

PLANNING STATEMENT OF MR. K. ASHBURNER

SHEEPWASH FARM,
CHURCH ROAD, ALDINGBOURNE, PO20 3TT

FOR A TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKER'S DWELLING

Symonds
& Sampson

ESTABLISHED 1858

Sheepwash Farm currently extends to 10 hectares (24.5 acres) and is a grass livestock farm. In addition to the core farm there is a further 10 hectares of grazing/conservation land which is held at Barnham on an Annual Licence and a further 2.84 hectares of grazing/conservation land held on Licence at Woodgate.

FARMING ENTERPRISE:

Calves

The current enterprises on the farm comprise a small recently established calf rearing enterprise which it is anticipated will expand to a total of approximately 225-250 calves per year which will be reared from week old to approximately 12 weeks old with about 15 per year being kept and reared to 24 months old in order to make use of the grazing on the land and therefore it is anticipated there will be approximately 30 store cattle on the farm at any one time.

The calves will come in in batches of 40-50 with approximately 4-5 batches of young calves per year brought in.

Sheep

There are currently approximately 45 ewes and 2 rams which are used for breeding and to produce lambs to be sold either as store lambs or as finished lambs. It is anticipated that lambing will take place during March and April. The ewe flock will increase to 100 ewes once again producing lambs to be sold either as store lambs or as finished lambs.

Pigs

There is currently 1 sow and some young pigs on the farm. It is intended that this will increase to 5 sows used to produce young piglets for sale at weaning.

Turkeys

It is intended that turkeys will be reared for the Christmas market with approximately 100 turkeys being reared and sold for the Christmas market.

Chickens

It is intended that there will be a small flock of free-range chickens which will be between 100-200 laying birds. These will be sold to premium markets.

CURRENT BUILDINGS

The buildings at Sheepwash Farm currently comprise a fully enclosed building which is used for machinery storage and for other secure storage.

There is currently an application for a livestock building being considered by the Arun District Council and there are other relatively rudimentary livestock pens including a polytunnel which is used by the sheep at lamb.

The buildings, particularly if planning permission is granted for the new building will be adequate to support the enterprises proposed.

PLANNING POLICIES

The Local Plan does not have any Saved Policies that relate to agricultural dwellings. There was a Policy DEV7 but this, for whatever reason, was not saved by the Local Planning Authority and that therefore their Local Plan no longer has any Policies relating to the provision of agricultural worker's dwellings. Therefore there are no primary Policies in the Local Plan against which we should judge this proposal and so we have to give

consideration to Government Guidance which is contained within Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) and which at paragraph 10 states that *"isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted. Where the special justification for an isolated new house relates to the essential need for a work to live permanently at or near their place of work"*. Annex A to PPS7 provides the criteria.

Therefore turning to Annex A PPS7, we have to give consideration to the guidance contained therein. In particular, a permanent agricultural dwelling requires the unit or activity to have been established for 3 years. The calving enterprise is a new enterprise and therefore we are guided towards paragraph 12 which relates to temporary agricultural worker's dwellings. Paragraph 12 states quite clearly that *"if a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming activity, whether on a newly created agricultural unit or an established one, it should normally for the first three years be provided by a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled or other temporary accommodation."* It has to satisfy 5 criteria which we deal with as follows:

(i) clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned

This, I believe, has already been demonstrated. The Applicant has already commenced the calf rearing enterprise, has put in a planning application for a new farm building and has therefore invested significantly in the proposal and has shown a clear intention and by the quality of the stockmanship that he has applied to the existing livestock on the farm, the Applicant clearly has the ability to develop the enterprise concerned.

(ii) functional need (see paragraph 4 of Annex A)

The functional need is one of the key tests and in particular paragraph 4 makes quite clear that the functional test has to be fulfilled and we have to consider whether a worker has to be on hand day and night in case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice or to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products by frost damage or failure of systems.

The primary concern here relates to animals which might require essential care at short notice and therefore we need to give consideration to each strand of the business that is undertaken on the site. The calving enterprise clearly will require key attention particularly when the calves are on the farm within the first 2-3 weeks and in addition, as young animals, at all times during the first 8-10 weeks they can be susceptible to rapid changes in health but, in particular, in the first 2-3 weeks they would be particularly vulnerable to rapid changes and therefore it is considered that there is a functional requirement that relates to the calf enterprise.

This has been considered and accepted at numerous other cases and, in particular, on two occasions in East Hampshire District Council there have been calf rearing enterprises where similar or a lesser number of calves have fulfilled the functional requirement therefore there is a precedent for calf rearing enterprises fulfilling the functional need.

The sheep enterprise on its own would not fulfil the functional need because the primary requirement for attention to the sheep flock is during the period of lambing which it is intended would be in March and April therefore whilst there is a clear functional requirement during lambing this does not last for the whole year but the sheep clearly contribute on a mixed livestock holding because there will be a requirement during lambing which means that there is a contribution to the functional need from the sheep enterprise.

In regard to the pig enterprise, 5 sows on their own would not create a functional requirement however they do contribute in a mixed livestock holding to the functional need. This has been accepted at numerous other cases, in particular, at Aldingbourne Farm Shop where a mixed livestock enterprise was considered to fulfil the functional need and also at Martin, Hampshire where 2 sows were said by the Appraiser to make a significant contribution to the functional requirement of the holding.

The turkey and chicken enterprises contribute to the functional need in a lesser and more minor way but it is our opinion that overall the functional need on this unit is fulfilled and there is clear precedent from other recent cases to support this view.

(iii) clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis

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The evidence that this proposal has been planned on a sound financial basis is firstly the fact that there is already a business that has been developing here over the years. That is shown by the fact that there already cattle on the farm, the ewe flock has already commenced and there are already pigs on the farm. Therefore this is the expansion of an existing business which is far more sustainable and far more likely to be successful than a completely new start of a new business.

We enclose at Appendix 1 Budgets that have been prepared to show that once established the business can produce an income equivalent to the agricultural workers wage and have a surplus for investment in the business.

In addition, one of the advantages of the calf rearing business is the opportunity for cashflow because calves brought in at a week old can be sold any time from 10 weeks onwards, depending upon market conditions, which gives the business the opportunity of a positive cashflow from an early stage.

The chicken enterprise will be selling eggs to a premium market and there will be opportunities to establish premium markets for all livestock produced on the holding.

(iv) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned

The property is outside the village of Aldingbourne. There are other properties in the locality but they are all premium properties that would sell for a significant sum of money. In addition it is felt, particularly with calf enterprises when the ewes are lambing and the sows farrowing, that the need relates to the holding and not to a dwelling in the locality and therefore since the need relates to the farm rather than the locality it is not considered that there are any other dwellings that could fulfil this need.

It is also important to consider that at Aldingbourne Farm Shop the need in the locality was given consideration and the Inspector considering that case did not consider that a mobile home less than a mile from the holding would fulfil the functional requirement.

(v) other normal planning requirements i.e. siting and access are satisfied

The mobile home is located adjacent to the primary buildings and therefore it is available to fulfil the functional requirement on the holding.

In addition, it is adjacent to the primary access into the property and therefore access to the dwelling can be given without the need to adjust any access requirements.

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