

AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL

for and on behalf of

MR & MRS JT & LA WEBBER

in respect of a

PERMANENT AGRICULTURAL WORKER'S DWELLING

at

**LITTLEDOWN FIELDS
YARCOMBE
HONITON
DEVON
EX14 9LZ**

taken and made this

NOVEMBER 2022

by

SHEAMUS MACHIN FRICS FAAV

Of

**WINDOVER FARM BARN
MADFORD
HEMYOCK
CULLOMPTON
DEVON
EX15 3QX**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proposal	Construction of a permanent on-farm dwelling
Size of Holding	12 acres owned and a further 10 acres rented plus up to 20 acres of grass keep is taken on annually in the locality
Existing Dwellings	Temporary dwelling
Buildings	A range of modern portal frame buildings various areas of hard standing and concrete yards.
Livestock	120 cattle of various ages 70 breeding ewes
Labour Employed	1 full time worker – Josh Webber
Functional Test	Essential requirements: - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Husbandry requirements of rearing young calves• Husbandry requirements of lambing ewes• Husbandry requirements of followers various ages• Responding to unpredicted incidents which cause losses• To monitor intruders to the site and visitors for bio-security reasons and general security reasons• Full time labour requirement of one full time worker
Financial Test	3 years trading accounts with profit in all of the last 3 years exceeding the recognised standard for the satisfaction of the financial test.
Availability of Suitable Dwellings	None

1. INTRODUCTION

Verbal instructions have been received from Mr & Mrs JT & LA Webber to prepare an Agricultural Appraisal in support of a planning application for a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at Little Down Fields. This report makes particular reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised), the policies within the East Devon District Councils local plan and the now defunct PPS 7, Annex A.

2. INSPECTION

All the information compiled in this report was obtained from the applicant during an inspection of the holding in September 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

The applicant's farming enterprise is based at Littledown Fields in Yarcombe. The holding was purchased in 2016 and consists of 4 steel portal frame buildings with 12 acres of land.

The planning history of the site is as follows: -

- 16/1909/FUL – Erection of additional agricultural building for livestock and modification of vehicle entrance
- 04/P1697 – Two agricultural buildings for livestock/fodder storage
- 19/0001/FUL – General purpose agricultural building and associated concrete apron, and roofing over yard area.
- 19/2471/FUL – Siting of a temporary agricultural worker's dwelling (mobile home)

Littledown Fields is a self-contained unit which comprises a range of farm buildings and 12 acres of land. The primary enterprises of the business are rearing beef cattle from the purchase of calves and young store cattle to be taken to finished weights. There is also a breeding flock of sheep.

The applicants are young farmers, not from a farming background, trying to get on the farming ladder. There are very few opportunities to get a start in farming if you are not lucky enough to inherit a farm or succeed to a tenancy and by purchasing Littledown Fields it has enabled them to consolidate their business and look to increase their stock numbers and sales to a self-financing, sustainable and viable business. They have achieved part of their goal by purchasing the holding, erecting buildings and living on the site in a mobile home for the last three years.

The application is to replace the temporary dwelling and provide a permanent on-farm dwelling at Littledown Fields. The temporary farm worker's dwelling was approved in 2019 with the reference 19/2471/FUL. This application deals with all the necessary criteria to satisfy the requisite needs for an on-farm dwelling.

4. DESCRIPTION

4.1 Location

Littledown fields is situated approximately 1.5 miles north of the village of Yarcombe. This can be seen more particularly on the plan at Appendix A.

4.2 Proposed Permanent Dwelling House

The proposed on-farm dwelling will be located within 'sight and sound' of the farm buildings in an appropriate position to meet the proven functional need of the farming unit. This can be seen on the location plan in Appendix B.

4.3 Farm Buildings

The farm buildings at Littledown Fields comprise a modern range of portal framed buildings and a wide range of hard standing and concrete yards.

4.4 The Land

The land which forms the holding comprises 12 acres and is shown edged red on the site plan at Appendix C. The majority of the land is down to grass. The land is used for grazing by the sheep and cattle. An additional 30 acres are rented annually nearby on a regular basis.

4.5 Livestock on the Holding

The applicant runs a cattle and sheep rearing enterprise. The principal activity is rearing calves. They are purchased in batches of 40 at a couple of weeks of age and then sold as store cattle at 12 months old. The applicant also purchases what are known as 'couples', which are ewes that have recently lambed. These are acquired late winter/early spring and the lambs are then fattened and sold. Some lambs are sold as store lambs later in the year and the ewes are sold either as breeders or cull ewes depending on the age of originally purchased.

The requirements of these animals necessitate an on-site presence of a full time worker the rearing & management of the calves all year around as well as managing the breeding flock of ewes. There is a letter at Appendix D from the applicant's veterinary surgeon to reinforce this need.

4.6 Labour Employed on the Holding

At the present time, Mr Josh Webber is the sole, full time worker on the holding.

5. THE PLANNING POLICY – PERMANENT AGRICULTURAL DWELLINGS

Policy assessment of this application falls into 3 categories.

5.1 Government Planning Policy and the National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 14 – *sets out a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ and when making decisions, planning should be granted unless ‘the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’*

Paragraph 80 – *states ‘To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Local planning Authorities ‘should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following special circumstances apply’.* One of those being:

‘There is an essential need for a rural worker, including those who taking majority control of the farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.’

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that it may be relevant to consider when applying paragraph 80a 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 6 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 permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

NPPF Paragraph 84 promotes a prosperous rural economy and requires planning policies and decisions to enable the development of agricultural and other rural land-based businesses.

5.2 East Devon District Council Saved Policy H4

“Dwellings for Persons Employed in Rural Businesses: Permission for dwellings in the countryside for new agricultural or forestry workers or people employed in rural

businesses or activities will be granted where the proposal fully satisfies the following:

- 1. There is a proven and essential agricultural or forestry or rural business need for the occupier of the proposed dwelling to be housed permanently on the unit or in the specific rural location for functional reasons and the size of the proposed dwelling is commensurate with the scale of the established functional need. Where this need is unproven or a new business is being established a temporary dwelling (such as a mobile home) may be permitted to allow time to establish that there is a genuine functional and financial need for a permanent dwelling. A temporary dwelling will normally be permitted for a period of three years, subject to meeting relevant criteria detailed below.*
- 2. In the case of a permanent dwelling, the rural business has been operational for a minimum of three years, it is demonstrable that it is commercially viable and has clear prospects for remaining so.*
- 3. In the case of a temporary dwelling, a financial assessment, specifically in the form of a business plan setting out projected future operations, must demonstrate future operational viability.*
- 4. The qualifying test of occupancy must involve at least one occupant being employed full time in the relevant rural business. Two occupants in partnership can meet the condition so long as their joint weekly hours equate to a full working week*
- 5. There are no buildings on the operational holding suitable for conversion to meet the residential need or exiting dwellings available now or likely to be available within a nearby location or settlement. Sale within the last three years of any dwellings or buildings suitable for conversion will be taken into account and will count against 'need' in the assessment carried out.*
- 6. Any permission granted will be subject to an occupancy condition tying it to the relevant business on the proposed dwelling and where appropriate, any existing dwelling on the farm holding.*

5.3 PPS 7, Annex A – Permanent Agricultural Dwellings

Although this planning policy is now defunct, I think it is beholding on authorities and advisers to look back and consider the criteria within paragraph 3 of Annex A. It confirms that new permanent dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units providing: -

- 5.3.1 There is a clearly established existing functional need*
- 5.3.2 The need relates to a full time worker or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to a part time requirement.*
- 5.3.3 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.*
- 5.3.4 The functional need cannot be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit or any other accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned.*
- 5.3.5 Other planning requirements e.g. in relation to access or impact on the countryside are satisfied.*

5.4 Relevant Planning Policy

I think it is reasonable to state the NPPF deals explicitly with permanent agricultural dwellings, although there is a common thread with regard to functional need. The defunct PPS 7 Annex A paragraph 3 closely relates to the local plan policy H4 and I think it is therefore prudent to look at the criteria which are common in both H4 and the old Annex A and to assess whether or not the criteria are met.

5.4.1 Functional need....

It is normal practice to assess the functional need by firstly evaluating how many labour units are required for the enterprises in question, and then whether or not that one or more workers need to be on site at most times of the day and night for the proper functioning of those enterprises.

As can be seen from Appendix E, there is a standard man day requirement of 1.1 labour units for the enterprise to operate properly.

The old functional test refers to the need 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 in case animals or processes require essential care at short notice and to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products.

The management of the young calves when they enter the holding, and for the first 3 months of their life, is critical for them to flourish and grow. There are so many ailments that young calves can pick up that early and immediate attention is vital. This is an all-year-round requirement with batches of young calves be purchased regularly. This attention can only be achieved by someone living on site. The day-to-day activities of the calf rearing system include:

- Feeding milk to the calves twice daily
- Husbandry requirements to include bedding up the pens, providing hay and calf creep
- Regularly monitoring to ensure animal welfare is maintained to the highest standards
- Disinfecting equipment and drinkers to ensure disease, illness and welfare issues are minimised and addressed immediately when they do arise

Any significant losses at this stage would be impact significantly upon the applicant's business. It is paramount to the success of the calf rearing system that the losses are kept to an absolute minimum. This attention can only be achieved by someone living on site.

The management of the ewes and lambs is similar in that constant management and husbandry are required to ensure they thrive and are well looked after. During the lambing periods, it demands a high-level labour requirement to regularly check the livestock (as frequently as every hour) to mitigate against any losses. Day to day tasks include the following:

- Monitoring of ewe and lamb condition
- Ensuring ewes and lambs have plenty to feed and drink

- Regular bedding when housed
- Administration of medication as and when required
- Disinfecting and cleaning
- Tagging and data recording

There is the added requirement of security both physical and bio security, requiring constant attention at the site.

The functional need for a resident worker is supported by the letter at Appendix D from the applicant's veterinary surgeon. The needs of the holding are virtually identical to the case that was made at the temporary dwelling stage, which was accepted by the Council.

5.4.2 Full time worker...

As can be seen from Appendix E the need clearly relates to 1.11 full time workers.

5.4.3 The unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years....profitable for at least one of them...currently financially sound...clear prospect of remaining so.

I have inspected the last three years accounts of the business and I confirm the business has been profitable for all of the last 3 years to a level in excess of the accepted amount as set out in Appendix F. The accounts are not being submitted with the application but will be made available to the local planning authority should they wish to inspect them.

5.4.4 The functional need cannot be fulfilled by another existing dwelling...suitable and available...by the workers concerned.

There are no other dwellings (apart from the existing temporary dwelling) either available or suitable for the occupation of the worker concerned on the holding that would satisfy the functional need.

Similarly, there is no other existing accommodation in the area which is either suitable or available for the occupation of the worker concerned which would satisfy the functional need.

5.4.5 Other planning requirements...

The proposed dwelling is sited so as to meet the identified functional need and will be well related to the existing farm buildings.

6. OCCUPANCY RESTRICTIONS

The applicant accepts the permanent dwelling will have an agricultural occupancy condition.

7. GENERALLY

The applicant satisfied the functional need criteria when the temporary dwelling was approved and has continued to manage the holding as stated in that original business plan. Therefore, the applicant has continued to demonstrate an existing functional need for the proposed permanent dwelling at the location identified where they will then be able to manage and run the farming business and provide the essential care for the livestock with the full-time worker being available at most times.

The needs of the holding create sufficient work for 1.11 full time farm workers to service the business.

The returns in performance of the whole business demonstrate the level of work carried out by the labour employed on the holding.

It is clear that the business has been established for at least 3 years, has been profitable for all 3 of those years, and has a clear prospect of remaining sustainable and profitable in the long term.

There are no other dwellings in the locality or on the holding which are either suitable or available for the occupation by the worker concerned.

The proposed dwelling will be of a size and design which will be in keeping with the locality causing minimal impact on the countryside.

After assessing the current business and inspecting the site of the proposed permanent dwelling, it is felt there is a clear functional/financial justification for there to be a permanent dwelling on the site to enable the proper management of Littledown Fields.

8. PROVENANCE

This appraisal has been prepared to provide independent unbiased advice in a factual statement of the business operating at Littledown Fields. The appraisal is based on the information provided by the applicant and produced by a Professional Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers. The undersigned has produced numerous appraisals for district councils and applicants in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset and has an extensive knowledge of farming in the region.

Sheamus Machin FRICS FAAV
November 2022

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

Littledown Farm, Yarcombe, Honiton



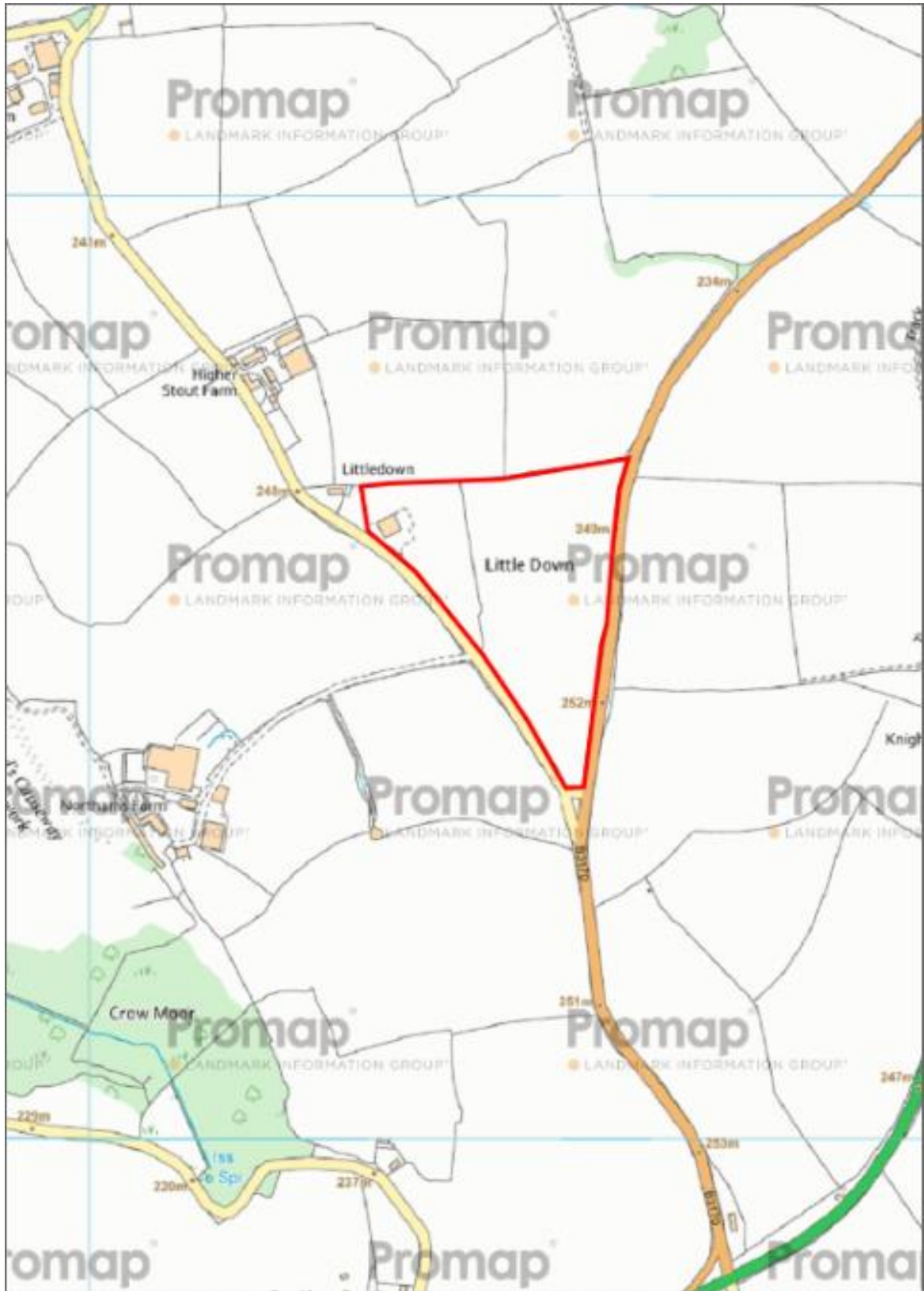
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LANDMARK INFORMATION

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Plotted Scale - 1:1250. Paper Size - A4

Sheamus Machin
CHARTERED SURVEYOR • VALUER • LAND AGENT

Location plan SM1

APPENDIX C



APPENDIX D



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17/11/2022

Mr Webber – Littledown Farm, Yarcombe, Honiton, Devon. EX14 9LZ

To Whom it Concerns

I am pleased to follow my letter written 07/11/2019 (attached) with an account of Mr Webber's farming practices for the past 3-years.

I have witnessed Mr Webber meet his farming predictions in all three years, producing 160 or so calves and in the region of 70 ewes with lambs. This was a particularly impressive achievement given that this window straddled the COVID pandemic.

I have regularly attended the farm for routine work such as TB testing, castrations and discussions on welfare enhancing solutions, such as the installation of a positive ventilation system. The stock has always been in excellent condition, clearly with a focus on the welfare considerations of farming alongside the commercial aspects.

Animal ailments have frequently been attributable to weather challenges (e.g. pneumonia cases) or illness inflicted prior to purchase (e.g. joint ill). These concerns have required prompt and continuing nursing from Mr Webber. His ability to monitor and feed the unwell animals at unsociable hours I believe has assisted in his high success rate for recovery and low mortality rate.

Mr Webber's sheep enterprise has been very successful. He has not required emergency veterinary intervention during the last three years. Mr Webber seeks consultation on his sheep production and preventative health care during my planned visits. This ensure that the animals are regularly discussed, and adjustments in management can be performed well in advance of critical periods. This level of success with the sheep will be due in part to Mr Webber's ability to regularly monitor his lambing ewes. Sheep during lambing will have adverse health effects ranging from ill-health to death if they are lambed 'too quick' or 'too late'. The ability and inclination of Mr Webber to regularly monitor and intervene at the optimal time will no doubt have helped him achieve this high health success.

I have witnessed Mr Webber meet and surpass his expectations for the farming venture outlined in 2019. It has been a pleasure to provide him with veterinary care over these years and I hope to do so for many more years to come.

Sincerely,

Dr R.J. Mangham BVSc BSc (Hons) CertAVP MRCVS

www.mountvets.com

APPENDIX E

LABOUR REQUIREMENTS CALCULATION

<u>STOCK</u>	STANDARD MAN DAY EQUIVALENT
40 0-3 Months	105.20
40 3-6 Months	45.20
80 – 6-12 Months	64.80
70 Ewes	26.60
Grassland management	24.00
SUB-TOTAL	265.80
Add 15% for general maintenance, repairs and management	39.37
<u>TOTAL</u>	305.67

In accordance with the accepted provisions (as set out in the Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book 95th edition) the total SMD's is then divided by 275 to give the number of labour units.

- 305.67 divided by 275 = **1.11 labour units**

DETAILED METHODOLOGY OF FINANCIAL CALCULATION

Assess **Gross Enterprise Outputs**

deduct

Variable Costs

to give

Enterprise Gross Margins

deduct

Fixed Costs

(eg employed labour, machinery, depreciation, general overheads etc)

to give

Net Annual Income

Assess

Notional Rent

for owner occupied land

and

Assess

cost of dwelling, other **new buildings** required

together with

working capital

charged at

2.5%

deduct

notional rent and **capital costs**

from

Net Annual Income

to give

Return to Unpaid Labour