

# **Design, Access and Energy Statement**

## ***Planning Application***

***Small scale expansion of existing dog agility training facility to include wet weather shelter and training rooms on land at Pool Farm, Ham Lane, Kingston Seymour, BS21 6XJ***

***For: Margaret Bush***



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### **1. Proposed Development**

This proposal is retrospective and seeks to regularise a wet weather shelter construction (reducing current height), a small expansion of existing permitted dog agility arena and provision of training rooms by way of retention of twin static cabin.

The applicant necessarily took over the operation of Pool Farm following the death of her father who had farmed at Pool Farm for many years. To ensure the farm is sufficiently viable to maintain property, buildings, boundaries and rhynes it has critical to bring in a range of incomes to supplement the agricultural income. A summary business plan separately submitted illustrates that whilst the land based farm income is still the main income, the range of other incomes are critical for viability with the dog agility training operation being one of the other sources of income. It is also a significant element of the planning assessment to account for the fact that the various diversification activities also support rural employment as well as the Pool Farm business.

The dog agility operation secured planning permission in 2013 providing an outdoor arena for dog agility training for multiple classes 5-10 people per day (and their dogs) across the week. During 2018 and 2019 the wet weather caused a number of sessions to be cancelled and so it became critical to construct an effective structure to protect against wet weather.

This wet weather shelter structure consists of steel columns supporting steel rafters and wires which in turn support a canvas covering currently coloured cream. The structure was purchased second hand as a fixed size and is taller than necessary. The proposal is to reduce the height of the wet weather structure to 3.25m at the eaves and 5.6m to the ridge. This is a reduction of 1.25 m in height which brings the structure to the same height as an agricultural building and below the height of the boundary hedges and tree lines and existing buildings. The structure covers one end of the arena and will provide an area where dog training can continue in wet weather.

In addition, the proposal includes the provision of training rooms in the form of a twin static van on site located between the wet weather shelter and the farmhouse. This mobile structure will provide facilities on site (WC and kitchen) and internal offices to be used for training purposes.

## **2. Farm Diversification**

Pool Farm is a 35 acre farm (Holding No 34/606/0012) and has operated as an all grass farm with beef and sheep for a number of years.

The applicant has a policy to manage a mix of farming and diversification activity to bring sufficient income to sustain the farm and its infrastructure. The farming operations include the grazing of livestock together with some forage operations with current farm business tenancy contracts reviewed when due to allow for increased owner activity if required.

The enterprises, in addition to the dog agility operation, include use of land and farm buildings for horses (all to one tenant with 11 retired horses and for personal use only), letting of storage space for antique farm and other machinery, provision of outside hard standings within the buildings complex for storage of three caravans and the provision of some of the garden area for a caravan being made available as private accommodation for single traveller use. Some of these enterprises are well established and other are subject to retrospective planning application. The dog agility enterprise is a crucial element of the mix of incomes providing local employment and boosting the viability of Pool Farm. See separate business plan.

## **3. Planning Policy Support**

The proposal for improved facilities and small expansion of this dog agility training operation is confirmed as part of the farm diversification policy and is supported by DM51 and DM55 and NPPF para 83 and 84 (supporting rural economy).

*DM51: Agriculture and land-based rural business development in the countryside Links to CS33 Smaller settlements and countryside and Replacement Local Policy RD/1 Agricultural and forestry development and farm-based diversification.*

- *the proposals are necessary for and ancillary to the use of land for viable agricultural or land-based rural businesses purposes*

The farm budget below broadly shows that 50% of the income is from use of grassland and farm buildings for agriculture and land-based business purposes. A further 25% from dog agility training facility and 25% from use of farm buildings for storage purposes.

- *in the case of diversification proposals, there is sufficient certainty of long-term benefit to the farm business as an agricultural operation, that other rural businesses and the character and appearance of the countryside are not adversely affected; and*

The farm budgets show that Pool Farm presents a level of fixed costs that need to be met every year that represent overheads incurred whatever the mix of enterprise. It is clear that every

income source (land & buildings, storage, dog agility) is critical for the long-term viability of this small farm operation.

- *the siting and design of the building respects its rural setting and does not harm the character of the landscape.*

See para 4. contextual analysis and 4.3 appearance and 4.4 landscape impact for how the proposal respects the rural setting and does not harm the character of the landscape.

DM 51 supports proposals for new agricultural buildings or development for the purposes of farm-based and other land-based rural businesses or diversification provided that it respects the landscape and its rural setting.

DM55 supports extensions or the intensification of use for existing businesses located in the countryside providing development is in keeping with the rural context.

## **4. Contextual Analysis**

Agricultural land accessed off Ham Lane sees a number of farming, equine and other commercial activities supporting a vital mix of rural employment. The dog agility training arena has been running for over 10 years without complaint.

Ham Lane currently supports a number of farms, rural businesses and residential properties from the western end of Kingston Seymour along the length of Ham Lane. This includes a solar farm immediately adjacent to Pool Farm.

The location of the arena is in a small paddock immediately adjacent to the existing farmhouse and buildings and it is well screened by an existing lines of trees and hedges from all points of the compass making it effectively hidden from residential properties, passing traffic and any footpath users. Reducing the height of the wet weather structure will bring its ridge and roof covering below the height of the natural screening that already exists.

The level of traffic movements created by the existing and proposed development average about 1-3 vehicles per hour across the day and early evenings with peak vehicles at circa 4 per hour. Within the context of the existing movements from residential, other recreational and business traffic along Ham Lane this level of traffic does not create significant impact.



#### **4.1 Amount**

Retain main arena measuring 25 m by 40m with two small extensions surrounded by a post and rail fence of 1 m in height. The total arena footprint increasing from 1000 sq m to 1185 sq m.

An addition a wet weather shelter is erected across one end of the arena with a footprint of 15m x 30m, height to eaves of 3.25m and to ridge of 5.6m. The shelter is open sided (all sides) with a roof covering of canvas.

A twin static van mobile structure to accommodate welfare facilities and training rooms measures 5.9m x 9.75 m with eaves height of 2.8m.

#### **4.2 Scale**

The physical scale of this development is not dissimilar to an agricultural requirement for a hard standing area and typical hay barn. The arena and fencing are not visible from the highway or footpaths and the reduced height of the wet weather shelter is in line with agricultural buildings along Ham Lane. The training rooms are located between the shelter and the farmhouse and are of a similar scale to existing outbuildings.

The historic level of activity for the dog agility enterprise was for 5-10 people and dogs to receive training during day and early evenings approximately four days a week. This very low level of activity has picked up a little so that the current activity is to provide training for 15-20 people and dogs during day and early evenings for Mon – Thurs and on Saturdays (5 days).

The level of traffic per hour has increased slightly from an average of 1.5 per hour (3 movements per hour) for 6 hours in the day to an average of 2.5 vehicles per hour (5 movements per hour) over 10 hours. Peak traffic during the early evening session (6-9pm) were very similar to current levels at approximately 3-4 vehicles per hour (6 or 7 movements per hour).

Given the low frequency of use expected and in the context of existing movements from other commercial and residential properties along Ham Lane the proposal does not represent a risk of any significant impact on the rural nature of the local area.

### **4.3 Appearance**

#### All weather Dog Arena

The arena is constructed of consolidated hard-core base (drained to local channels) and surrounded by a post and rail perimeter fence at a height of 1 m. Access is from an established parking area and via hardcore paths. The rural nature of the site is preserved with no hedges or trees affected and with the grassland left in-situ where no hardcore required.

#### Wet Weather Shelter

It is acknowledged that the marquee-like structure when at full height is visible when viewed between the farm buildings and farmhouse. The off-white canvas has also added to the visual impact.

The proposal is to reduce the height to 3.25 m eaves and 5.6 m ridge which is below farm building / farmhouse heights and is also lower than the tree and hedge lines that surround the site. In addition, the proposal is to change the colour of the canvas to a grey or dark green to further reduce impact.

#### Training rooms

This consists of twin static cabin with welfare facilities (connection to main sewer) and its appearance is as standard – 2 x single access doors and windows as shown in the submitted plans. The static van floor level is set 500mm above ground.

### **4.4 Landscape Impact**

The existing dog agility arena consisting of hardcore arena and post and rail fences are low impact, well hidden in a small paddock adjacent to the farmhouse surrounded by hedge and tree lines with heights of over 6 m and the farmhouse and buildings.

The proposed wet weather shelter will be reduced in height to an eaves height of 3.25m and ridge height of 5.6m with canvas coloured to a darker green or grey. The existing boundary structures surrounding the site of hedges, trees and buildings to all aspects will present effective visual barriers.

The context of any potential impact also needs considering and the permitted solar farm on adjacent agricultural land has already impacted on the rural landscape. This proposal presents no significant additional impact due to its scale and the visual barriers that exist.

Visual impact assessment. The twin approaches recommended by the Landscape Institute (sign posted by the North Somerset website) requires a combination of assessment of impact on landscape character of any development and then the visual impact from identified sensitive receptors.

The proposed development sits well within an agricultural landscape with a range of buildings and hardcore areas. Its impact on local landscape is minimal – certainly when compared with the solar panel development next door. Impact on landscape character is negligible when considering scale of the proposal and the context of existing developments.

The potential receptors are neighbouring residential occupiers, highway and footpath users. With the reduced height and the existing trees and hedge heights together with buildings the proposed development cannot be seen from any aspect other than perhaps elements of the 5.6m ridge but this in context of existing buildings close by. No significant visual impact is likely.

Combining negligible impact on local landscape character with no significant visual impact allows a reasonable conclusion that the development is of a scale that respects the rural setting.

## **5. Access**

Access to the site is via existing farm access from unclassified highway. Visibility good and turning areas and parking sufficient for requirement (see site plan).

## **6. Flood Risk**

The site is in flood zone 3b. A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies this application.

Sequential test undertaken concludes that as an expansion of an existing facility and as a farm diversification development the site is required to be within the boundaries and ownership of the Pool Farm operation.

Zone 3b allows for water compatible uses including recreation and no exception test required.

## **7. Conclusion**

The proposed use of land for this farm diversification proposal at Pool Farm is supported by and meets the requirements of North Somerset policy DM51 and DM55 and the National Planning Policy Framework Para 83 and 84.

The slightly expanded dog training arena, wet weather shelter and training rooms will not impact on the rural character and will boost the long-term sustainability of the farm and provide for some local employment.