

Planning Supporting Statement

**Application for Planning Permission in Principle for
House for agricultural worker at Firknowe Farm, Skirling, Scottish Borders
ML11 6HD**

on behalf of
R.E Wood & Sons

18th August 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 R.E Wood & Sons farm over 3 farms totalling 1,745 hectares (4,312 acres) in the Scottish Borders. The business is a cattle and sheep enterprise producing high quality livestock for the fat and breeding markets. Full details of the farming enterprise, its structure, labour requirement and relevant financial information is provided within Laurence Gould Partnership's (LGP) comprehensive "Agricultural Justification" report submitted as a key part of this planning application. The financial information is provided strictly for the review of the Planning Authority only and is otherwise confidential.
- 1.2 The application seeks planning permission in principle for the erection of a dwellinghouse for a farm worker on Firknowe, a 40 acre farm at Broughton. There is no house on, or associated with, the holding at Firknowe at present. An agricultural shed will be erected beyond the site boundary as shown on the indicative site layout which is provided at Fig 1 below. The shed will be 9m x 12m (108 sqm) and thus the Prior Notification procedure will be followed in due course and this is the reason why the shed element of the proposal does not form part of this planning application.
- 1.3 The house is required at Firknowe to allow the business to expand its current active farming operations by employing and housing an additional member of staff on site and providing a shed for sheep lambing, handling, over-wintering of stock and general purpose farm storage.
- 1.4 The business, R.E Wood & Sons, wishes to protect and grow the high value pedigree business by relocating the flock to Firknowe for fully justified health and welfare reasons as advised within LGP's report. The business cannot relocate the pedigree flock without a dwelling house and agricultural shed being available due to reasons of operational efficiency, animal welfare and security.
- 1.5 The location identified for the new house and shed lies immediately to the north east of the track between the public road and the two dwellings at Whinnybrae. The application site extends to 2,504 sqm (0.62 acre). The south eastern boundary of the site lies c. 90m from the nearest dwelling.
- 1.6 Access to the plot will be obtained from the existing track which leads south eastwards from Skirling to the two semi-detached houses at Whinnybrae. The

track is a core path between Skirling and Broughton. An indicative site plan is provided below.

Fig 1: Indicative Site Plan



PromapV2
LANDMARK INFORMATION
Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2020. All Rights Reserved.
Licence number 100024312
Planned Scale - 1:1250. Paper Size - A4

Fig 2: Site Location



2.0 ANALYSIS AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

- 2.1 This section provides justification for the proposal to construct a house for an essential farm worker, together with a farm shed, against planning policy. This Planning Statement together with Laurence Gould's Agricultural Justification report demonstrate that the proposal for the erection of a dwelling is compliant with the provisions and intentions of Scottish Borders Council's planning policy.

SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Policy HD2 Housing in the Countryside

- 2.2 The proposal is to be considered in terms of Housing in the Countryside policy associated with 'Economic Requirement' as there is genuine need for the new dwelling for an existing farming business as explained within the LGP report.

Agricultural Economic Requirement

- 2.3 The new dwelling is specifically for occupation by an agricultural worker. As detailed within LGP's report, the new dwelling, together with the proposed future shed, will enable the established farming business to expand and restructure its current active farming operations by employing and housing an additional member of staff on site and providing necessary sheep handling accommodation.
- 2.4 The business wishes to protect and grow the high value pedigree business by relocating the pedigree flock to Firknowe for justified health and welfare reasons as advised within the Agricultural Justification report. The health of the flock is at risk whilst it is being run with the commercial Blackface flock. The business cannot relocate the pedigree flock without a dwelling house being in place due to reasons of operational efficiency, animal welfare and security.
- 2.5 The Agricultural Justification report methodically addresses:
- The carrying capacity of the land at Firknowe,;
 - The labour requirement associated with the pedigree flock once it is located at Firknowe;
 - The financial viability of the pedigree business; and
 - The requirement for the on-site farm house.
- 2.6 The labour requirement against the existing resource is clearly set out within the report and the calculation indicates the farm business has a clear requirement for

over 10 labour units, demonstrating the level of commitment and resource required for the business to function effectively, particularly given the three geographically separate sites. This confirms the need for the business to employ an additional worker to allow the business to expand whilst maintaining a high standard of animal health and welfare. The current labour force is at full capacity with a demonstrated need of 10 labour units being covered by only 4 full time workers. There is currently no opportunity to expand or restructure the business without employing an additional worker.

- 2.7 The farming business has very limited access to housing. There are no houses within the ownership or control of the farm business which would be suitable or available for occupation by the additional worker. There are no existing houses or buildings capable of conversion at Firknowe or agricultural sheds available for use.
- 2.8 A record of houses within the ownership or control of the Applicant is set out below to demonstrate the lack of available housing for the required farm worker.

Holding	Distance from Firknowe	Dwelling	Occupation
Kingledores	11 miles	Benshaw Cottage	Farm shepherd
Kingledores	11 miles	Kingledores Farmhouse	Richard Wood + family
Bamflatt	6 miles	Bamflatt Farmhouse	Mr & Mrs J. Wood
Firknowe	N/A	No accommodation	Additional worker (proposed)

- 2.9 For completeness it should be noted that Kingledores Cottage at Kingledores is not part of Kingledores Farm and is held in unrelated third party ownership. Quiltburn at Kingledores is also not part of Kingledores Farm and is likewise in third party ownership. The Bungalow at Kingledores is owned by the Landlord of Kingledores and is not available to the farming business.
- 2.10 In summary, and specifically in terms of Housing in the Countryside policy's section **[F] Economic Requirement:**
- 1) The dwelling is a direct operational requirement of an existing agricultural enterprise – labour requirement and financial viability have been demonstrated;
 - 2) The worker for whom the dwelling is required will be employed full-time in the business;

- 3) The presence of that worker on site is essential for the efficient operation of the enterprise and for animal welfare reasons;
- 4) The dwelling, together with the proposed future shed, will allow an existing agricultural business to grow and expand;
- 5) There is no other suitable existing house or other building capable of conversion at Firknowe for the required residential use within the ownership or control of the Applicant;
- 6) The selected site is reasonably related to the existing two dwellings whilst not materially impacting upon residential amenity, being c. 90 m distant from the nearest dwelling.
- 7) The site has been selected to minimise the agricultural land take and to be able to be readily accessed from the existing track.

Services

- 2.11 Mains water is located at in Skirling and at the lower part of the land. Investigation will be made as to whether a mains supply is possible. If it is not, a borehole will be progressed. Foul disposal and surface water disposal would be managed with a soakaway to land, subject to ground conditions which are understood to be suitable by the Applicant.