The Farm Consultancy Group

An Agricultural Justification to Support a Planning Application for a Bovine TB Isolation and Rearing Unit

at West Dunely Farm, Grittleton, Wiltshire

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On Behalf of S P Madge & Son

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by Holly Hawker of *The Farm Consultancy Group* on behalf of Harry Madge of S P Madge & Son of West Dunley Farm, Grittleton, Chippenham, Wiltshire to confirm agricultural justification for a new TB calf Isolation rearing unit, comprising two calf rearing buildings, an ancillary building for feed and stores, a yard area and a rural worker's dwelling. This report should be read in conjunction with the planning application and plans submitted by Marc Willis of Willis & Co.

The report has been produced based on information provided by the client, farm records and standard costings data where appropriate.

This report gives agricultural justification and context to the proposed new unit, which will compliment the existing farming enterprises at West Dunley Farm, as well as provide a diversified form of agricultural income for Mr Madge.

2. Background

West Dunley Farm is a well- established mixed farm in North Wiltshire, comprising almost 300 acres of land, 280 of which forms part of the Duke of Beaufort's Badminton Estate, and the remaining 18.6 was purchased by the Madge family some 35- 40 years ago. Harry Madge (38) is the second-generation tenant of an Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy that his father previously held. Mr Simon Madge sadly passed away several years ago, and since then the farm has been under the management of Harry. Harry's mother, Wynne, was until her very recent passing still a partner in the business, though has for some time not taken an active role in the business owing to poor health. The land is a mix of arable and permanent grassland, the arable planting policy being mainly spring cereals and maize for forage and much of the grass is cut for racehorse hay. The business usually also operates between 150 and 200 acres on a mix of grass-keep and annual licenses.

The farming activity is all operated from the main yard at West Dunley, which has a mix of traditional Cotswold stone farm buildings and utilitarian steel framed farm buildings which house the 280 head

beef herd, up to 2,000 pigs at any one time (three batches per annum are taken on a 'Bed and Breakfast' scheme) and circa 75 calves which are reared on contract for Farmark.

The work is carried out by Harry and one full time employee. Harry, along with his partner Abigail and their young children, lives in the main farmhouse adjacent to the farmyard, and the employee is housed in a bungalow at the end of the farm drive. Both of these properties form part of the AHA Tenancy.

The proposal is for a TB unit to be constructed away from the main farmyard (this is a DEFRA requirement of TB isolation units) on a parcel of land that is owned by the family, and currently forms part of the arable rotation. The unit will be capable of taking 200 calves, that will arrive as one batch between 2 and 6 weeks old and be reared on site for 60 days until they are TB tested. If clear of TB they will then be sold on through the appropriate avenues, or moved to the main farmyard at West Dunley where they will be finished as part of the beef herd. The unit aims to host two batches per annum.

3. Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework published in April 2012 outlines that planning policies should support sustainable economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to new development. Planning strategies should maintain a prosperous rural economy including policies to support the sustainable growth of rural businesses. It should promote the development and diversification of agricultural businesses and support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors which respect the character of the countryside.

The framework lists that local planning authorities should avoid isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to be available at most times at or near their place of work in the countryside.

In the county of Wiltshire, the Wiltshire Core Strategy runs alongside the NPPF, the core strategy outlines a sustainable spatial strategy for future development in the county.

Prior to the National Planning Policy Framework and Wiltshire Core Strategy the Government's policy on the development of the Countryside was detailed in Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS 7).

The grounds covering planning permission for Agricultural Dwellings were set out in Annex A of PPS 7, this set out the agricultural requirements that need to be fulfilled if a permanent dwelling is to be permitted, these are:

- Clear functional need
- The need relates to full time workers who are predominantly employed within the agricultural sector and does not relate to a part time requirement
- The agricultural activity concerned has been established for at least three years, proved profitable for at least one, are currently financially sound and have a clear prospect of remaining so.
- The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling either on the unit or locally
- Normal planning requirements are satisfied

The Wiltshire Core Strategy has reintroduced the need for functional and financial tests to be provided. A full justification for financial viability seemed unnecessary for this level of development, but the functional test is addressed within this report.

4. Background Information

The proposal for the TB isolation unit has come about as response by Mr Madge to the forthcoming changes in agricultural support and the removal of the Basic Payment Scheme, which will have a significant impact upon the farm's income. It is not the policy of the Duke of Beaufort's estate to enable any kind of non- agricultural diversification upon their farms, and with the farming enterprises already being quite diverse, any further activity at West Dunley would require significant investment, which the family understandably would prefer to spend upon their own land than that of their landlord's. With this in mind, the introduction of the TB isolation unit on the proposed site holds a practical and viable solution to this. The site lends itself well to the use, having a separate access to the main farm holding (again, a DEFRA requirement) and being in a remote part of the farm, but still accessible via an existing track from the main holding.

Wiltshire, along with the rest of the South West of England, has for a long time now suffered with Bovine Tuberculosis cases, and remains an area of High Risk. Requirements for regular testing are most stringent when in an high risk area; all bovines over 42 days old must be tested every six months for the disease, and if tested positive the animal must be destroyed. Farms that have had a confirmed case of TB (have had a 'reactor' to the test) are then required to undertake testing of all of it's bovines every 60 days. Until a test yields zero reactors, the farm is 'closed' and animals cannot be moved onto or off of the holding (with some small exceptions). This has major consequences for farm business profit margins, as animals cannot be sold into the open market, and also can result in some farms becoming over- crowded as animals remain on the farm for longer than intended.

In a lot of dairy situations, where space, bedding, feed and labour to accommodate them is minimal, young calves would be sold into market shortly after birth. However, if the farm selling them is closed with TB, the youngstock must go to an approved TB isolation unit where they will be tested, stored for 60 days, then tested again to ensure that they are not infected with the disease. It is such a unit that is the subject of this application, and units of these kind are in high demand by DEFRA as TB cases continue to rise in the South West, and indeed Mr Madge's proposal has been given support by the local Animal and Plant Health vet. Units such as these can offer other closed farms a more viable alternative to simply destroying their youngstock, even though the calves are valued at

significantly less than they would be if they were to be sold on to the open market. It is also the policy of many milk contractors and supermarkets that calves not be destroyed in this situation, and an alternative avenue of rearing these animals be found. Beyond this, selling TB restricted calves to a TB unit is a far more sustainable approach than some alternatives, and as all farms come under to pressure to reduce their carbon footprint, calf deaths and destructions of young animals needs to be reduced.

TB isolation units must have their own dedicated machinery including handling facilities, milking machines, mucking out equipment and feed and water management equipment. APHA policy also dictates that where a unit is located on an existing farm, but is being run as it's own holding (as would be the case at West Dunley) that dedicated personnel be assigned to each holding, and those on the isolation unit should not have access to other livestock outside of that unit, to minimize biosecurity breaches. There is therefore a requirement for a dedicated team member to manage the isolation unit, and they will require their own accommodation.

The project, whilst offering a form of diversified income from the existing farm enterprises, also extends and feeds-in to the established farming practices at West Dunley farm. Mr Madge has been rearing young calves on contract for Farmark for some years now, who supply one of the high-end UK supermarkets with superior quality beef. Their animal welfare requirements are therefore very high, as well as their herd health expectations. This is something that is being seen more widely in the beef market, and in particular reduced allowance of anti-biotic use by buyers is making cattle very difficult to source and worth a premium. Separate to the contract rearing for Farmark, Mr Madge has his own herd of 280 beef cattle which he buys in at circa 3- 4 months old and takes through to fat, and so sourcing good quality calves that he can guarantee have been housed and fed properly so that they have adequate resilience to disease and illness is becoming a problem for him. He intends to keep between 150 and 200 of the calves he rears in the isolation unit for himself, moving them to the main holding once they have passed their 60 day TB test. This will mean that a far cheaper and more reliable source of buying calves is then available to him, as calves will be purchased into the unit at circa [redacted] per calf, and not at the current value of [redacted] per calf.

Sourcing calves for TB isolation units can be risky; all of the calves must come from the same source farm, and must be collected within a six week period (so if the farm is shut with TB, only calves on site at that point or born in the 6 weeks after can be moved off). If one farm cannot provide enough calves to fill the unit, this could increase costs and overheads per head, as well as resulting in a reduced number of animals to sell on, making the unit unviable. However, Mr Madge has been working closely with Farmark for some time now, and they have agreed to supply all calves from their existing supply base, ensuring a consistent supply of calves are available to be moved to West Dunley. By working with a large-scale supplier, the risk of not filling the unit, or buying poor quality calves is greatly minimized.

5. The Proposal

The proposal is for 2 steel portal framed buildings, lying opposite each other, separated by a concrete yard. To the end of the yard will be another open fronted steel portal framed building, which will be used for storing straw, feed and other supplies needed for the unit. The size and design of the buildings is detailed in accompanying plans and documents within this application. The yard will then be fully gated with a wildlife-proof gate. An area of hard standing where tractors can be sprayed down will lie just outside of the gates, and water collected from here will be collected in a tank. The soiled bedding will be removed and stored as Farm Yard Manure in an in- field heap (in keeping with Farming Rules for Water) and then applied to the arable land as a fertilizer source in the spring.

Having the two buildings is an important part of the design, and essential when rearing large batches of calves as it reduces the spread of diseases such as pneumonia and Cryptosporidium. Pneumonia becomes prevalent in areas with poor air intake or over-stocked corners. Whilst the design of the buildings, with plenty of fresh air, high rooves and open sides should minimize outbreaks as much as possible, separating the buildings reduces the chance of all of the batch becoming infected with the air-born disease. Cases of Crypto spread quickly through calves within the same shed by contaminated water and bedding. This can be

managed by housing calves in pens but again, the physical separation of the two buildings makes controlling spread much easier.

The central courtyard will be used for handling (each animal will need to be TB tested on to and off of the farm so safe, efficient handling facilities will be important) and any forage feed will be spread next to the gates for the calves to feed on. The implementation of the courtyard within the design is also a forward- thinking and innovative back-up plan, as should the unit have an animal test positive for TB and be closed and Mr Madge be unable to sell on the animals, the buildings can be opened up into the central yard and the unit is then capable of accommodating much larger animals.

The storage shed is essential as no machinery, feed or other supplies must move between the existing farm holding at West Dunley and the TB unit for biosecurity reasons. The unit therefore must be self sufficient with its own storage.

The farm workers dwelling, which will provide accommodation along with essential washing facilities for the farm worker, will lie just to the south of the unit. As previously stated, the unit must have it's own designated personnel, and attending to young calves, as will be proven in the later functionality test, requires significant man hours. Since Brexit and the Covid-19 outbreak, farm labour has been increasingly difficult to source and the success of the unit will depend upon finding a suitable, reliable and conscientious person to oversee the unit and care for the animals within. Despite the actual need for someone to be on site to provide the level of care required, many people will now not consider a job in agriculture unless it comes with proper accommodation that is commensurate with the level of responsibility that they have, and in this case that is a proper farm manager's property. It is for this reason, as well as the existing business activities at West Dunley, that a permanent rural workers dwelling is being applied for, and not a temporary accommodation.

6. Machinery

The business owns a large machinery fleet. All of the arable and grassland is managed and farmed by the business themselves.

7. Functional Test

All figures for labour requirements have been obtained from 'The Agricultural Budget and Costings Book – 91st Edition' (2020) by Agro Business Consultants.

The table beneath illustrates the current business activities, without the additional introduction of the TB unit.

	Numbers of animals/hectares	**Standard Man-Days required (per animal/ per ha)**	**Enterprise Total**
Calves (0- 12months)	75	1.75	131.25
Weaned calves (6-12 months)	140	0.81	113.40
Extensive beef animals (12-24 mnths)	140	1.75	245.00
Pigs	6000	0.15	900.00
Arable / Maize	88	0.5	44.00
Grassland	178	1.6	284.80
Total Enterprise Requirement			**1718.45**
Allowance for Farm Maintenance		**15%**	**257.77**
TOTAL			**1976.22**
	Standard Man Days provided by 1 Person		275
	Total labour requirement		**7.19**

The table beneath shows the labour requirement of the unit as itself, without any allowance for field work included which, in reality, as much of the forage, straw and grain feed will be grown on the farm for the unit should have a small allocation to the unit in addition to the calf rearing.

	Numbers of animals/hectares	Standard Man-Days required (per animal/ per ha)	Enterprise Total
Calves (0- 12months)	200	1.75	350.00
Total Enterprise Requirement			**350.00**
Allowance for Farm Maintenance		**15%**	**52.50**
TOTAL			**402.50**
	Standard Man Days provided by 1 Person		275
	Total labour requirement		**1.46**

The tables above detail a total of 7.19 labour units for the existing farm enterprises and 1.46 in addition to this for the new TB unit. In total, West Dunley Farm would have a total man requirement of 8.65 after the establishment of the TB unit. This includes all livestock managed by the business including land holdings and grass rented and leased in the local vicinity. As you can see from the table, overall, there is a significant labour requirement and the need for additional accommodation on site is more than justified, and the unit as a stand- alone site requires the use of a house full time.

A labour unit of one person is assumed to work 2,200 hours per year. These total hours are converted into 275 notional 'Standard Man Days' of 8 hours (ABC, 2020).

PPS7 is no longer a material consideration however to assist the Council in their decision making the statement required an enterprise to show an essential need for the proper functioning of the enterprise for at least one rural worker to be readily available on site at most times. Paragraph 4 (i) of Annex A referred to the example of animals requiring essential care at short notice, and in 4 (ii) to the ability to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss.

The proper functioning of a livestock farm requires that skilled stock attendants are available at very short notice at any time of the day or night. Practically, there is a requirement for two or more people to be available for most tasks. This is especially important at night when any daytime staff have gone home.

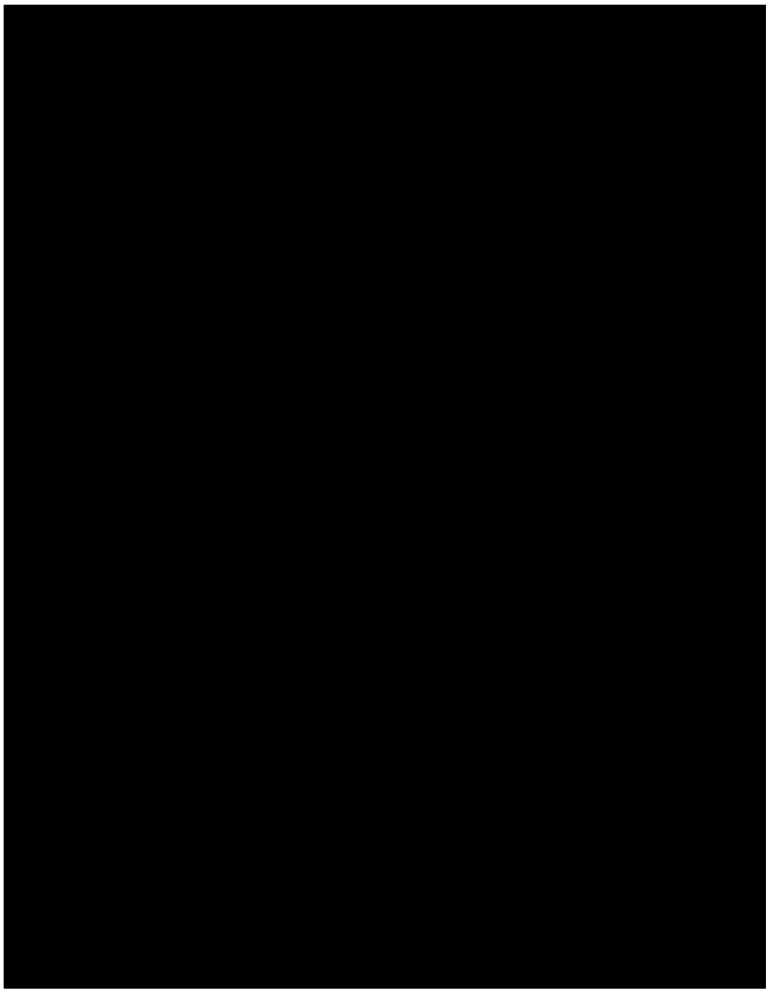
Currently Harry and his employee live on site at the main farm house, and in the bungalow at the end of the farm drive. Both of these properties are too remote to properly serve the new unit, and are also subject to the AHA Tenancy, which, if taken back by the landlord, would result in there being no suitable property available for the new unit.

8. Financial viability of the unit

S P Madge & Son have been running a successful business that has spanned multiple generations to date with sufficient profits to cover the required drawings and reinvestment within the business. Previous years accounts can be provided on request if required.
The new TB unit will offer a diversified income; calves will be purchased into the unit in a batch of 200 at one time, and then either sold off the farm once they have passed their 60 day test, or transferred into the existing beef unit on West Dunley Farm.

[redacted]

Many of the overhead costs can be minimized by making use of the farm's available assets, such as growing feed and straw. A rough gross margin of the unit (sans labour for now) can be found below.



Although basic, the gross margin above clearly indicates that the project is viable and able to withstand any financing costs that are associated with it. Should the TB situation in the South West of England change, and the unit was no longer needed as an isolation, the facilities would remain as high-quality, purpose built calf rearing facilities and would be employed as such.

9. Proper Functioning

The presence of youngstock on a farm ensures that there is a continued requirement for at least one person at all times, and the stipulation that a TB unit must have one delegated person (we have already proven in the standard man day calculation that this role far exceeds that of one full time job) also justifies in its own right the absolute need for someone with proper training and experience to be in charge of this unit.

Farm Assurance Codes of Practice require that suitable trained persons are available 24 hours a day and the Government's Strategy for Food and Farming states that '*high standards of animal health and welfare are important because they are a vital part of producing safe food and because we care about how animals are treated. High standards are also essential for the economic success of the industry.*

Appropriately skilled workers will need to be living on site to be available at short notice to manage the animals' health and welfare. The Code of Recommendation for the Welfare of Livestock (Cattle) states that 'no matter how acceptable a system may be in principle, without competent, diligent stockmanship, the welfare of animals cannot be adequately catered for.'

The calves will be of an age when they may be transferring from their mother's milk to milk powder. It is important to be able to spot stress in calves from when they change from whole milk to milk powder feeding and train calves to the bucket feeding system. It will prove vital that all housed calves are regularly inspected and monitored as their welfare depends on frequent human attention. Particularly after travelling, calves can be stressed and dehydrated and diligent attention

must be taken for several weeks after this in order to minimize calf fatalities and suffering. Calves are susceptible to a number of health problems that require rapid attention such as viral diseases, pneumonia, bloat and scour, all of which need to be detected early and immediately treated if losses are to be avoided. The Code of Recommendation for the Welfare of Livestock (Cattle) states that 'it is particularly important that you watch calves regularly for signs of diarrhoea or respiratory disease.'

The Welfare of Farmed Animal Regulations stress that animals which appear to be ill or injured shall be cared for appropriately without delay and that action should be taken immediately if any animals are injured or appear ill or distressed. From a financial perspective it is also vital to the success of the business that any losses are kept to an absolute minimum. Adequate and timely supervision at all times is therefore essential.

To enable good staff to be available on farm 24 hours a day, it is important, in any farming business, that the accommodation is of a sufficient standard, as well as being located closely enough to the main source of their employ to be available immediately.

10. Current Business Achievements and Intentions for the future.

To date the Madge Family have created and developed a resilient farming business, taking a mixed approach to maximize the assets available to them. The next decade is going to be critical if they are to continue farming, as agricultural subsidies decline and the beef industry remains volatile whilst it is still exposed to foreign imports, rising welfare expectations, reduced anti-biotic requirements and a rise in veganism and vegetarianism causing uncertainty amongst the consumer market.

There are no other buildings on the farm that can be considered for the TB unit; the off-lying, accessible area of land has been particularly singled out as an ideal location for a TB isolation unit owing to it's remoteness, and so running this unit from the main yard would not be an option. Even if Mr Madge were to cease all of his other operations and solely operate as a TB

isolation unit from the main farm, the buildings would not be suitable to rearing calves in these numbers and to the exacting conditional requirements made of the industry.

There are no other available properties on the farm that should be considered for the provision of rural worker's dwellings, owing to the remoteness of the unit, and the fact that the dwellings that are currently available to the business could not become so if the situation with the tenancy were to change.

11. Availability of Other Houses

When considering the essential need for a rural worker's dwelling, it is important to assess the availability of other property in the vicinity.

The villages of Grittleton and Littleton Drew are the only villages within a 10 minute drive of the facility, and therefore worthy of consideration as potentially close enough to serve the unit (though still not within site and sound or close enough to be on-site fast enough should an emergency arise). Both of these villages lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and are, as such, very desirable places to live. Both boast excellent transport links to Bristol, Bath, Swindon and London Paddington via Chippenham train station, whilst also being within idyllic North Wiltshire Countryside. Properties of the type considered suitable for an employee of the TB unit (a home 2-3 bedroom home, with parking and cloakroom with washing facilities). A Rightmove search of 2-3 bedroom properties within 3 miles of West Dunley Farm presents at present only one property being marketed for sale (3 bedrooms [redacted] in Grittleton) and no properties available to rent. Whilst it is not disputed that such properties may become available, what is for certain is that to buy or rent a property within this location would not be a viable option for the business. It also does not solve the undeniable problem that the unit needs its own worker who will live on site, to be available 24 hours a day.

12. Conclusion

In conclusion; Harry Madge is a hardworking, progressive and conscientious young farmer who has taken on a robust, traditional style of farming business and tenancy from the previous generation. He is now facing a critical time of his own life and needs to ensure that he is able to weather the changes that British Agriculture is facing in the coming years if he is to continue farming. In order to do this, he needs to make radical changes to diversify the agricultural income of the unit, and is pursuing an opportunity to do this that is away from his landlord's stipulations.

The unit has been backed by DEFRA and APHA owing to the shortage of units of this kind in the South West of England, and will give Mr Madge the infrastructure to revolutionise his farming enterprises and activities in the future.