

## **Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee Update 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

### **20/0421/FUL Agricultural Buildings to the East of Moss End, Spenbrook Road**

One additional response received from the National Farmer's Union in support on the following grounds:

Mr Dewhurst has been a long standing member of the National Farmers Union throughout his farming career, originally breeding Cattle and Sheep on his various agricultural holdings, and subsequently taking advantage of the proximity to the towns and villages of South East Lancashire, to diversify into the Equine Industry, providing DIY Livery and Equine Services from his premises.

The consequent interaction with the public at large and the need to augment farming incomes from diversified enterprises encouraged Mr and Mrs Dewhurst to invest in their current enterprise, which provides children's nursery activities across three sites within the Lower North West.

These facilities have been successful in their own locations, and the resultant profits have allowed Mr and Mrs Dewhurst to consider the development of their ambitions to introduce children to Farming and the Countryside, through the development of a purpose built, farm based facility, where children can interact with livestock and learn rural skills as a part of their development.

This ambition has the support of both the County Education Authority and OFSTED, who currently monitor and assess the existing nursery sites, all of which are currently noted as achieving the specification of "Outstanding".

The embrace of diversification is now seen as a crucial part of the Rural Economy. Nationally, some 66% of farm businesses have developed a diversified activity to support their farming business. The traditional agricultural support schemes are being withdrawn by Government, through the joint mechanisms of CAP Reform and Brexit.

As Britain leaves Europe, the traditional agricultural support schemes are being withdrawn, to be replaced by a bespoke scheme, individually tailored to each farm's circumstances, which follow the "Health and Harmony" principles contained within Government policy documents.

It is anticipated that the direct financial support will reduce, and that farmers will be encouraged to develop alternative business ideas to maintain profitability. Government Policy, including Planning Policy, is developing in ways which support that ambition through amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework, and to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Further changes are anticipated to support farmers and rural landowners in their diversification ambitions.

Having looked over the application as submitted to the Planning Authority, it is evident that the buildings proposed at Moss End have been sympathetically designed, in materials and colour, with a low profile, to blend into the setting within an Area of Outstanding Beauty.

The existing buildings upon the farm are unsightly and dilapidated and could be considered an unwelcome intrusion into the landscape.

The proposed development will mitigate this effect, by the use of appropriate construction, and sympathetic landscaping and screening by planting.

As an organisation, the National Farmers Union has long held the intentions to introduce families, children and the wider public to farming practices, and to cultivate a knowledge within society of where their food is produced, the standards which it conforms to, and to inform of our world leading food standards and heightened animal welfare.

We see facilities such as the development of the business proposed by Mr and Mrs Dewhurst, as an opportunity to make the Countryside accessible to a wider range of people, and we welcome such businesses.

The NFU has a dedicated initiative, STEMterprise, which engages with Primary and Pre-school children, to support their learning with appropriate materials and support from educational specialists.

We are arranging for Mr and Mrs Dewhurst to meet with our providers, to enhance the offering at their new facility.

We feel that the development, and the business, proposed is wholly in line with the intentions of Government for diversification within the Rural Economy, and that it will represent a valuable learning asset within the Borough of Pendle, and offer it our full support.

We trust that the Authority will agree, and that permission for this initiative will be granted.