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## **Change of Use of Land for Dog Walking and Exercising**

PREPARED FOR

Ms S Cason  
Warren Farm

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**PREPARED BY**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report has been prepared on behalf of Ms S Cason to outline the facts considered relevant for the proposed change of use of an agricultural field for the walking and exercising of dogs at Land at Warren Farm.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The land of Warren Farm forms part of the wider land owned and rented by the applicant which extends to approximately 15 hectares (37 acres), which is down to grassland.

The farm is going through a phase of diversification, with this seen as the most suitable form of diversification.

## **3. PROPOSAL**

The applicants are proposing changing the use of the land, 0.97ha (2.39 acres) to a dog exercise field where customer(s) can exercise up to a maximum of 10 dogs at any one time.

No infrastructure would be required other than a small parking area situated within the dog run area, a short-stay waiting area off Warren Road.

Since the COVID pandemic, dog ownership has increased significantly with many first-time dog owners uncomfortable with their dogs mixing with other dogs and puppies requiring safe secure training areas. Some dogs are reactive to other dogs, which means they are nervous in the company of other dogs and other environmental challenges. This in turn has led to a rising need for safe, secure exercise areas where there are fewer distractions.

Furthermore, a limited number of safe places are available where dogs can be released off the lead to exercise safely. The exclusive use of the field will give customers space and peace of mind knowing that they will not meet other dogs and provide a quiet environment for training. The location is close to the expanding village of Barton Mills and near to Kennett.

The perimeter of the field will be fenced with a maximum 2-metre-high fencing using anti-climb stock fencing. Customers access the car parking area via a gate which is padlocked (coded) and secured by customers on entry to prevent their dogs escaping. The code is provided via a website when booking a suitable time slot. The field will be available to dog owners/walkers on a 25 minute or 55-minute

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basis by booking online. The site will be available from dawn to dusk.

With more people owning dogs, there is an increasing need for dog walking services and the proposed use would enable a professional dog walker or trainer to exercise/train up to 10 dogs at any one time without the risk of dogs escaping or annoying other dog walkers.

A small car parking area within the run will be created, large enough for the parking of vehicles with turning. Access will allow all cars to leave in forward gear.

Bins for dog waste will be provided within the run including compostable dog waste bags. The onus will be put on customers to be responsible for clearing up any mess. Regular visits to empty the bins will be made by the operators.

Drinking water for dogs will be provided on site by the operators.

The applicants could currently use the field as a dog walking facility for up to 28- days as permitted development without planning permission and with no control over the number of dogs on the land. However, they wish to apply for planning permission to provide an identified all-year round facility.

#### 4. PLANNING POLICY

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).

**Paragraphs 83 and 84** provide policy on supporting a prosperous rural economy as follows:-

*Planning policies and decisions should enable:-*

- a) *the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;*
- b) *the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses;*
- c) *sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) *the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

*Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location by sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where opportunities exist.*

Individual customers and very small groups will have exclusive use of the field and will be able to walk up to 10 dogs at any one time. Time slots are on a 25-minute or 55-minute basis.

Existing access to the field will be utilised, this is already an existing agricultural field access, it is proposed that the access will be improved and made to bound material for the first 6-metres.

The access will provide suitable visibility in both directions.

National planning policy are supportive of diversification and sustainable development and this proposal scores highly on both counts.

Farming activities remain the predominate use of the farm with the change of use only extending to

0.97 hectares of the 15-hectare holding.

## **5. PLANNING COMMENTS**

The proposal is for the change of use of existing grassland to a dog exercise field. The application is for a change of use only, with no building works proposed.

The land will be fully enclosed by a fence no more than 1.9 metres high to prevent dogs from escaping into the surrounding farmland. Fences up to 2 metres high do not require planning permission unless abutting the highway, which this fencing will not. Fencing of this type could be installed now under permitted development. The existing field is now down to grassland having been cropped for arable purposes in previous years.

Individual customers will have exclusive use of the field and will be able to walk up to 10 dogs at any one time. Time slots are on a 25-minute or 55-minute basis.

There is an existing agricultural field access to the area which will be improved and made to bound material for the first 6 metres from the road.

The access will provide suitable visibility in both directions.

National planning policy are supportive of diversification and sustainable development and this proposal scores highly on both counts.

The proposal is for a change of use only. Therefore, there would be no adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area, indeed the proposal would maintain the natural environment and landscape. The proposal is therefore of a use and scale that relates well to the setting of the existing farm.

It is likely that local dog owners will make use of the facility as it provides a local community facility during a time when dog ownership is increasing and open space for dog walking decreasing. Local customers will be able to walk to the site.

The proposal will contribute to the viability of the farm especially given the changing farming regime following Brexit and continued uncertainties with farm subsidies and Government support. The remainder of the farm is mainly arable so this proposal will expand the income sources and make use of the some of farmland.

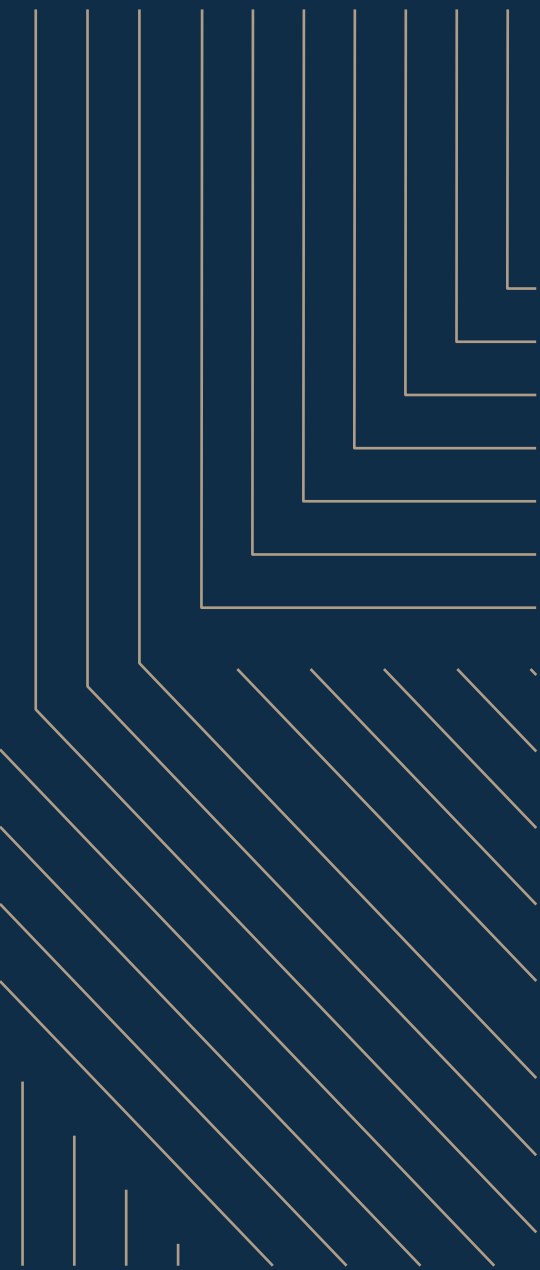
## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion the proposal is particularly sustainable, providing a diversification use to an existing farming business so meeting economic objectives. Diversification is strongly supported in terms of planning policy.

The proposal will provide a local service so scores highly in terms of social objectives.

There will be no impact on the environment. The proposal provides an economic use whilst allowing the permanent pasture to be maintained.

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