balance in this case.

As such, the high quality design, minimal associated infrastructure and use of quality site provisions e.g. grasscrete to the parking area and significant landscaping that produces biodiversity net gain, should also be seen as VSC to support the proposal.

Significant Local Support

It is clear from the pre-application consultation undertaken by the applicant that there is significant local support to the proposals and from existing customers to the meat business who would seek more flexibility and opportunity to purchase home produced meat and other local goods via a shop and daily opening (referenced in the Planning Statement).

Since the application has been submitted, there has also been significant support via written submissions to the authority (101 supporting comments and only 2 objections as of 6 December).

Key points that have been raised in responses include:

- “Sounds fabulous. Can't wait. Fresh local produce. Know where your food is coming from”
- “I think this would be a very valuable asset to the community, and I am sure it would be very popular with people who wish to access locally sourced food. I will be very pleased if the application is approved and would be happy to support a local business”
- “I think this is a fabulous idea. Fresh produce made available locally. I often travel outside town to visit farm shops”
- “Would welcome a farm shop and cafe in our local area. Thought for a long time Rochdale was missing out when we have lots of rural areas”
- “I support this application for a farm shop cafe etc. It's just what Littleborough needs. A farm shop selling local produce & hopefully serving local produce in the cafe.. I travel to

Craggies Farm Shop & Cafe - which is fab but a long way to travel to buy good quality meat. Please support this planning application it would be an asset to the Borough!"

- "Fantastic addition to the area. Healthy local food rather than a takeaway"

Further, support has also been provided on:

- the applicant's Facebook for the business, which has registered 223 'likes' and 31 comments, all positive
- Littleboroughlocal Facebook registered 286 'likes', 54 comments, most being positive (with some queries/requests for further information to the community element)
- Rochdale Online registered 125 'likes' and 53 comments, again most being positive

It is clear that the proposals are broadly supported in the local area and that the opportunities to buy wider ranges of fresh produce sourced directly from the farm, as well as produce from other farms in the local area, thus reducing food miles and increasing local choice, and the associated café and community element, are also supported.

The small number of concerns raised have generally focused on car parking and that the proposal doesn't affect traffic flows on the road. In this respect, the Local Highway Authority have confirmed the level of parking and traffic generation anticipated is acceptable to the proposals (and their potential concern to servicing of the site has been assessed in the further information submitted and should be possible to be addressed via the arrangements and use of a planning condition as proposed).

Application Progression

We understand that the application will not now be presented to the December Planning Committee, and that it should however be considered at the January 2023 meeting.

We would be grateful for confirmation of whether a further response has been received from the Borough Highway Engineer to the submission of the further information on servicing and potential management options.

We have on a number of occasions requested a meeting (on-line or in person) to discuss the application further. Following previous rejections of this, we understand that an on-line meeting may be possible; we await confirmation of this and when it could be timetabled.

We also await update on the application consideration following your review of this now provided further information.

If anything further is required in respect of the application please let us know.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Jones
Planning Consultant

For and behalf of Maybern Planning and Development



LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

Honorary President HRH The Countess of Wessex, GCVO

Gary & Sue Davies
Bank Top Farm
Hollingworth Road,
Littleborough,
Rochdale
OL15 0AU

November 30th, 2022

R.E. Planning application for a farm shop, café, and community room.

Dear Sue,

Thank you for your correspondence outlining your planning application for a community room as a base to work with schools on educational programmes linked to food, farming, and the environment. The question of how we feed ourselves, protect our fragile planet and enrich our natural environment has never been more urgent or more vital. Sustainable food production is now rightly at the forefront of our society's collective attention. Your work educating young people on the journey from farm to fork is of great importance and it is wonderful to hear how you plan to enhance the facilities on the farm to do this.

LEAF is a registered UK charity, through our education and public engagement pillar (LEAF Education) we work to engage, inspire and motivate young people through experiential learning, to equip our future generations with a balanced and informed insight into food production, farming, and the wider natural environment. We work across the education and agricultural sectors to mobilise farmers and educators to bring food production, farming, and the environment into a learning context, and embed an appreciation of farming into everyday life.

Research clearly indicates that young people have little, if any idea at all, about the role the farmer/grower plays in the production of their food and maintenance of the countryside.

- *More than 90% of young people believe our individual food choices are important in the mitigation of climate change
- *Less than 60% of young people think farmers play an important role in climate change mitigation
- *Less than 30% of young people purchase food thinking about its environmental impact.

For LEAF Education to deliver in its mission, it is vital that young people can engage with farmers, visit farms and experience learning in a farming context to support young people to understand what it means to be a conscious consumer. The National Curriculum, at all Key Stage levels, has objectives that can be achieved through experiential learning, either on farm or in a classroom setting (see appendices).



LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG
T: 024 7641 3911 enquiries@leafuk.org www.leafuk.org @LEAF_Farming

Registered in England as a company limited by guarantee (Reg'd No. 3035047) Registered office as above.
V.A.T. Reg No. GB 660 9232 38 Registered Charity No. 1045781



LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

Honorary President HRH The Countess of Wessex, GCVO

The positive impact of meeting these National Curriculum objectives through farming, gives young people a key link to a real-world context, understanding the journey of food production from farm to fork. Considering society's ever-increasing awareness of the challenges and global connectedness of food production, agriculture has a key role in educating our future generations.

Understanding the impact of climate change, sustainability and food security is also right at the forefront of the education sector's priorities going forward. With the release of the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2022 from the DfE (Department for Education), the importance of connecting the education sector to food production highlights the opportunities for farmers to share their expertise with schools and young people.

(Key Statements from the DfE strategy Linked to food production and sustainability)

- *support schools to buy from procurement frameworks that offer sustainable goods and services*
- *work with education settings and partners to share best practice for delivering and improving uptake of nutritionally balanced, affordable, and sustainable meal choices*
- *pilot a food curriculum and whole-school approach to food, promoting accountability and transparency of school food arrangements by encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites*
- *T-level in Agriculture and Land Management with increased focus on UK agriculture on environmental and sustainable practices.*

As the education sector looks to connect young people with food, farming and the environment, farm visits are in high demand. Sue Davies has completed CEVAS training (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme) delivered by LEAF Education on behalf of Access To Farms (ATF), and is best placed to work with LEAF Education to provide safe, high-quality educational visits to schools and young people. If we are to achieve an education sector that provides young people with the information to help them make choices that have climate, food, environment, and sustainability positive impacts, we need farms with the facilities to help young people receive invaluable learning experiences of the journey from farm to fork.

Yours sincerely

Philip Adams
LEAF Education Programme Manager



LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG
T: 024 7641 3911 enquiries@leafuk.org www.leafuk.org @LEAF_Farming

Registered in England as a company limited by guarantee (Reg'd No. 3035047) Registered office as above.
V.A.T. Reg No. GB 660 9232 38 Registered Charity No. 1045781



LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING

Honorary President HRH The Countess of Wessex, GCVO

**Statistics 2022: LEAF Education, Harper Adams University (through the School of Sustainable Food and Farming), and McDonalds have worked together on teenager research to better understand young people's perception of the food and farming industry.*

Appendices

National Curriculum objectives with a link to experiential learning through the topic of farming (list not extensive). Additional curriculum links in Maths, English, Art and Design, Geography, Food Technology, PSHE and Physical Education. For the full National Curriculum, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

National Curriculum objectives in Science and Design and Technology with specific links to experiential on farm.
Please note: many aspects of the National Curriculum can be delivered through farming. Working with our team of Regional Education Consultants (RECs), can help you to explore additional aspects of the National Curriculum in your bespoke approach to educational visits.

- *Understand where food comes from.
 - *Observe changes across the four seasons.
 - *Observe and describe weather associated with the seasons and how day length varies.
 - *Notice that animals, including humans, have offspring which grow into adults
 - *Find out about and describe the basic needs of animals, including humans, for survival (water, food and air)
 - *Identify that most living things live in habitats to which they are suited and describe how different habitats provide for the basic needs of different kinds of animals and plants, and how they depend on each other
 - *Identify and name a variety of plants and animals in their habitats, including microhabitats
 - *Describe how animals obtain their food from plants and other animals, using the idea of a simple food chain, and identify and name different sources of food.
 - *Observe and describe how seeds and bulbs grow into mature plants
 - *Find out and describe how plants need water, light and a suitable temperature to grow and stay healthy.
 - *Explore the requirements of plants for life and growth (air, light, water, nutrients from soil, and room to grow) and how they vary from plant to plant *Investigate the way in which water is transported within plants
 - *Explore the part that flowers play in the life cycle of flowering plants, including pollination, seed formation and seed dispersal.
 - * Describe the life process of reproduction in some plants and animals.
 - *Photosynthesis
- Identify environmental factors that limit the rate of photosynthesis. Evaluate data relating to common agricultural practices used to overcome the effect of these limiting factors.
- *In any ecosystem, plants synthesise organic compounds from atmospheric, or aquatic, carbon dioxide. Most of the sugars synthesised by plants are used by the plant as respiratory substrates. The rest are used to make other groups of biological molecules. These biological molecules form the biomass of the plants.
 - * In flowering plants, specific growth factors move from growing regions to other tissues, where they regulate growth in response to directional stimuli.



LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG
T: 024 7641 3911 enquiries@leafuk.org www.leafuk.org @LEAF_Farming

Registered in England as a company limited by guarantee (Reg'd No. 3035047) Registered office as above.
V.A.T. Reg No. GB 660 9232 38 Registered Charity No. 1045781