Supporting Statement.

Erection of extension to barn to provide a treatment spa and gym, and change of use of ménage to tennis court, Small Shaw, Hollin Lane, Millhouse Green.

CONTEXT

Physical context

The Surrounding Area:

The site lies on a hillside within open countryside, and forms part of a 300 hectare farm, primarily engaged in livestock production and supporting three families. The land rising steeply to the north to a ridge line surmounted by wind turbines. The land falls away to the south towards Lee Lane. Access is via Hollin Lane, which also serves the main farm complex based at Withens.

The Site:

The site comprises two blocks of buildings, both listed. The first comprises a pair of houses, one occupied by one of the farming families, the second used as holiday accommodation. The second group were formerly barns, converted in 2002, and now comprise four dwellings, three used as holiday accommodation, the fourth by a member of the family.

To the east of the main house and garden is a barn and stables constructed in stone and blockwork, with plain asbestos roof and a blockwork wall 1m high forming an open storage bay to the eastern side. Beyond this is a fenced ménage area, constructed on the concrete base of a former agricultural building, and surfaced with sand and rubber chips.

The barn is used to store a tractor mower, logs for fires in holiday lets, farm tools, horse feed and hay / straw, and bar equipment for weddings.

Listed buildings:

Three listed buildings adjoin the application site, Lower Small Shaw Farmhouse (IoE Number: 333790), Small Shaw Farmhouse (IoE Number: 333788) and Barns at Small Shaw Farmhouse (IoE Number: 333789).

The existing business.

Planning permission was given for the conversion of the listed barns in 2001, and the holiday let business started in 2004 as a means of diversification for the farm. Accommodation for a total of 19 people is provided in four properties. While it has been successful, the business has changed significantly in character. As part of a national trend there has been a drastic reduction in demand for whole week bookings, and a major increase in weekend bookings, mainly hen parties which now form approximately 80% of bookings for this site. In addition, the business now operates 8 weddings a year using the accommodation and a temporary marquee. This side of the business has been operating for the last four years. To strengthen the business it is proposed to extend an existing building to provide a treatment spa and small gym. There will be three beauty treatment rooms, facilities that should appeal particularly to hen parties and wedding parties. James Booth, who supervises the holiday let business, is also qualified as a Chartered physiotherapist and in acupuncture, and will be able to offer these services to guests. Additional employment will be provided for local beauty specialists.

The conversion of the existing ménage to a tarmac surfaced tennis court will provide a further facility and attraction for guests.

Planning policies

The following policies have been taken into account in the submission of this application.

National policies

National Planning Policy Framework, sections 3 (Supporting a prosperous rural economy), 9 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

Local policies

The following policies were considered to be relevant when producing the design for this development: Core Strategy policies 20 (Promoting Tourism), 21 (Rural Economy), 30 (The Historic Environment), and 34 (Protection of Green Belt).

DESIGN OF THE SCHEME

Use

The proposal is to introduce ancillary activities to enable the existing holiday accommodation business to meet the changing demands of this market.

Amount

The extensions will result in an increase in the size of the existing building of 50%. This incorporates the storage area enclosed by blockwork walls. The barn is fully used for storing equipment for the farm and holiday let business, and so additional space is needed for the new facilities.

Scale

The building will not appear out of scale in relation to its surroundings given that is one of a group of former farm buildings. In addition the extension's impact will be limited because it will incorporate the open storage area to the east side of the existing building which is at present enclosed by blockwork walls.

Landscaping

The only change to the landscape would be the removal of a hedge of leylandii on the boundary with the garden of Smallshaw Farm House, replacing it with the stone gable wall of the extended building.

Appearance

The building is to be extended in the same proportions and style as the existing, and matching windows styles, stone heads and cills will be used. Natural york stone will be used to match the existing stone walls. The blockwork sections of the existing building to the front and sides will be replaced to provide an improved appearance. The existing plain asbestos roof will be replaced by plastic coated steel sheeting with a dark brown finish.

The appearance of the area will be further improved by the removal of the blockwork walls that enclose the open storage area to the sides of the existing building.

The dark grey surface of the ménage will be replaced by dark grey tarmac.

Access

No alterations to the existing access are required, and extensive parking space is available.

Green Belt

While the site lies within the Green Belt, paragraph 89 of National Planning Policy Guidance includes in the list of appropriate development "the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building". The proposal is for a 50% increase in the size of the building, which is not considered to be disproportionate. In addition, facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, such as tennis courts, are also appropriate in the Green Belt.

Should the view be taken that the proposals are not covered by this guidance, and instead constitute inappropriate development, then the following very special circumstances are considered to be sufficient to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt.

The principle circumstance is that the proposals are necessary to support an existing business which provides diversification for the farming concern. Because of the changes that are taking place in the holiday let business, with the major market now weekend hen parties, it will be difficult to continue successfully without providing some additional facilities. These will also support the occasional weddings that are based on the accommodation. This is an important factor when farms are struggling to survive in the current economic climate. National policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to such farm diversification schemes. Under the section "Supporting a prosperous rural economy" Paragraph 28 states:

"Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development."

It advises that to promote a strong rural economy Councils should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, promote the development and diversification of agricultural, and support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors.

The development is also supportive of the Council's Core Strategy policies CP20 (Supporting Tourism) and CP21(Rural Economy). It helps achieve a viable rural economy by supporting the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy, would result in the growth of an existing businesses, and is related to tourism.

The second circumstance would be the improvement to the setting of the listed buildings. The present building has sections of wall constructed in blockwork, a blockwork wall around an open storage area, and a plain asbestos roof. The listed buildings are faced in natural stone. The appearance of the building would be significantly improved by the construction / reconstruction of walls so that the building's main elevations are all in natural stone, and the roof replaced by dark brown sheeting. In addition, the removal of the open storage area, and the blockwork walls that enclose it would further improve the

appearance of the area. The development will protect and improve the setting of the three Listed Buildings, in accordance with Core Strategy policy CSP 30 and the advice contained in paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework.