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**Proposed Change of Use Of  
Land for the Siting of a Mobile  
Home at Winwick Road, Thurning**

PREPARED FOR

**Mr and Mrs J Pywell  
25 Rock Road  
Oundle  
Peterborough  
PE8 4LN**

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**PREPARED BY**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report has been prepared at the request of Mr and Mrs J Pywell to outline the facts considered relevant for the change of use of land for the siting of a mobile home to supervise the agricultural business at Land at Winwick Road, Thurning, Peterborough, PE8 5RG.

Information within this report should enable the Local Authority to assess the application in the light of current Government Guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance.

## **2. SITE VISIT AND INSPECTION**

A site visit and inspection was first undertaken during June 2019, when Mr and Mrs Pywell were interviewed regarding the agricultural business at Thurning by Matt How, Business Consultant for Acorus.

Information contained within this report is as supplied at that visit and further ongoing correspondence, together with personal observations where appropriate.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Background**

The applicants farm a total of 8.3 hectares (20.5 acres) of land in the area of Thurning, Northamptonshire which they purchased in 2011. The holding comprises mainly of grassland and includes approximately 0.19 hectares (0.4 acres) of fruit orchard trees.

The grassland is currently utilised by a breeding ewe flock and a small number of free range hens. To complement these enterprises a small horticultural area comprised of soft fruit bushes are being established as well as the growing of various soft fruit and vegetables within a polytunnel on the site.

Buildings on the site include a general purpose agricultural building, permitted in 2014 (14/00821/FUL) and a planned polytunnel granted prior approval on 12 February 2020 (19/01948/PNA). Delayed erection due to COVID lockdown restrictions.

### **DISCLAIMER**

**This report is for the sole use of the named client. While it may be shown to other professionals acting for them, the contents are not to be disclosed to nor made use of by any third party without our express prior written consent. Without such consent we can accept no responsibility to any third party.**

### 3.2 Agricultural Business and Development

Since purchasing the holding in 2011 the applicants have invested in establishing an agricultural business, which they wish to continue to develop. In particular, they are looking to increase the livestock enterprise over the next 3 years to produce the following:-

- 300 free range hens which producing approximately 6,050 dozen eggs per annum to be sold at the farm gate, with excess sold at market. This will build on existing contracts within the retail and hospitality sector.
- 80 free range Christmas turkeys, all of which will be sold at the farm gate. These will be grown on from day old chicks initially kept under heat lamps.
- 30 breeding ewes producing 45 lambs per annum to be butchered and sold at the farm gate or as box sales. Lambing will be in batches to ensure lambs are ready over a longer period.
- 7 different types of purebred breeding chickens consisting of 4 hens and 1 cockerel per breed giving a breeding flock total of 35 (hens and cockerels).

Of the pullets produced it is anticipated that 116 (20%) will be sold direct at 8 weeks old, 300 (52%) will be sold direct at point of lay with the surplus 160 (28%) being sold at market.

For the purebred egg sales, 388 (45%) will be sold as setting eggs direct with the 480 (55%) surplus eggs being sold locally.

Eggs will be hatched by using an incubator. The first eggs will be placed early in the year when the hens start laying which would normally be February, with hatching carrying on until June/July depending on anticipated demand. Young chicks will be kept under heat lamps until approx. 6 weeks old.

- 50 oven ready cockerel sales, all of which will be sold from the holding.

Although the birds are to be free range, it should be noted that during bird flu regulations which have become more frequent, birds have to be kept in confined spaces during winter months where they have no access to wild birds.

In addition to the livestock the applicants intend to further develop vegetable and fruit production as well as introduce Heritage Fruit Trees which will be sold as 1 year old bare roots.

Bee hives are to be introduced for the production of honey.

Fruit will be sold for apple juice and cider which together with honey, fruit, vegetables and cut flowers will be sold from the holding.

Hay is also made on the holding which will be increased to an average of 350 bales per year by the end of year 3.

### **3.3 Labour**

Labour currently consists of Mr and Mrs Pywell who split the responsibilities with both working part- time on the holding, making one full time role between them. Additional part time labour will be brought in when required.

### **3.4 Dwellings**

Mr and Mrs Pywell currently live in Oundle, some 7 miles from the site.

## **4. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED DWELLING**

Mr and Mrs Pywell outlined that they needed to live on the holding in order to be able to further develop the agricultural business.

In particular routine husbandry tasks need to be undertaken during the working day and late into the evening with 24 hour supervision being essential for the welfare of livestock on the site.

In addition horticultural crops grown in the polytunnel need constant supervision, particularly during hot weather when the plants can be prone to scorching and during extreme cold when the plants may need to be fleeced.

On site accommodation also required for the security of the holding, theft in the countryside is common place.

## **5. BASIS OF ASSESSMENT**

National planning policy is contained within the NPPF as follows:-

*“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.*

*Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

- a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- b) **a social objective** – to support, strong vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well being; and
- c) **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

**Paragraph 10** states that “So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development** (paragraph 11).

With regard to housing, **paragraph 79** 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, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.”*

Planning Practice Guidance was provided in July 2019 at Paragraph 010 which deals with the need for rural workers dwellings in the countryside. This states considerations that it may be relevant to take into account when applying Paragraph 79 (a) of the NPPF could include:-

- \* Evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land based rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on site attention 24 hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health, or from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products);
- \* the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future;
- \* whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process;

- \* whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and
- \* in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting planning permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

## **6. ACORUS COMMENTS**

### **6.1 General**

Mr and Mrs Pywell bought the site at Thurning 10 years ago, during which time they have erected an agricultural building and a polytunnel will be erected in the near future. Livestock and horticultural enterprises have been introduced to the holding.

In order to continue to develop and increase viability of the site on site accommodation required, to provide 24 hour supervision.

### **6.2 Evidence of Necessity**

#### **Sheep Enterprise**

24 hour care is vital to the well being of livestock, particularly during the lambing period.

Sheep are prolific and multiple births are common. This means a high level of skill is required at lambing and there is a need for a worker to be on site at all times.

Ewes can take time to give birth to their lambs and regularly need assistance. Ewes which have struggled with lambing and received aid are at risk from metritis and septicemia and must be treated immediately.

Multiple births can lead to first or second born lambs being neglected by the ewe while she gives birth to the next. These lambs must be highlighted to the ewe (or bottle fed her colostrum as a last resort). It is necessary for the shepherd to remove the membranes from the lambs' heads as they are born in order that they are able to breathe, and resuscitate the lambs if the ewe is ignoring them.

Colostrum is essential for the well being of the new born lamb, it contains immunoglobulin to increase resistance to disease and energy in the form of carbohydrate to maintain

temperature after birth. Lambs that do not receive it are likely to die within 72 hours. This is a particular problem with multiple births and colostrum should be milked off and bottle fed every few hours to ensure each lamb receives it. It is imperative that this is done in the first few hours of life otherwise its benefits are lost.

Lambs should be kept warm and ideally be licked and massaged by the ewe. Young ewes often do not do this and it is up to the shepherd to perform these duties. After lambing, lambs must be marked and penned with their mothers, weights recorded and ears tagged. Each lamb should have its navel sprayed to avoid infection; this should be soon after birth.

Any variations from normal behaviour must be watched for and an awareness of any change ensures prompt treatment preventing expensive veterinary treatment and deaths. Whilst sheep exhibit diurnal behaviour, it should not be assumed that their needs are any less, outside the period considered to be normal working time.

Sickness of ewes has a direct impact on production and profitability. It is essential that ewes receive a high standard of welfare.

The shepherd must also be aware so as to prevent other diseases and conditions such as flystrike, mastitis, pulpy kidney, tetanus, lamb dysentery and twin lamb disease. The flock will also require regular worming, vaccinating and foot trimming.

There is also a need for constant supervision and vigilance throughout the season to ensure the safety and security of the flock from predators or intruders and similarly to prevent injury or accidents from any animals that might escape.

### **Poultry Enterprises**

Free range egg production entails the supervision of laying hens both inside the building and outside on range. Hens in large groups are prone to panic for a variety of reasons and when they pile into corners, and losses from smothering can occur if not attended to immediately.

The birds (both hens and turkeys) are housed overnight and have free access to the outside during daylight hours. In order to maintain the free range status the birds have to be released every day throughout the year. It is necessary to release the birds every morning and then ensure that all the birds return safely to the building in the evening. In order that the birds have maximum use of the release areas this involves work outside of normal hours especially during the summer months.

Constant monitoring of the birds is required when they are outside to prevent or minimise any losses from predators. Also, severe weather can be a problem particularly thunder storms which can scare the birds and it is often necessary for manual moving in these situations so as to avoid birds huddling together or against the building or wiring of the pens

which could easily result in suffocation and death.

There is a need to be on site to arrange deliveries and for regular collection and processing of the eggs which may be at any time during the day or evening.

The brooding of chicks (for the rearing of the pure bred pullets) entails the use of supplementary heating, either from electric or gas fired heaters. During the early stages of brooding it is desirable to have a high/low temperature alarm wired to the dwelling on site as young chicks can get chilled very quickly when a heater fails. A fall back arrangement is essential to avoid suffering and potential losses.

The incubator has automated timers and regular temperature and humidity checks are needed as well as checking the welfare of the chicks.

The DEFRA Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock - Laying Hens states that at least one responsible member of staff should be available to deal with any emergencies that may arise.

Lighting must be checked regularly to ensure that day length, times of lights on and lights off and light intensity are correct and best suited to the behaviour of the birds and the collection of eggs. Changes to light timing and intensity can upset birds, trigger aggressive behaviour (which can lead to cannibalism) and can have significant economic consequences on the quality and the value of the eggs.

Although the birds are to be free range, it should be noted that due to the bird flu regulations which occurred in 2020/21 and previous winters, birds have to be kept in confined spaces during certain periods, where they have no access to wild birds. This confinement can lead to increased disease implications and bullying, ultimately leading to an impact on egg production.

An experienced stockman living within 'sight and sound' of the birds will notice immediately if the birds are disturbed, and will know what action to take to calm the birds and to avert any problems that could occur.

### **Horticultural Enterprise**

Husbandry tasks are varied, many of which need to be undertaken outside of normal working hours and naturally the business is particularly influenced by prevailing weather conditions.

Particular issues include:-

- \* Irrigating stock by drip irrigation and partly by hand, with the latter often being carried out early in the morning or later in the evening during hot sunny periods so

as to prevent burning or scorching of the plants.

- \* Provision of space heaters for less hardy plants. This can be via mobile heaters from autumn to spring particularly. Fleeces are also used to protect stock, it is important to give plants as much daylight/growing time as possible therefore these are put on later in the evening.
- \* Spraying, which generally needs to be undertaken early in the morning or evening, for example vine weevils have to be sprayed for at night.
- \* Applying fertilisers and compost/manure etc, particularly liquid ones which cannot be applied in sunlight.
- \* Organising and being on site for deliveries out of normal hours.
- \* Ventilation – this is critical particularly in the summer, although it can have the biggest impact when there is rapid temperature changes as the owner gets caught out, e.g. in the spring.
- \* Snow – snow on polytunnels can lead to collapse. This has to be removed if it falls persistently heavy, which can involve work through the night.
- \* Wind can quickly destroy polytunnels, but small gaps/flapping plastic can often be identified and heard early if on site and rectified before greater impact occurs.

It is prudent in any case to be on site so as to pre-empt emergencies and assess weather/climate conditions which can vary even locally. Much time, money and produce can be saved by being able to react immediately.

### **General**

Unfortunately, nowadays, theft, arson and vandalism is becoming a seemingly ever increasing problem, even in rural areas and unsecured units are particularly at risk.

The damage caused not only results in financial losses but often causes panic and suffering to the livestock, in particular birds, leading to the loss of production and sometimes mortality. The longer term effects on the birds that survive can be considerable due to the stress caused.

The provision of security lighting and alarms is of limited value unless someone is on-hand to deal with any problem.

Overall it is considered there is a need for someone to be resident on site to deal with the issues identified.

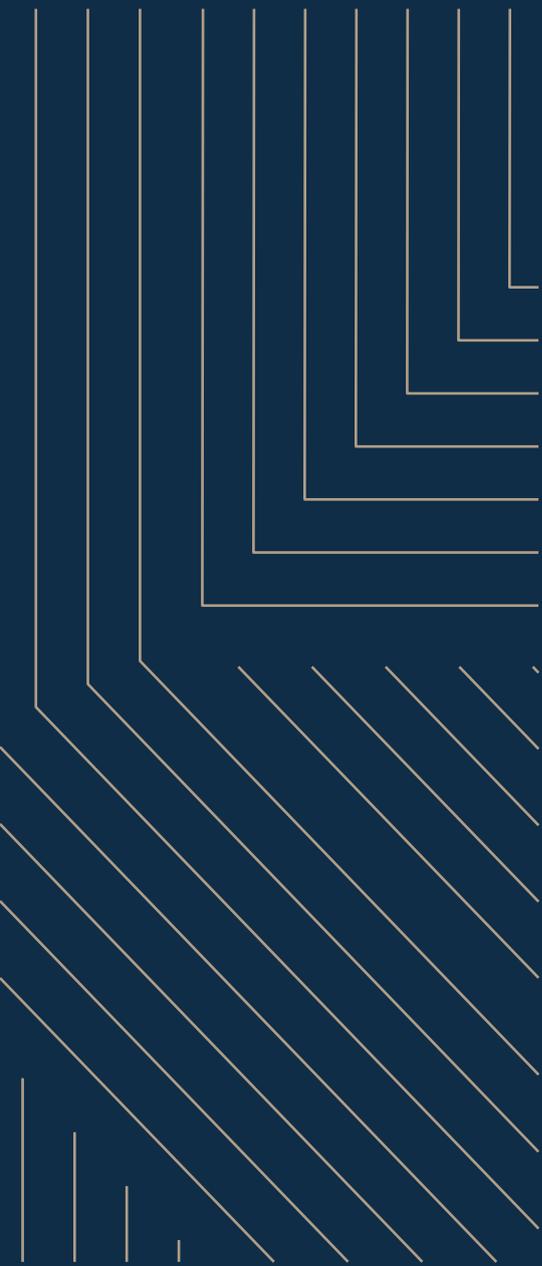
### **6.3 Confidence the Business will Remain Viable**

A business plan is submitted with the application. This shows that by the end of Year 3 the business will be making a profit of £41,262. The potential cost of an agricultural dwelling being in the region of £150,000 amortised at 4% over 40 years (£51 per £1,000) leaves the operators profit of £33,614, which more than covers an agricultural wage.

### **6.4 Existing Accommodation**

There is no existing accommodation on the land, nor within sight or sound of the buildings. The applicants live a 20 minute drive from the site at Oundle.

It is considered that it is appropriate to consider granting planning permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period in this instance in order for the applicants to be able to develop the new enterprises.



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