

Derrick and Debby Richardson  
Moorside Alpacas  
Ings Lane Kirkbymoorside  
YORK YO62 6DN

20<sup>th</sup> October 2022

The Planning Dept  
Ryedale District Council  
Ryedale House  
Old Malton Road  
MALTON  
YO17 7HH

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: MOORSIDE ALPACAS PLANNING APPLICATION**

We bought the 17.25 acres on Ings Lane in Spring 2004, at the time it had a small stone barn and a water supply

What prompted us to buy the land in the first place? Well, we had always dreamed of owning our own bit of land and starting a smallholding and here was our chance.

We thought about starting a sheep flock but weren't sure what type of sheep. Then the summer came and with it Ryedale Agricultural show. That was to be a day that changed our lives forever. At the show that day was an Alpaca Breeder showing of his Alpacas. We had never seen or heard of an Alpaca until that day. This was way before the days of Alpacas being a lifestyle choice. The must have accessory to the house in the country. Alpacas were a new and exciting alternative livestock.

Well, I can only say we were absolutely smitten by them!!! Consequently, in November 2004 we became the proud owners of 2 pregnant females, Blossom and Buttercup and the rest as they say is history and Moorside Alpacas was born so to speak.

Our first baby alpacas (cria) were born in May 2005, Ozzy, and Barley. These two sires went on to help found the herd of alpacas we have today.

Sadly, we lost Ozzy a few years ago but Barley still potters about the paddocks at the ripe old age of seventeen.

In 2012 we introduced a flock of pedigree Blue Faced Leicester breeding sheep. This was to compliment the alpaca fleece. Their blended fleeces make a lovely soft but strong yarn.

Over the years we have built up the land that we bought into a thriving smallholding.

We have now been breeding alpacas longer than most breeders in the country. We have invested a lot of time, a lot of money and an awful lot of blood sweat and tears (especially the tears, lots of tears of both sadness and joy) to get where we are today.

We have improved the business by building barns, and erecting fences creating smaller more manageable paddocks, and in 2018 we finally got electricity to the smallholding. This has all contributed to the welfare of the animals.

We are both so passionate about the welfare of our animals and their wellbeing, it is a concern that is constantly on our minds. We have gone through a lot of preventable heartache and financial loss over the years which has been mentally draining at times. There have been an awful lot of 'if only' said over the years and all because we were not on site. It is all very well being a 5-to-15-minute drive away (depending on the time of year and day) but nothing can compensate for being there.

Alpacas themselves present a problem when breeding. They are pregnant for approx. 11.5 months and can easily give birth 2 weeks either side of their due date. The birthing period is therefore extended over a considerable amount of time when breeding female alpacas. This is an animal that often gives no outward signs of the impending birth.

For this reason, it is very hard to keep checks on the alpacas and we have lost several baby cria over the years simply because they weren't in sight of us.

The causes of death have been varied. The cria has got stuck while trying to be born and has needed assistance to enter the world. Unfortunately, we have not been there to assist.

The cria has been born with the birth membrane unbroken around its mouth causing it to suffocate. The umbilical cord has not broken so the cria has been left hanging there and died. We have also had bleeding umbilical's where the cria has bled to death. Births in bad weather where the cria has not got up and going, then got chilled and consequently died. Most of these situations could have been rectified had we been there to assist. We do our best to be there, but our situation is not ideal.

The sheep have similar issues with lambing. We can pen them up when lambing and watch them via a camera, but a camera does not see everything and if we do see something amiss by we get there it is more than often too late. Minutes are vital in such situations. Ongoing care of the alpaca cria and lambs is vital for several months after birth. Both being capable of getting themselves into trouble such as, getting caught in fences, hedges, and troughs etc. We have on occasions lost animals in such situations due to not finding them in time.

We lost one of our best lambs this summer, she strangled herself in the fence. It was soul destroying. She was the last of a good bloodline that we had hoped to keep going through her. It was totally gutting to find her there. She was so entangled that we had to cut her out of the fence. That was a real low point for us. It could have so easily have been prevented. You can't hear a lamb bleating in distress at the other end of Kirkbymoorside. We have also had problems with foxes taking our ducks and hens with no chance of hearing the commotion such an incident would have created.

Due to the restrictions of where we live, we cannot progress as we would like to with both the alpacas and sheep. It is just not practical to increase numbers with the situation as it is. Our not being on site presents both a welfare and security problem. We have had phone calls saying our animals were on the road where the gates have been deliberately opened. We have been burgled on more than one occasion with expensive equipment taken and diesel siphoned off. We have even been involved in the robbery of our local ATM. The thieves stole a teleporter from J wood and sons behind us on the industrial estate. They then took it across our fields breaking down fences and gates, finally making their way to the town and ripping the ATM out of the wall with it. Something if seen or heard may have been prevented.

With input costs rising sharply for the business (feed, bedding, materials etc), it is now more vital than ever that losses are minimised by being onsite. Our growing reliance on the farm business, with plans to make the operation more efficient and profitable once onsite, will in turn improve the welfare of the animals in our care. Small losses on slim margins really make the difference.

Not being on site makes us very vulnerable to a myriad of situations that do not need to happen. We just want to do the best for our animals and be there when they need us most.

We need to be within earshot and eyesight to make it an all round better farming experience for all our animals as well as us.

Where there is life there is death, but it is that bit more stressful and heart breaking when we know it could have been prevented just for the sake of being there.

Our animals need us 24hrs a day 365 days a year. The least we can do for them, be there when they need us most.

Yours faithfully

D. [ ] and D. [ ] Richardcole

