

Holiday Accommodation at Island Farm, Staintondale, for Mr and Mrs M Else: Planning Statement

- 1 The Else family owns Grange Farm in Staintondale, a large and successful dairy cattle farming business. They have recently bought two adjoining holdings, Rudda Farm and Island Farm. They have surplus buildings and farm houses and wish to make good use of them as holiday accommodation as a form of agricultural diversification.
- 2 This planning application relates to a house at Island Farm. There is a separate application for Rudda Farm. I have prepared the Planning Statement on behalf of the applicants, Mr Mathew and Mrs Thelma Else, in conjunction with Terry Horton, MBIAT, ACIOB, who is the agent for the planning applications.
- 3 At their original holding, Grange Farm, they own 450 acres and rent a further 170. There is a good set of modern farm buildings, some very recently built. There are also three dwellings, all subject to agricultural occupancy conditions. A fourth dwelling, Grange Lea, is in separate ownership, still being owned by a member of the family from whom the Elses bought the farm in 1990.
- 4 A further 540 acres have been purchased with Rudda and Island Farms, of which 170 are at Island Farm. The total combined holding of all three farms is therefore now 1,160 acres (470 hectares including rented land). There are two dwellings at Rudda Farm, and one at Island Farm, which are not needed by the Elses.
- 5 **Existing Dwelling at Island Farm.** The house purchased by Mr and Mrs Else is called Island Farm House. It is large, with eight bedrooms, and was erected in the late 1960s. It should not be confused with Island Farm Cottage, nearby to the south east but in separate ownership. It is believed that Island Farm House has been used for bed and breakfast accommodation for some years before the recent purchase.
- 6 Outline planning permission was given for it on 8 December 1966 (application reference 6/3/1894). Detailed plans were approved on 13 April 1967 (6/3/1943). A restrictive condition was imposed on each consent. It said
"2: The occupation of the dwelling house shall be limited to persons employed or last employed in agriculture, as defined in Section 221 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1962, or in forestry, and the dependants of such persons."
- 7 **Proposal for Island Farm House.** The existing dwelling is not needed for the operation of the farming business. Grange Farm is not far away and as has been mentioned the Else family has three dwellings there.
- 8 Mr Else has considered trying to find an agricultural worker to rent the house, to comply with the current agricultural occupancy condition. However there are now very few farms in the area especially after his consolidation of Grange Farm by acquiring the two further ones. Therefore there is very limited demand for farm dwellings to rent. Farmland at Staintondale is bounded by extensive nearby open moorland to the west and north and by the North Sea to the East. The difficulty in finding agricultural occupants has been demonstrated locally and recently at Church Farm, Staintondale, which was vacant but subject to such an occupancy condition. It has been for sale for two years and is still unsold.
- 9 A particular difficulty which could deter likely tenants is the size of the farmhouse. It has seven bedrooms on the first floor and seven bathrooms. Downstairs are three large living rooms, one of which is being used as an eighth bedroom, and a very big kitchen. Planning policy is that agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with their functional requirements (see 9.14 of the LDF).
- 10 However, circumstances might change in future and there may be need for an agricultural worker to live at Island Farm. Mr Else is therefore applying to widen the permitted use, to include holiday occupation as well as agricultural.
- 11 The National Park Authority's planning policy is set out in its Local Development Framework (LDF). It says that dwellings no longer required for agriculture "*should not be kept vacant*". This is at

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paragraph 9.27 in the explanatory text of the Core Strategy Document for the LDF. Development Policy 22: Removal of Agricultural Occupancy Conditions states

"The removal of agricultural occupancy conditions will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the accommodation on the holding or in the locality. Where permission is granted, the condition will be substituted with one which restricts occupancy to local needs as defined in Core Policy J. Where a local person cannot be found to occupy the dwelling permission may be granted for temporary holiday use or rented accommodation for local needs."

- 12 Application is therefore being made for planning permission to vary the planning condition at Island Farm House to allow temporary holiday use as well as the existing agricultural employment use. Such a range of permitted uses would be flexible and allow for a range of options.
- 13 **Assessment.** The use of the existing surplus dwelling would be for holiday accommodation. It would therefore allow the business to diversify. This is prudent at a time of challenge for hill farming.
- 14 The proposals accord with the following policies in the LDF related to the rural economy.
 - Core Policy H: Rural Economy. By supporting the agricultural sector and opportunities for diversification.
 - Development Policy 13: Rural Diversification. An existing building would be used and the activity is compatible with the existing farm activity.
 - Development Policy 14: Tourism and Recreation. The facility would provide opportunity for visitors to enjoy the National Park.
 - Development Policy 22: Removal of Agricultural Occupancy Conditions. The policy encompasses holiday use.
- 15 The proposals are also supported by paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) by supporting rural enterprise, promoting agricultural diversification and supporting sustainable rural tourism and leisure.
- 16 **Conclusion.** I believe that this proposal is in accordance with planning policy. I hope it can be supported.

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