

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

BY EMAIL

30 January 2023

Dear Mrs Carney

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

Following our meeting on 26 January, I provide further information and letters of support to the application proposal.

Support

- Letter from Head Teacher of Holy Trinity CE Primary School¹ – confirming the proposed community and education function via the community room is supported to provide opportunity for school visits to learn about food sources, farming and the countryside and the ability of children to view and interact with animals and the land
- Letter from Pextenement Cheese Company, local producer –confirming that the sale of their products from the farm shop would further support their businesses and economic and employment potential. Other local producers have also indicated verbal support to the applicant.

This support further recognises the education/ community and economic very special circumstances that have been set out in the Planning Statement and Economic Diversification Statement.

We also understand that the Smithy Bridge and Littleborough Save the Green Belt Group have also made a representation supporting the application proposal.

Given the limited land take for the proposal and the benefits to the retention of the wider Green Belt of the continuation of the farm business and the good practices and land management of the current farm owners, this support is welcomed by the applicant.

Servicing and Deliveries

As previously referenced, the applicant is willing to provide a servicing management plan for the site and considers this could be secured via a planning condition.

¹ as referenced support in the previous letter of December

We would kindly ask for full confirmation that this would be acceptable to the Highways Officer and that there would be no technical highways objection to the planning application on this basis.

Section Plan of Car Park Area and Detail

Following my email of 26 January and plan extract, I provide the at scale plan SK01 CO1 illustrating the existing ground level at the mid-point within the car park area.

This demonstrates that the slope of the land is more gentle towards the northern part of the site and thus the amount of material removal and level of engineering works required for the preparation of the car park area is envisaged to be lesser. Also the use of a retaining wall to the rear and side of the car park area minimises the works (rather than requiring more excavations to provide further separation to the parking area).

It is to be recognised that engineering works for the car park and access area form appropriate development in the Green Belt. It is then also highly relevant that to minimise visual impact considerations from this element of the proposal, the car park area has been developed to a high quality design and form with the use of natural stone gabions reflective of local stone outcrops that will also be landscaped with appropriate species for landscaping and biodiversity gain, and the majority of the car park surface being grass-crete to provide an appropriate natural led visual context and to allow permeability for drainage. As such, this design and arrangement is considered to result in minimised visual change to this part of the site.

Concluding Comments

From the discussions in the meeting, it is disappointing that the application is likely to be recommended for refusal notwithstanding the clear need for the proposal to support the ongoing viability of the farm and enable the expansion of the existing meat business.

The high quality design and layout of the farm shop and community room has been developed following a full assessment of the site and existing farm context including via visual and landscape analysis, achieving significant biodiversity gain and full transport and accessibility review.

From this it has been concluded that the proposed siting of the farm shop is appropriate in terms of visual, accessibility and technical considerations (there being no objections to the proposal from any statutory consultees) and farm operations (with separation to the working farm area for safety and health/ animal health reasons).

The proposal also enables the applicant to deliver a 'real farm shop' on the farm to sustain and expand their business and deliver quality farm origin and local produce that is clearly demanded by local residents. Also to deliver a community and education role using the farm context and animals for direct involvement that would not be possible via off-site accommodation.

It is therefore considered that Very Special Circumstances for the proposal are fully evidenced in the submitted information. Should any further explanation of elements be required by Officers, we and the applicant would be willing to assist.

It is also highly relevant that the proposals are fully in accordance with the rural and agricultural diversification policy of the adopted development plan along with other technical and design policies of the plan and should therefore be given significant weight in the planning balance assessment of the proposal. National policy also encourages the development and diversification of agriculture and other land based rural businesses. It is also clearly stated that policies and decisions should

recognize that sites to meet local business and community needs may be beyond existing settlements.

Assessment against Green Belt policy should therefore fully consider the full range of other development plan policies and the very special circumstances.

If anything further is required in respect of the application please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Sarah C Jones".

Sarah Jones
Planning Consultant

For and behalf of Maybern Planning and Development