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Mr Paul Duncan
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Scottish Borders Council

21/01982/FUL - The Blue House Near Swansfield Farm Reston Eyemouth
Change of use from agricultural store, alterations and extension to form dwellinghouse with garage

We would respectfully ask you to read this before making any determination of our application.

We are a local family with local businesses in the local area, and we would love to build our own home as there is a distinct lack of houses for sale in this area.

The home we are proposing is, in country terms, only a stone's throw away from Swansfield and will be a modern eco build totally off grid with all renewable energy sources and fully insulated.

This is not a speculative application for residential development in the countryside. It is a carefully considered submission on the site of an approved residential site to provide my family with a self-sustaining means of working and living in the local area we call home.

Relevant planning history of the site:
Change of use from agricultural use to dwellinghouse
Reference 00/00183/COU 12 April 2000

Change of use to form dwellinghouse
Reference 05/02159/FUL 20 January 2006

Planning permission has been granted not once but twice for the use of the Blue House and its curtilage for residential occupation.

Although it is accepted that these grants of planning permission have since lapsed, they clearly identify the Council's approval and acceptance for the residential use of the premises and thereby of the site. Indeed, there is some evidence of historical residential occupation of the building.

Correspondence from the Planning and Development Directorate at the time of the first application appreciates the limited scale of the building and therefore the need for additional accommodation on the site to provide a viable development.

This application seeks to provide long term family accommodation, carefully conceived to provide an agricultural form, design and materials to blend with its agricultural setting, in a position and form that will not interrupt public views of the Blue House nor impinge on its historic appearance and character.

As a lifelong local in East Berwickshire who is well settled in the local community of Reston and Auchencrow, my aim is to provide accommodation for my family that will sustain us and our businesses (small holding, joiners' and furniture restoration workshop) for the coming years.

The Blue House stands as a substantial building with four intact walls, and it is intended that the additional building will, using appropriate materials to match with the stone of the Blue House, form an agricultural appearance that is complementary with the surrounding countryside and landscape.

The overall design is, with its short, glazed link, forms an integral part of our future home, located and orientated so as to limit the work needed to the Blue House to allow it to showcase itself to the public views of the site, with additions to the rear.

The scheme is to provide an off-grid, self-sustaining build with high level insulation, rainwater harvesting and ground source heat pump to reduce its carbon footprint. Investigations have identified sufficient bore hole water supply and septic tank.

In terms of the Council's policy and guidance, as a conversion, our proposal complies with policy HD2(C) Housing in the Countryside; conversions of buildings to a house parts (a) and (b). And as stated above, the thoughtful design and location of new building work is in keeping with the architectural character of the existing building and the surrounding countryside and agricultural spatial character.

Rather than taking the view that this application with the appearance of a large new dwelling linked to a much smaller old building converted to additional ancillary accommodation it should instead be assessed as a single entity with an overall agricultural design, reminiscent of other building groups in the area, that would protect the historic fabric and appearance of Blue House, particularly when viewed from the public road. The design chosen is of agricultural proportions, appearance and materials not at all different from a large number of other building groups combining the old and the new.

Our scheme has support from the Community Council and there are no road safety issues raised by the Council's Transport Officer.

Accordingly, I would respectfully request that my application is given further consideration and assessment by the Council's Planning and Building Standards Committee.

Yours sincerely