RURAL BUSINESS APPRAISAL

APPLICATION FOR THE PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR AN ESSENTIAL RURAL BUSINESS WORKER

AT

LAND AT THE STREET,
WEST KNOYLE
WARMINSTER
WILTSHIRE

FOR

MR PAUL YATES
(T/A BROAD OAK GAME FARM LIMITED)

PREPARED BY:

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This appraisal has been carried out by Sam Haskell, who holds a Diploma in Rural Land Management from the Royal Agricultural University, is a Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and a Fellow of the Association of Agricultural Valuers. Mr Haskell has been involved in agricultural and rural surveying across Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.

A large part of Mr Haskell's practice is the preparation and submission of planning applications in relation to agricultural and rural based developments.

1.0 Background

1.1 This is an appraisal of the rural business considerations involved in the provision of a temporary dwelling as temporary accommodation on land at Street Lane, which is a working part of Broad Oak Game Farm, West Knoyle, Warminster, BA12 6AG.

1.2 This report has been prepared at the request of Paul Yates (t/a Broad Oak Game Farm Limited) who owns Broad Oak Game Farm (as well as Holcombe Farm, Alton Pancras, Dorchester; Cruxton Manor Farm, Maiden Newton, Dorchester; and Rockpitts Farm, Plush, Dorchester). The approach taken to this appraisal involves the application of objective assessment criteria to provide an independent and impartial appraisal. Although the former Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas - Annex A) has been superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the format therein for assessing functional need and to a lesser extent the financial strength of the business continues to provide a good basis for assessment. It should however be made clear that there is no financial test in relation to essential rural workers' dwellings under the NPPF and this position has been supported by the 2013 case of Embleton -v- Gaston.

1.3 The site was visited by Sam Haskell and Edward Dyke on 8th August 2023 and the appraisal is based upon information provided by Mr Yates at that time.

2.0 Broad Oak Game Farm

2.1 Broad Oak Game Farm extends to approximately 350 acres (141.64 hectares) with varying heights above sea level. The lowest being approximately 135m above sea level along The Street, West Knoyle, to a high point that is 228m above sea level. The farm extends from just North of West Knoyle to the A303. There are multiple points of access to various parcels on the farm, however to the subject site takes direct access off The Street, then over an established farm track heading North. The main farmyard is also access from a separate established access from The Street.

3.0 The Business

3.1 Since 1993, the base for his business had been West Knoyle, Wiltshire. Purchasing 40.5 hectares (100 acres) there, he then transferred to it the game breeding activities he had established since 1983 on his father's smallholding at Broad Oak, Sturminster Newton. The business took with it the name Broad Oak Game Farm. The acquisition in 2001 of the shooting rights over 4,000 acres at Alton Pancras brought Mr Yates back to Dorset and represented a major extension of one part of his business. However, it did not provide additional space for breeding and rearing. Mr Yates rented additional land at West Knoyle while looking for other suitable land to purchase. Since, further expansion has continued through the years.

3.2 As at 2023, the applicant is rearing 70,000 birds at Broad Oak Game Farm, this comprising of 55,000 pheasants and 15,000 partridges. Also Broad Oak Game Farm is the hatchery for all of the applicants other game sites, hatching on average approximately 35,000 per week during that time of year. Approximately one third of the hatched are kept for the applicants own ran shoots which is approximately 200,000 birds across all units.

3.3 Broad Oak Game Farm has one dwelling of which Paul Yates and his family occupy. On the site of the rearing of these 70,000 birds (Land at The Street) there is currently no permanent dwelling.

3.4 Game rearing is a specialist business and requires experienced workers and it is now vital that one individual is able to reside on the holding on a full time basis in order to provide effective 24 hours a day coverage for husbandry and security.

3.5 Essentially, the game rearing and shooting year operates as follows:

Early February - erect and prepare laying pens for the arrival of laying hen pheasants.

Late February / Start of March - laying hens put into the pens with constant checking and vermin control being essential. This typically starts in March and peaks in mid-April, peaking for 5-6 weeks, tailing off mid-June.

Late March - egg collection commences (which, due to the intensity of the work, requires multiple part time employees to assist) with all eggs, once collected, delivered to Broad Oak Game Farm main holding for incubation. Egg collection will take place over roughly a 10–12-week period, finishing in mid-June.

Middle April - day old chicks start returning to the subject land at The Street and are then introduced to rearing sheds under heat lamps. At this stage, the birds are extremely vulnerable to temperature change and disease infection and constant and repeated checking takes place over virtually a 24-hour period. A high level of workload is necessary because if the heater goes out the chicks will die. This phase, with the chicks arriving in batches, stretches over a 3-month period.

Late May - chicks start going out within pens but return to night shelters every night. Again, because of the batches, this stretches over a 3-month period. This is very high weekly workload time period as the chicks need to be pushed back into the lamps.

June/July/August - chicks growing into poults with pheasant poults being delivered to shoots at 7 weeks old and partridge chicks being delivered to shoots at 14 weeks old.

Year round - security on game farms has become a significant issue due to the increasing criminal activities of animal liberationists and saboteurs. This follows widespread distribution of site addresses on social media. Releasing chicks and young poults during night hours has become increasingly common and is actually very harmful to animal welfare.

3.6 The rearing process starts in February each year and it extends into September before birds have left the rearing fields to release pens. This is not only for the shoots that are run by Broad Oak Game Farm Limited, but it supplies approximately 50 other major and minor shoots in Southern England.

3.7 Normally the large commercial shoots want poults relatively early as they have permanent, professional and trained staff who can cope with young birds, whilst the smaller, farmer run shoots want a stronger bird (as labour is not available) and they will be delivered in August and early September.

3.8 From mid-September to mid-October, the rearing fields are dismantled of their equipment and pens and are disinfected and treated before being stored in an agricultural building during the winter months.

3.9 From mid-October to the end of January, the staff deal with the shooting on 2-3 days per week and, in addition, to game keeping duties at all other times which requires them to deal with vermin control, dogging in and to provide constant night-time vigilance against poachers. They are also responsible at that time of the year for attending shooting days at other shoots under the control of Broad Oak Game Farm Limited and to be responsible for any livestock on the holding and agricultural land management and maintenance.

3.10 There are particularly intense periods of activity resulting in extremely long hours being worked from 1st March to 1st September each year (particularly as days lengthen as summer arrives). Working days do literally run from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. over that 6 month period, which is why it is essential to provide on site accommodation for a full time employee.

3.11 Whilst Broad Oak Game Farm Limited now has 10 full time staff and 10 part time staff in total, the operation on land at The Street is increasingly dependent on 1 full time staff and 2 part time staff, although during the shooting season, the overall business will employ a further 50-100 people on a part time basis for beating and related shoot day duties.

3.12 In addition to game rearing, the holding is farmed conventionally with the majority of operations currently being carried out by contractors. Livestock graze on a keep basis and silage is mown during late spring/early summer on the same basis. At Broad Oak Game Farm approximately 100 Ewes are lambed each year as well.

3.13 Arable farming operations are organised by the applicant who also oversees usual farm maintenance including hedge cutting annually.

4.0 Cropping & Stocking

4.1 Details of the cropping, stocking and land use at Broad Oak Game Farm were approximately as follows:

Arable Cropping - 70 acres
Woodland/scrub - 30 acres
Pasture - 250 acres

Total 350 acres

Breeding pheasants – 2,000
Rearing birds – 70,000 (55,000 pheasants and 15,000 partridges)
Breeding Ewes – 100

* Rearing bird figures are the total for the season and not all were present on the farm at the time of the appraisal visit. The entire farm is owner occupied.

5.0 Buildings

5.1 Broad Oak Game Farm has a range of modern and traditional agricultural farm buildings. The traditional farm buildings are not suitable modern agriculture. All these farm buildings are situated close to the main farm entrance and vulnerable to unwanted attention.

5.2 Land at The Street currently has no agricultural buildings but would benefit from having a secure building which will allow the safe storage of valuable fodder, pens, and machinery throughout the year. Currently these valuable assets must be travelled back and forth from the buildings at Broad Oak Game Farm.

6.0 Labour

6.1 The labour in 2023 for land at The Street consists of 1 full time employee and 2 seasonal workers essentially employed full time from March to October, to assist with the rearing programme. The part time workers are then put onto winter roles. There is more full-time labour at Broad Oak Game Farm which can assist. Additionally, labour is brought in from Cruxton and Alton Pancras to facilitate seasonal tasks throughout the year and there is ongoing exchange of labour between the various holdings. Overall management is carried out by Mr Yates personally as the business owner.

7.0 Dwellings

7.1 As noted above, there is one permanent dwelling at Broad Oak Game Farm.

7.2 Previously the applicant has moved around a temporary caravan without any planning permission on land at The Street.

7.3 The application is to station a mobile home at Broad Oak Game Farm for an employee to manage the day to day activities of the business, take full responsibility for security, rearing the birds and oversee shooting during the winter season.

7.4 The provision of temporary accommodation will enable the business to continue operating to high standards of animal welfare.

8.0 Appraisal of Agricultural and Game Rearing Factors

8.1 Functional Appraisal

8.1.1 A functional test can be used to "establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the business for one or more workers to be readily available at most times" (an extract of the wording from the former PPS7 Annex A which the NPPF has superseded).

8.1.2 The calculations that follow relate to the requirements for essential care at short notice of the game birds at Broad Oak Game Farm, together with land management activities. Consideration has also been given to security issues as outlined above.

8.1.3 Standard Man Day Calculation

CROP/STOCK	**SMDs PER UNIT**	**SMDs**
Arable	70 acres @ 0.8/acre	56
Pasture	250 acres @ 0.2/acre	50
Woodland	75 acres @ 0.4/acre	30
Breeding Pheasants	2,000 birds @ 0.06/bird	120
Rearing pheasant and partridge poults	70,000 birds @ 0.011/bird	770
Provision for shooting days	30 @ 6 each	180
Ewes	100 @ 0.38/sheep	38
Total Crop & Stock		1244
General Farm Maintenance	@ 15%	186
Farm Management	@ 5%	62
Total Assessed Annual Labour Requirement		1392

8.1.4 The provision for shooting days is an estimate of the regular farm labour required in preparation on the days and does not include beaters hired in by the day for the shoot.

8.1.5 The Standard Man Days (SMD) system can be used to provide a general estimate of the farm labour requirement. A labour unit of one person is assumed to work 2,200 hours per year. This might be thought of as 45 standard working weeks of 39 hours after holidays, illnesses etc. have been deducted, plus an average of 10 hours overtime for each of those weeks (45 x 49 = 2,205). These total hours are converted into 275 notional 'Standard Man days' of 8 hours. This figure obviously includes average overtime but can be increased by further overtime working. The calculation takes no account of the seasonality of labour requirements of the special circumstances of individual holdings and should be regarded as a general indication of the likely need, rather than a precise prediction.

8.1.6 Every enterprise on the farm requires a number of SMDs for each unit of production (per hectare, per cow etc.). The total SMD requirements for each enterprise is thus found by multiplying by the size of the operation. The total labour needed on the holding is the sum of all the individual enterprises. An additional 15-20% has then traditionally been added to account for general maintenance, repairs and management. The total SMD requirement is then divided by 275 to find the number of full-time employees that will be required.

8.1.7 The total figure of 1392 Standard Man Days gives a theoretical labour requirement of the holding for agriculture/game rearing/shooting purposes is for 5.06 full time workers.

8.1.8 In terms of demonstrating functional need, it is concluded that the farm business has a labour requirement of over 5 full time labour equivalents. This requirement is in fact met by 3 full time and 4 part time workers at Broad Oak Game Farm with back up from Cruxton and Alton Pancras when needed. Land at the Street is predominantly reliant on 1 full time employee and 2 part time staff. For breeding pheasants and partridges and pheasant poults reared requires the ready availability of qualified attention at all times and from March to October this can be over a 24 hour period. The provision of accommodation at land at The Street makes a significant difference to the business at Broad Oak Game Farm.

8.2 <u>Financial Appraisal</u>

8.2.1 The applicant's business (operating at West Knoyle, Alton Pancras, Plush, Cruxton and Holcombe Farm) known as Broad Oak Game Farm Limited, has grown from a one man business when Mr Yates commenced in 1983 to a business with an annual turnover of £2,500,000 and employing 10 full time and 10 part time staff with between 50 and 100 part time staff being employed as beaters from October to January each year.

8.2.2 The business has, for many years, been profitable (the capital to secure Cruxton Manor Farm in 2007, Rockpitts Farm in 2017, and Holcombe Farm in 2018 coming from the retained profits of the business), remains so and has every prospect of remaining profitable in the long term.

8.2.3 It is safe to say, therefore, that the business has been planned on a viable long term basis and will continue to provide good and secure long term employment for its proprietor and his staff.

9.0 Planning Statement

9.1 The specific guidance relating to essential rural worker's accommodation which has previously been set out in PPS7 has now been largely superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework and in particular paragraph 79.

9.2 The wording of paragraph 79 is as follows:

"Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

a) There is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside ….."

9.3 In my opinion, it is fair to assume in this case that special circumstances do exist (due to the specialist game rearing activities and the scale of those activities that take place on land at The Street and Broad Oak Game Farm) and that there is an essential need for a rural worker to live on the site in order to provide the 24 hour a day care that is required from March to September each year if pheasants and partridges are to be successfully reared. From October to February each year, there is significant work involved in packing and unpacking game rearing equipment including all related bio security work, and providing 24 hour security for the holding and dealing with shooting activities in the winter months.

9.4 Over and above this, section 6 of the NPPF states at paragraph 80:

"Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business and wider opportunities for development".

9.5 Paragraph 84 states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;

b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses;

c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside ….."

9.6 Game rearing, alongside the ongoing agricultural and shooting activities at Broad Oak Game Farm, is a development and diversification of the core agricultural business and other land based activities and support should therefore be given for essential rural worker's accommodation that supports that development and diversification and which in itself provides employment in the countryside.

9.7 Over and above this, the business brings sportsmen from all over the UK and further afield to Dorset and Wiltshire, providing business for hotels, bed and breakfasts, pubs, restaurants and local shops and, therefore, what should be considered as not only the employment of the business itself creates but the business employment created for third parties as a result of the overall game rearing and shooting activities run by Broad Oak Game Farm Limited.

10.0 Environmental & Landscaping

10.1 The proposed siting of the caravan is within the River Stour Catchment and therefore phosphates and nitrates are not assumed to be an issue. An appropriate sewage treatment plant is proposed to be installed as waste management for the proposed.

10.2 The site is within the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Down Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposed accommodation is screened from public highway by woodland and the sites natural topography which slopes South. There is also an existing natural hedgerow to the South of the proposed location. There is no public right of way which crosses the parcel or surrounding parcels, therefore there is no public view of the proposed accommodation. We are aware of dark skies policy for the AONB and care will be taken to avoid any conflict with this.

11.0 Summary

11.1 The applicant, Paul Yates of Broad Oak Game Farm Limited, has over the last 30+ years grown a game, breeding, rearing and shooting service which has become an important employer within the counties of both Dorset and Wiltshire.

11.2 That business creates special circumstances that warrant an essential rural worker's dwelling being provided on land at The Street as to ensure the welfare of the birds that are being reared and to ensure that the business can operate effectively, profitably, and securely.

10.3 In my opinion, there is a need for a unit of residential accommodation on land at The Street to support the ongoing game rearing, breeding and sporting activities and that accommodation can be provided by a mobile home in the short to medium term.

SIGNED … [redacted] ….. DATED: 17th October 2023