

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING APPLICATION.

1.0	REFERENCE	APA/001/0699
1.1	Proposed Development	"Erection of an [sic] rural workers dwelling"
1.2	Planning Authority	Wiltshire Council Development Control North
1.3	Planning Application No.	PL/2025/09813
1.4	Applicant	Tangent Estates Limited, Easton Grey House, Easton Grey
1.5	Site Address	Pinchmore Buildings, Willesley, SN16 0PA

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Location

The application site lies immediately north of the livestock buildings known as Pinchmore Buildings. Pinchmore Buildings lie to the east of the Tetbury Road in open countryside about a mile north-north east of Sherston village centre.

2.2 Land Area and tenure

2.1 The applicant Company's freehold extends to approximately 137ha (338 acres) of land, including Pinchmore Buildings. I understand the land formed part of the Easton Grey Estate. Easton Grey House and its associated dwellings are held in a separate corporate ownership.

2.2. Soil Type and Characteristics

The soil at the application site is classified in the Elmtun 2 association which is described as shallow well drained brashy loamy soils over limestone.

3.0 AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE

Existing

- 3.1 The holding is run "in hand" by the applicant Company. Farming practice is as a pedigree livestock and arable unit. The pedigree livestock are beef cattle and sheep. The beef cattle comprise a herd of Aberdeen Angus and a small number of Belted Galloways. The sheep flock comprises Kerry Hill and Hebridean ewes.
- 3.2 Land use at the holding is split 170 acres to grass and 168 acres to arable crops. The grass is utilised for grazing and silage for the livestock. The arable area is run under a contract farming arrangement which is in the process of modification.
- 3.3 The beef cattle are primarily Aberdeen Angus and total herd is approximately 65 breeding cows. The cows are bred annually using natural service alongside sexed semen. Embryo harvesting is also practised. Offspring are reared to approximately 12 months old. The majority of the cattle are sold privately for breeding as part of the pedigree market. The cows are calved indoors spring and autumn, with calving taking place across a total of about eight months of the year.
- 3.4 The sheep total about 70 breeding ewes. They are lambed annually indoors in the spring. As with the cattle, progeny are sold as breeding stock, with any surplus to the meat market.

Proposed

- 3.5 It is proposed to expand the beef cattle to approximately 100 head of breeding cows. The expansion will take place over a five year term and will be achieved through the retention of suitable homebred females and selective acquisitions. The expansion will require the provision of a further livestock building, likely immediately north of the current yards.

Comments

- 3.6 I understand the livestock enterprises have been conducted at the site by the owners since the late 1990s. The farm is managed day to day by Matt Stoker. Mr Stoker advises that he has extensive experience in the breeding, keeping and judging of pedigree livestock and that he has been employed as manager of the unit for some 14 years.

Buildings

- 3.7 The farm buildings are in a single contiguous group and comprise two modern livestock sheds with a surrounding concrete yard.

4.0 EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

Dwellings owned by applicant

- 4.1 I understand the applicant Company does not own any dwellings. Mr Stoker has tied accommodation close to Easton Grey House, approximately 10 minutes' drive from the site.

5.0 LABOUR REQUIREMENTS

Existing and Anticipated if Proposals Undertaken

- 5.1 The unit generates a labour requirement in excess of one full time employee for the livestock and grassland.

6.0 NPPF – ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT

- 6.1 The planning application for the dwelling is associated with the existing pedigree livestock business. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in 2024. In the context of the application for the proposed dwelling, paragraph 84 of the NPPF states:

“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.....to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.”

- 6.2 Under the NPPF it is therefore relevant to consider the requirements of the current enterprises and whether those requirements present an essential need for a worker to live at or near the enterprises.
- 6.3 In my view, the key aspects of the enterprises which present an essential need are calving the suckler cows, lambing the ewes and the care of neo-natal and very young progeny.
- 6.4 Calving and lambing can both present a need for close monitoring and intervention at very short notice. Whilst many lambings and calvings can take place without extensive intervention, there is no guarantee and each occasion has the potential to develop complications. The neo-natal and very young animal can also present a need for care through human intervention. It is therefore my view that the foregoing presents an essential need.

- 6.5 I understand that to date the essential need has been met off site, utilising CCTV and structured inspection. The applicant's farm manager advises that recent incidents including the death of a downcalving heifer mean that such a regime is no longer tenable.
- 6.6 Having established an essential need for an activity it is then necessary to consider the extent of the essential need. The ewes are lambed in spring across several weeks. The suckler herd is calved across most of the year. It is therefore my view that there is an essential need at the unit at most times.

7.0 BUSINESS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is no express reference in the NPPF to an assessment of either an existing or proposed business which will operate in association with the proposed rural dwelling. It is my opinion that such an assessment is critical to forming an opinion on the continuation of the "essential need". In this case the essential need described and recognised above will only continue through the operation of the business. If the business does not operate on a profitable and viable basis then it will fail and the authority would be left with a dwelling but no "essential need" for its presence.
- 7.2 Following the Government's update to Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), published in July 2019, financial viability is now referenced as a consideration when determining the need for a rural worker's dwelling.
- 7.3 The applicant has submitted profit and loss accounts for the last three trading periods. The accounts indicate that the business is profitable. It is my view that the level of profit is sufficient to demonstrate viability.

8.0 GENERAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The application is for outline permission only, with all matters reserved save for highway access. There is thus no indication of the size of the dwelling. Should the Council wish to consider a condition that would inform the size of the dwelling then I would suggest a maximum floor area of 150m² GIA would be commensurate with the identified essential need.

9.0 CONCLUSION AND OPINION

The subject business and its livestock enterprises are well established, profitable and viable. There is an essential need for a presence at most times. The application is for outline permission and should the Council wish to consider a condition that would inform the size of the dwelling then I would suggest a maximum floor area of 150m² GIA would be commensurate with the identified essential need.

I trust the above provides you with the information required. If you require any further information, or clarification on the any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

A.M Coke BSc (Hons) MRICS

Note: *This Report has been prepared on information provided by the Applicant and or the Applicant's Agent.*

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NWDC/Appraisals/0699 Pinchmore Buildings, Willesley/rept.docx

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