

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING APPLICATION.

1.0	REFERENCE	APA/002/0275
1.1	Proposed Development	"...temporary siting of mobile home for use as an agricultural worker's dwelling..."
1.2	Planning Authority	Wiltshire Council Development Control Central
1.3	Planning Application No.	PL/2025/09651
1.4	Applicant	Mr James Bodman, Bodman Livestock Ltd, Windsmere Farm, Worton
1.5	Site Address	Whyr Farm, Worton Road, Potterne SN10 5PU

2.0 DESCRIPTION

Location

- 2.1 The application site falls within the applicant's larger landholding at Whyr Farm. Whyr Farm lies in open countryside at the southern end of Worton Road, immediately north east and east of the junction with the eastern end of Worton High Street.

Land Area and tenure

- 2.1 The applicant's freehold extends to approximately 26ha (64 acres) in a ring fence at Whyr Farm. In addition to the freehold land at Whyr Farm the wider farming business includes freehold land at buildings at Windsmere Farm, Worton and South Park Farm at Shoddesden. In the context of the proposed business at Whyr Farm the applicant also has the use of land and buildings at Crookwood Farm, Potterne Wick under a leasehold arrangement. I understand that in total some 121ha (300 acres) are farmed, the majority of which is owned freehold within the wider business.

Soil Type and Characteristics

- 2.2 The soil at the application site is classified in the Denchworth association which is described as slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clay over clay loam.

3.0 AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE

Existing

- 3.1 The current and proposed farming practice for the unit is the production of beef cattle. Cattle are produced from a retained herd of suckler cows, together with the purchase and rearing of calves. Reared animals are sold either as finished at approximately 24 months or as yearling or forward stores.
- 3.2 The enterprise is currently based at Crookwood Farm, which is occupied under a leasehold arrangement. The suckler herd is 50 breeding cows. The cows are calved across the year. There are approximately 100 head of youngstock, which is split 50/50 between 0-12 months and 12 to 24 months.
- 3.3 The land at Whyr Farm is in a mixture of arable and grass and will be converted to grass subject to the relocation of the cattle business to the site.

Proposed

- 3.4 The proposal is to centre the beef enterprise in a new set of farm buildings at the application site. The cattle will be housed in the proposed livestock building over the winter and grazed during the summer. Cows will be brought into the building to calve and unweaned calves will be reared indoors.
- 3.5 The suckler herd will be expanded to 100 head and the yearlings and 12-24 month cattle will be expanded. A calf rearing enterprise will also be introduced. Approximately 120 calves will be purchased across the year at up to two weeks old in batches of 20 head every eight to 10 weeks. The calves will be weaned and taken through to finished animals, subject to cashflow.
- 3.6 The proposal, alongside the temporary dwelling, is to construct a new farmstead. A covered yard and a storage building will be constructed, along with a concrete yard area. I understand the cattle will be bedded on straw. The resultant farmyard manure will be spread on land in the wider control of the applicant's family or other parties' land under a dung for straw arrangement.

Comments

- 3.7 The applicant's family's wider business includes Windsmere Farm, which is an intensive piggery. The applicant advises that he has no intention or proposals to operate Whyr Farm as an intensive livestock unit.

Buildings

- 3.8 There are no buildings on site. The proposal is to erect a new farmstead.

4.0 EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

Dwellings owned by applicant

- 4.1 There is no dwelling in the applicant's occupation or control at Whyr Farm

5.0 LABOUR REQUIREMENTS

Existing

- 5.1 One unit part time

Anticipated if Proposals Undertaken

- 5.2 The proposed business will generate a labour requirement in excess of one full time unit. I understand James Bodman will work on the holding full time with part time assistance from family labour.

6.0 NPPF – ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT

- 6.1 The planning application for the dwelling is associated with the proposed cattle breeding and rearing 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.”
- b)

- 6.2 Under the NPPF it is therefore relevant to consider the requirements of the current enterprise and whether those requirements present an essential need for a worker to live at or near the enterprise.

- 6.3 As indicated, the proposed key activities at the holding are the breeding and rearing of beef cattle. In my view the aspects of those activities which touch on essential need are calving, the rearing of young calves and overall animal welfare. Calving is the key process in the sustainability of a suckler herd. The applicant proposes that calving will take place across the year. The dam and calf can require close attention immediately before, during and after calving. Calving can occur at any time of day or night and the need for intervention can range simply from monitoring, without human intervention, right through to veterinary surgery. The neo-natal and young calf can be vulnerable and again close supervision may be needed to ensure the animal suckles or receives artificial colostrum.
- 6.5 The applicant proposes the introduction of a calf rearing enterprise. Very young calves are at a vulnerable stage in their lives and can often require close care at short notice. It is my view that the proposed increase in the quantity of calves along with the batch rearing proposed across the year will significantly increase the need for close care at short notice.
- 6.6 In my view in the event that the proposed enterprise is implemented as described then there will be an essential need for a presence 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 provided projected budgets and fixed costs for the unit. In my view the projections are reasonable. The projections indicate the unit will attain both a profit and viability at year three of implementation.
- 7.4 It is noted that there is significant capital cost associated with the construction of the new farmstead. It is my understanding that the cost of the unit will be funded from retained profits in the applicant’s family’s wider farming business and will therefore not be depending on either a secured or unsecured loan.

8.0 GENERAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The proposal is to station a mobile home to accommodate an agricultural worker at Whyr Farm in association with the proposed relocation of the beef unit. It is not clear from the submissions supporting the application whether the proposal is for a temporary or permanent stationing of the proposed dwelling. I have therefore sought clarification from the applicant. It is my clear understanding that the proposal is to station the dwelling for a period of three years in order to facilitate the implementation of the proposed enterprise.
- 8.2 I would suggest that the Council seeks written confirmation of the above.

9.0 CONCLUSION AND OPINION

The implementation of the business as described above will generate an essential need for a presence at the application site. The proposed business appears to be planned on a sound financial basis. As indicated above, my clear understanding is for the proposed dwelling to be stationed for a period of three years.

I trust the above provides you with the information required. If you require any further information, or clarification on 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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