BRIERLEY LODGE FARM, BURNTWOOD ROAD GRIMETHORPE, BARNSLEY

PROPOSAL FOR A PERMANENT DWELLING ON AN AGRICULTURAL HOLDING

AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL

1 INTRODUCTION

This appraisal has been prepared in support of a planning application to build a new farm workers dwelling to replace the temporary accommodation presently provided by a mobile home. The aim of this report is to provide an objective evaluation of the agricultural business conducted on the farm.

Provision of housing in rural areas must follow the guidance provided by the Government's national policy set out in Planning Policy Statement 7 *"Sustainable Development in Rural Areas"* August 2004 (PPS7) and in particular Annex A.

2 BUSINESS

The farm unit extends to some 9 hectares and includes woodland, grazing land and buildings. The main agricultural activity is pig rearing although a small flock of sheep and free range poultry produce additional farm income. Since acquiring the holding, the applicant has spent six years building up a closed herd, initially from a few sows, by retaining progeny. The holding currently accommodates 50 breeding sows and 150 progeny and the herd is expanding. The animals are generally reared outdoors utilising the woodland. Farrowing and weaning take place in a recently constructed building. The optimum stocking rate for outdoor sows is 8 per acre (20/ha) so there is plenty of room for additional stock. Produce is supplied to local bacon producers.

Closed herds are important to ensure healthy stock. They are created by retaining progeny for use as breeding sows, the progeny from which carry on the closed breeding cycle. In this way, no "foreign" livestock are brought in which could contaminate the herd. Any disease found in pigs can lead to the destruction of the entire herd. A recent newspaper article describes the present situation in this way: "Serious concerns have been raised about the risk of importing young pigs from the continent to the health of domestic herds. Almost all pig diseases that have entered our pig herds have originated from outside mainland Britain. The British pig industry is recovering from a long period of recession and is investing considerable sums of money in regional health schemes to improve production efficiency. Currently,

British weaner and finished pig prices are higher than those overseas. Producer confidence is stronger than it has been for years."[1]

In terms of future expansion plans, the enterprise will continue to be run as a closed herd, with an average of approximately 10 sows being retained each year for expansion of the herd to an optimum number of 80. The number of free range poultry is also expected to grow with a subsequent increase in egg production. Unfortunately, there has been a number of recent incidents reported to Cudworth Police Station:

1 Crime number B60093:2009

This involved the killing by dogs of 4 lambs and serious, but not fatal, injuries to 4 ewes.

2 Crime number 369OT:27/8/2009

Another dog worrying incident. Due to the presence of Mrs Clarke in driving the dogs away, serious harm was averted.

These incidents have temporarily deflated the sheep numbers but these are in the process of being replaced and the flock added to. The incidents reflect the functional need for living on the site to provide security, welfare and immediate health aid, without which, the ewes would also have been lost. As a result of these most recent incidents, the local police have extended their area of night-time patrols to include Brierley Lodge Farm.

The flock of sheep comprises 20 ewes and some 200 or so poultry roam the farm.

Outlets for the farm produce are all local and include:

- Leaflet drop in the village which produces telesales, delivered to the customer.
- Eggs are delivered to a local shop named Baines.
- A neighbour buys eggs in bulk for distribution to his customers in the village.

There are also plans to shortly refit a van which will help with local distribution.

This enterprise is clearly a local producer supplying a local market. The enterprise has local support as demonstrated in a multi-signature petition organised from the local shop at the time of the previous planning application for a dwelling.

Labour for the business is provided by Mrs Clarke who spends an average of 8-10 hours each day of the week tending the livestock. Mr Clarke adds about 4 hours each weekday and both full days at weekends, particularly during farrowing and lambing. Most of his other time is spent repairing or improving buildings, mending fences etc, as well as acts of farm husbandry. The Clarkes also have a local neighbour who helps with the animals every day on an unpaid basis. There is also additional specialist labour during the annual shearing.

A comparative "standard" calculation for the labour requirement for this enterprise is set out below using the "John Nix" guidance.

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[1] Extract from article by Mark Casci "Yorkshire Post" Agricultural Correspondent 01.08.2009

3 DWELLING

The applicant demonstrated a need for on-farm living accommodation in connection with an earlier planning application. The result was permission to live in temporary accommodation provided by a mobile home. The permission was subsequently renewed and Mr & Mrs Clarke have now been in residence for over 5 years. With the expansion of the pig herd, the need to be constantly present has also increased. Sows are particularly susceptible to disturbance. They will abort in an event such as sudden noise so it is imperative to be on hand to deal with this type of emergency.
It is now considered to be appropriate to replace the temporary accommodation with a permanent dwelling.

4 PPS7 ANNEX A: AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY and OTHER OCCUPATIONAL DWELLINGS

Isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification for planning permission to be granted. One such justification is when accommodation is required to enable farm or forestry workers to live in or close to their workplace.
New permanent dwellings are only allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units, providing:

(i) there is a clearly established existing functional need;
(ii) the need relates to a full time worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to part-time requirement;
(iii) the unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;
(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; and
(v) other planning requirements, eg in relation to access, or impact on the countryside, are satisfied.

4.1 FUNCTIONAL TEST

It is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:

(i) in case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice;
(ii) to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example, by frost damage or the failure of automatic systems.

Breeding sows are capable of having an average of 2½ litters and so can produce up to 25 piglets each year so, at the present stocking rate, the progeny could be up to 1250. Although pigs are generally extremely robust animals, sows and their progeny require constant supervision for the following reasons:

1) Mixed pigs of any age can lead to aggression and fighting which must be dealt with instantly.

2) During farrowing, difficulties can arise which may affect the welfare of both sow and piglets. Piglets are extremely small when compared to the dam (about 1%) and hence are very vulnerable.

3) The period of highest risk to the piglet is that between birth and becoming established on a sow's productive teat. During this time it may become severely chilled. The lower critical temperature of a new-born pig which has not had milk is about 34°C. Below this temperature it begins to lose body energy in increasing amounts. The use of infra-red lamps to combat this heat loss is common but it is more important to ensure that each piglet has a long drink at a teat before it seeks the comfort of the lamp.

4) Disturbance of a sow during parturition can lead to her becoming active and crush the piglets by trampling or lying on them.

5) Gilts, farrowing for the first time, may savage their piglets, apparently not realising what they are.

6) Newly weaned pigs are extremely susceptible to changes in temperature, diet and exposure to disease.

Any of these problems require immediate attention if the heath and welfare of the animals are not to be put at risk.

The flock of ewes also require attention, especially during lambing. The urban fringe location of the farm increases the risk of worrying by dogs so frequent inspections of the flock, including night-time checks, are essential. Poultry may also require immediate emergency attention from predatory attacks such as foxes.

Safety and security are also important considerations. A constant presence on the farm deters theft and vandalism and provides immediate action to release animals in the event of a fire.

It is asserted that the functional test is met by the need for welfare, safety and security of breeding sows and their progeny, ewes, lambs and poultry.

4.2 FINANCIAL TEST

The farming enterprise needs to be financially viable to justify permanent accommodation but local authorities are advised to take a realistic approach to the level of profitability, taking account of the nature of the enterprise concerned. Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (eg in managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats), can be sustained on relatively low financial returns.

The farm profit is presently running at about £1000 per month. However, the applicant continues to plough back profits into building up the pig herd, repairing and improving run-down buildings. Investment in the fabric of a recent new building (33m x 7.5m x 5m high) cost £30,000 with Kevin Clarke providing the labour.

The unit is on the urban fringe with the associated problems from vandalism, theft and roaming dogs (see above). The applicant's presence in rearing the pig herd within Lady Wood is providing a deterrent to the misuse that occurs in other parts of this important and highly visible landscape.

4.3 ALTERNATIVE DWELLINGS

There is no second dwelling on the farm. The original house was rendered derelict by vandalism and theft of materials prior to the applicant acquiring the holding. The current application could be considered as a replacement for the original house although the application is submitted as a new dwelling, not a replacement.

The nearest dwellings to the holding consist of a former council housing estate on Burntwood Road. There are no properties available on Burntwood Road. There are, however, 3 houses for sale on Ladywood Road further to the south (see example). However, these are all semi-detached houses forming part of the former council estate and are therefore in very close proximity to their neighbouring houses. Therefore, the density of housing in this area together with the style of living associated with farming such as early mornings, late nights, tending to sick or injured animals in the home, renders these estate houses unsuitable for use as a farmhouse serving the holding.

4.4 ACCESS and IMPACT

The holding is an existing enterprise that has been in business for 6 years. A new dwelling will not generate additional traffic.

The proposed siting of the new dwelling will not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding countryside. It will be located adjacent to the existing stone barn and the materials to be used in its construction will be similar to the barn and other stone buildings in the farm yard.

Although in an elevated position, the farm is only visible from the north at a distance (the nearest residence Brierley Manor being 1km away). From the west, the farm is visible from a few houses at the end of Burntwood Road although distant views are partly screened by the existing mature trees fronting the farm. The siting takes advantage of being screened from the south and east by Lady Wood and the neighbouring West Haig Wood.

The farm, and consequently the new dwelling, will be visible by users of the public footpath adjoining the site. However, the development will blend into the background

created by the existing farm buildings which are much larger than the proposed dwelling.

It should be noted that up until about 15 years ago, the original house was still in a more or less complete state. The extant planning permission at that time would have resulted in two large dwellings now standing on the site.

APPENDIX 1

ASSESSMENT OF LABOUR REQUIREMENT

The assessment of labour required to run an agricultural business can be ascertained from standard data provided in the "Farm Management Pocketbook" by John Nix which is updated and published annually by Wye College University of London. The latest (38th) edition was issued in September 2008.

It is generally accepted that an agricultural worker provides 275 standard man days on the basis of an 8 hour day. The assessment of labour requirement can be calculated from the type of farm and livestock reared or on a standard man days basis. The former method is more farm specific and thus is the more accurate, while the latter offers a "broad brush" approach more applicable to larger holdings.

LIVESTOCK

PIGS		Labour hrs/month average
Breeding, rearing and feeding, per sow Baconers, average 70 sows per worker (with progeny)		2.8
	Current herd 50 sows = 1680 hrs/pa	
SHEEP (per ewe)		4.0
	Current flock 20 ewes = 960 hrs/pa	
POULTRY Free range laying hens		4 hrs/100
	Current flock 200 = 96hrs/pa	

LIVESTOCK LABOUR REQUIREMENT 2736 hrs/pa or 342 days (8hr day)

TOTAL FARM LABOUR REQUIREMENT **342 DAYS or 1.25 full time workers**

APPENDIX 2

GROSS MARGIN BUDGET

"Nix" is also the source of data used to calculate the Gross Margin of a farming enterprise. Gross Margin (GM) is not a profit figure but is the enterprise output less its variable costs. It is often used in farm planning and can provide a useful estimate of the viability of an enterprise.

LIVESTOCK

PIGS	
Combined Breeding, Rearing and Feeding: per pig	
GM per sow (50 no.), Baconer @£444 (average)	
Farm gross margin	£22,200
POULTRY	
Brown egg layers, 52 week laying period, free range	
GM per bird (200 no.) @£6.10 (average)	
Farm gross margin	£1,220
SHEEP	
Lowland Spring Lambing (per ewe)	
GM per ewe (20 no.) @£16.2 (average)	
Farm gross margin	£324
TOTAL	£23,744
LESS Total whole farm fixed costs (including labour)	
£1420 x 8.2 ha	£11,644
Enterprise net profit	£12,100

APPENDIX 3

COMPARABLE CASES

The first is an extract from "Planning" Issue 1826 dated 10th July 2009 Development Control Casebook, compiled on behalf of Planning Magazine by DCS Ltd.©

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Farm worker's house secured in green belt

The owner of a pig farm in the West Midlands green belt has successfully persuaded an inspector that a farm worker's dwelling should be provided on the holding.

The appellant had won temporary consent in 2003 to site a mobile home on the land to help establish the enterprise but although this had expired he remained on the land. He stated that he had had 27 breeding sows, two boars and 48 weaning piglets in 2003. In 2007, he asserted that the number of sows had risen to 86 but in 2008 he explained that the less productive of these had been culled.

The inspector accepted the appellant's claim that he was rebuilding the breeding stock after the cull. Given the number of farrowing pigs per year and the necessity of having a worker on site for these there was a functional need to live on site, the inspector concluded. The accounts clearly showed that the business was financially viable, she held. There was no other dwelling in the vicinity that could satisfy the need, she decided.

DCS Number *100-062-811*

Inspector *Karen Ridge; Hearing*

100-062-811 04/06/2009 CANNOCK CHASE

OAK TREE FARM, SLITTING MILL ROAD, FLAXLEY GREEN, SLITTING MILL, RUGELEY

Outline. Agricultural worker's dwelling at small-scale pig farm in open green belt and AONB countryside. Permission had been given in 2003 for mobile home to establish pig breeding business. Functional on site need and viability shown noting profit had been demonstrated for the last 3 years and lack of alternative sites. Need outweighs inappropriate development in green belt and some visual harm to AONB character and appearance.

100-052-068 17/12/2007 YORK

PARK FARM, HOLME UPON SPALDING MOOR, YORK

2nd agricultural worker dwelling, development on 12 hectare poultry and pig livestock farm in open countryside close to village. Financial test satisfied, functional need satisfied, given sensitivity of poultry to emergencies, which cannot be satisfied by alternative village accommodation.

COMPARABLE CASES cont'd.

100-042-972 13/06/2006 PEAK DISTRICT
CROSSROADS FARM, BLACKWELL, TADDINGTON, DERBYS
Agricultural worker dwelling (outline) redevelopment part farmyard in Hamlet in National Park. Intensive pig rearing unit for 950 - 1100 pigs per year. No alternative dwelling available. Odour control separate legislation. Functional test satisfied. Established over 4 years and financial test satisfied so no need for temporary permission.

042-239-069 15/12/2004 DONCASTER
LONG LEYS POULTRY FARM, LONG LEYS LANE, BRAITHWELL, ROTHERHAM
Agricultural dwelling, green belt, mixed livestock pig/free range poultry/calf rearing fattening. Functional need - supervision need established, hours required discussed 287 standard man days OK, 275 agricultural workers standard. Profitable, though notes main pig element. Present more than 3 years.

052-909-912 10/12/1997 EPPING FOREST
OLD HOUSE FARM, NAZEING
Dwelling to replace residential caravan on pig farm in green belt. Functional need for 3 workers. No alternative accommodation.

100-019-716 07/08/1989 SOUTH NORFOLK
RIVERSIDE FARM, RINGLAND LANE, EASTERN
Unauthorised building at pig farm - looks like house and not designed for agriculture. Should be one storey.

033-784-754 12/04/1988 EAST DEVON
NEW BROOK FARM, SOUTHERTON CROSS, NEWTON POPPLEFORD
Agricultural dwelling on 12 hectare pig/arable/horticultural holding in AONB. Agricultural need established to justify intrusion in AONB. Section 52 Agreement to revoke previous planning permission.