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OWLGREAVE BUNGALOW FARM COMBS, CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH

DESIGN STATEMENT: JUNE 2012

The Owlgreave Farm complex, sits just off the Combs Road on the way into Combs, just outside the town of Chapel-En-Le-Frith. Although it was originally one farm, the site was split into four separate land ownership users in 1999, with the client, Mr Ian Barratt, owning 46 acres of land as part of the Owlgreave Bungalow Farm.

Owlgreave Farm has been hit by the economic downturn as much as any such farm and, as such, this has led the client to a need to diversify over the last 13 years as a means of trying to make a living through the land and other business uses. The family has historically been involved with the Derbyshire Oatcake business and over the last few years, this has remained Mr Barratt's only constant source of income. In terms of farming activity, the site still provides grazing for 70 sheep throughout various fields and during relevant months, the growth of feed crops. These activities on their own are of course only of limited economic return when looked at in the context of the size of the farm.

Throughout the years, the family has been involved in horses and livery and the site has a long history of grazing and livery yard usage. Although the economic returns for such use are limited, they do provide a constant use for the land that is in keeping with the rural setting. The livery yard, to date, provides stabling for 7 horses within a recognised stable yard.

Further down the site, Chapel and District Riding Club have the use of 10.6 acres of land. This land is used for various events throughout the year for the club. This has become a very popular facility for the community, a fact backed up by the increasing number of visitors on event weekends. The club currently have to store all their equipment in either the fields where they hold the events or in two, very poor, steel containers that currently sit on the agricultural compound to the lower area of the site.

Due to the economic difficulties that this and many other farms have suffered, diversification has become a necessity just to keep the farm and the land usage

viable. These changes have of course resulted in several applications coming before High Peak Borough Council over the years, not all of which have been met with a successful outcome. The number of applications coming before the Council has, to certain extent, resulted in a slightly negative image of what the client has being trying to do at Owlgreave Farm through the needs of diversification. Not with standing this, it should of course be noted that the number of applications that have come before the Local Authority, do show that Mr Barratt has a belief in trying to obtain approval for such works, a statement that cannot always be applied to farm land in either this or other local authorities. The other factor that is relevant in such applications is that Owlgreave Farm is always looked at as one element and this is not the case, with the land, as was mentioned earlier, representing four separate farms or land users.

Many of the issues that have been levied at Owlgreave Farm, relate to the agricultural compound yard at the lower end of the farm and the diversified land use that the client has tried on this particular area. Although an area that has a recognised usage for agricultural storage, the client has also used a certain part of this site for caravan storage, a usage that he had tried to legalise through a recent application and subsequent appeal – an appeal that was recently lost. The site also has recognised use for storage for Chapel and District Riding Club with two large storage containers towards the end of the compound adjacent to the agricultural shelter.

It is the rejection of the appeal for caravan storage and the need of the riding club to increase the storage capacity for all their equipment, over and above the recent approval for their storage shelter that led the client to submit an application to the local authority for further works at Owlgreave Farm. These works requested approval for a link block extension to the livery yard near the farm to increase the livery use from 7 stables to 10 (the related income would take into account the loss of the caravan storage whilst also having no detrimental impact of the farm and its context in the environment). These changes also originally meant that a certain amount of agricultural storage would need to be moved onto the compound area, resulting in an extension to the agricultural shelter. The need to provide additional storage for Chapel and District Riding Club over and above the previously approved shelter for them in 2011 as a result of the proposed removal of the steel storage containers, also meant the application requested approval for an increased storage shelter within the fields used for their events. This application went before the committee in April 2012 and was subsequently rejected. The rejection referring, in the main, to the fact that the relevant structures would be harmful development that would retract from the rural character of the farm by the nature of their size and siting. The application we refer to was HPK/2012/0099. It was mentioned in the meeting however that the context and the size of the stabling was probably not really out of context in an agricultural setting but the need to relocate agricultural storage because of the works had a negative impact on this. The removal of the storage containers was also not without merit but the resulting size of the riding club shelter was too large.

With the above reasons for rejection in mind and taking on board the other negative comments made relating to the site and the impact the proposed works would have, we now wish to approach High Peak Borough Council with a re-submission of

the above application with what we hope are changes that can be seen as significant steps in order to make the works approvable.

The first positive steps taken by the client have been the removal of all the caravans that were stored on the compound site and a general tidying up of the site for agricultural usage, the two containers do of course still sit on the site and are in constant use by Chapel and District Riding Club. The second important step was to have a full independent traffic survey undertaken by Derbyshire County Council. This was done as a response to the concerns raised by the committee with regard to the access into the site and any potential increase in vehicles into the farm. Although not given as reasons for refusal, Mr Barratt has taken on board the comments made and duly paid for the survey in an attempt to show the fact that traffic flow and speed is greatly reduced from what may be assumed on Combs Road. The results of the survey hopefully speak for themselves with regard to an attempt to show that the existing farm access is more than adequate when looked at in the context of any minimal increase in traffic flow as a result of this application. Traffic speed on this road is shown to be in the low 30's rather than the 60mph that the national speed limit may suggest. These figures are also not isolated as the survey was undertaken at 4 separate spots as the motorist passes Owlgreave Farm.

The changes to the Livery Yard extension have also now been greatly reduced so that, although the client still wishes to add 3 stables, the resulting impact on the adjacent agricultural shelter will not result in any significant loss of agricultural storage thereto. The result of this has been that the client no longer intends to extend the Agricultural Shelter on the lower compound. These changes, along with the removal of the caravans thereto mean this compound can return to a sole purpose of agricultural use, with the hoped relocation of the equipment of the storage containers and their subsequent removal from site. The attached documentation already shows the significant steps taken in this particular area and the way in which the compound has improved in its rural and agricultural setting, the removal of the containers would only serve to further improve this situation and answer all the concerns the local authority have levied at this site.

The Chapel and District Riding Club still have a significant need for the storage capacity that is offered to them by the use of the containers on the compound. Without them, they quite clearly do not have enough storage space and the equipment will have to be stored outside in the event fields as are the riding jumps at the moment –the very reason the riding club were granted approval for a storage shelter last year. As was mentioned in the previous application, this approval never took into account the removal of the containers on the compound however and was only granted permission relating to the jumps that they have stored within the fields. The desire and to a certain extent, need, to remove these containers from site will of course result in a significant loss of available storage – the contents of which are clearly shown in the attached photographic information. It was these reasons that meant we wished to obtain approval for an increase in size to the previously approved building for their storage requirements.

With regard to this, the need to provide the additional storage is still a requirement following the intended removal of the containers, but we have taken on board the concerns of the committee and reduced the size of the proposed shelter. The shelter

that was granted approval by HPBC in 2011 was about 70m2, we are now proposing a shelter of 98m2 – with a reduced width off the previous proposal of some 2000mm. The shelter is still proposed to be located in the same place within the top event field adjacent to natural screen planting and the same reasons that were given for the approval of the original building (not as yet built) are, it is hoped, still relevant with the new proposals, which still carries the same use all be it in slightly extended form. The desire to increase the size of this previously approved structure should of course also be looked at in the context of the resulting removal of very unsightly storage containers and the significant steps already taken on the adjacent compound.

The positive intentions of Mr Barratt and the way in which he is trying to address the local authority concerns with regard to the farm are hopefully clear to see on the site. The removal of the caravans, the undertaking of a traffic survey and the proposed changes that form part of this re-submission, further illustrate the fact that the client wishes to improve Owlgreave Farm and respect its rural setting, As such, it is hoped the Local Authority can see these changes are designed to address their concerns with the previous applications and thereby support the new proposals.