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# Planning Statement

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Erection of permanent rural  
occupational workers dwelling

Hare Hill Farm, Edgton

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Prepared for:

Mr & Mrs O'Brian

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Reviewed by: Paul Middleton MCIAT

Publication title: Planning Statement

Version: 1.0

Date: November 2023

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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This supporting statement considers the planning issues relating to the application proposal for the erection of a permanent rural occupational workers dwelling, at Hare Hill Farm, Edgton, and forms part of the application. The information included within this statement is intended to assist the Planning Officer in making their decision.

The applicants obtained consent for a temporary dwelling under planning reference 20/01796/FUL and are now seeking permission for a permanent dwelling as long-term viability has been demonstrated.

## 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

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Hare Hill Farm is situated adjacent to a council-maintained road on the south-western fringe of Edgton. It is approximately 5 miles east of Bishops Castle and 4 miles north-west of Craven Arms.

The land holding at Hare Hill Farm is 7.5 acres and then they also utilise an additional 15 acres for grazing. The couple have obtained permission for a building and polytunnels onsite.

The surrounding area is predominantly open agricultural land, and the site falls within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

## 3.0 THE PLANNING APPLICATION PROPOSAL

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The applicants currently utilises 22.5 acres for horticulture along with Mr O'Brian's tree surgery business and a flock of Exmoor sheep. Since moving on to the site Mr O'Brian has spent the majority of his time dedicated to the horticulture business and does the tree surgeon business part time. There is also a building on site which houses machinery and equipment for the business, along with two polytunnels erected more recently to enable the couple to keep pace with the flourishing horticultural business. Living on site has also enabled increased security which is very prevalent in rural areas unfortunately.

The applicant's horticultural business utilises 2 acres to grow fruit and vegetables along with the polytunnels. They also produce breeding ewes and lambs for local meat sales from a flock of rare Exmoor horn sheep. Furthermore, they produce free range eggs from a flock of 10 birds. Having a permanent presence on site has enabled the business to grow in the 3 years since temporary consent was granted and the clear need for a permanent dwelling has been

proven. They have also increased the number of chickens and sheep in this time to enable them to supply more restaurant, selling more stock at local markets and within the local area direct.

Their future aim for the business is to increase stock further and utilise more land with discussions already in place to rent a further parcel of land. The foundations have already been put in place with the temporary dwelling, but for the full potential to be realised a permanent dwelling is now required.

Having a permanent dwelling on site will allow the applicant to increase the number of veg boxes, allow customers to order produce directly from their website, obtain further veg/flower growing land, and take on additional market stalls.

A Block Plan Layout is submitted in support of the application, along with details of the proposed permanent dwelling.

### **3.1 Business Equipment / Assets**

Horticulture – Hare Hill Farm:

- General purpose building
- Tractor and loader
- Mower
- Gardening tools
- Hand tools
- Seeds, plants etc.
- Commercial polytunnels
- Large hen house and chickens
- Flock of Exmoor Horn sheep

New items bought for horticulture business:

- Harrow
- Ridger
- Potato Harvester
- Rotorvator
- Disk Harrow
- Seed Drill
- Stock Trailer

Tree Active:

- Range of chainsaws

- Blower
- Small hand tools
- Ladders
- Helmets
- Climbing equipment
- Road signs
- Ropes

Items sold from tree business to further expand and enhance horticulture:

- Trailer
- Plant trailer
- Chipper

#### 4.0 FUNCTIONAL REVIEW

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Planning policy recognises that agricultural forestry and other occupations associated with rural based enterprises sometimes require one or more workers to live on or near the site. This is consistent through national and local policy guidance.

Hare Hill Farm is used to grow fruit and vegetables and also some plants which are currently sold to six restaurants and two local shops, together attending seven farmers markets each month and the delivery of 30 veg boxes fortnightly. The business has been built up by the applicants who dedicate much of their life to it. Some days they spend 14 hours ensuring all work is completed. The couple have calculated that each year, between them, they are still spending in excess of 3,000 hours working on the horticultural business. It is generally accepted that 275 days are worked by farm workers allowing for holidays and illness. Based on a 9 hour day this would equate to 2,475 hours a year. The couple therefore work more than the equivalent of a full-time worker on the horticulture business.

It is therefore considered that there is at least the requirement for a full-time worker on the holding. The functional requirements are set out below: -

##### Responsibilities

Liam and Alice manage the horticulture business between them and carry out all of the day to day duties. They are solely responsible for planning the cropping rotation and carrying out all of the cultivation and crop care work. The ground preparation work for some of the vegetables is very important and involves rotating, cultivating, rolling, and scuffling. The seeds

are either sown by hand or using a compact drill. Attention to the nutrient levels of soil is also important and varies for each crop. Produce is grown in the polytunnels and outside.

Once the seeds have been sown, it is important to control the weeds, ensure the crops have the correct nutrient levels and vitality, the required amount of water, which is completely reliant on close monitoring especially when temperatures are high.

The crops are harvested by hand and taken to the storage shed and sold straightaway to restaurants or at local markets.

The applicants also run the market stall which involves preparation on the holding before transferring the goods to the market for sale. They are also responsible for general maintenance of the buildings and equipment.

They are also responsible as the business owners for all financial decisions, book-keeping, purchases, sales, and banking.

### Hours of Work

Mr and Mrs O'Brian often work long hours to ensure that everything is carried out at the required time and during busy times they often work 14 hour days on the horticulture, sheep and chickens. Mr O'Brian has been dedicating the majority of his time to the horticulture business since moving on site as this is the biggest earner.

During the summer, they often start early in the morning so that watering is done before picking, and before the midday heat kicks in. The remainder of the day will be spent weeding, succession sowing through the year, and fertilising. They only use organic and low impact methods including organic fertilisers and do not spray their crops to provide environmental benefits. To have a permanent dwelling on the holding would enable the couple to continue being onsite at these early hours to carry out required work and ensure that the required level of monitoring is possible. Having the polytunnels has also allowed the growing season to be extended, which has increased crop production considerably and the need to be on site 24/7.

### Emergencies

Being on site has allowed Mr and Mrs O'Brian to better respond to any emergencies that may arise including issues with crops, monitoring polytunnel temperatures, and livestock welfare. Issues are able to be spotted and corrected quickly.

### Business Security

Having a permanent presence on site has enabled them to live and work at Hare Hill Farm which acts as a deterrent to any organised gangs who may look to target the site if it were unoccupied. They had previously experienced break ins when not living on site, and thankfully no thefts have occurred in the past 3 years which shows the importance of living at Hare Hill Farm.

## 5.0 LOCATION, DESIGN AND ACCESS

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### Location

The site has been carefully selected taking account of site constraints and to ensure the current needs of the business.

It is proposed to locate the permanent dwelling in the same position as the existing temporary dwelling, adjacent to the access track and near to the access from the road.

### Scale, layout, appearance, and landscaping

The application is for a permanent dwelling and the applicants wish for this to be single storey with two distinct elements, one for sleeping accommodation and the other side for living accommodation. The dwelling is of a modest size and using sustainable materials. Sustainable energy sources will also be incorporated to allow the dwelling to be off grid.

The dwelling would have an internal floor area no larger than 100sqm which would align with the Affordable Housing SPD. The applicants are willing to enter into a Section 106 agreement with regard to the occupation and size of the dwelling.

Below are the elevations and floorplans for the proposed design:



Block Plan



Proposed South Elevation



Proposed North Elevation

*Elevations*



Foul drainage will be taken to an existing private treatment system as mains drainage is not available. A mini sewage treatment plant and discharge was installed as part of the temporary dwelling consent. Surface water would be taken to a storage tank for use on the crops with an overflow taken to the soakaways. Rainwater harvesting would also be used for grey water within the house.

### Access

The existing vehicular access will be utilised and was confirmed as acceptable during the temporary planning consent. Suitable parking provision is also provided and shown on the Block Plan.

## 6.0 POLICY OVERVIEW

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### National Planning Policy – Overview

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012, revised July 2018, February 2019, June 2019, July 2021, and September 2023, and replaced most of the former planning policy statements and guidance notes, emphasising sustainable development and planning for prosperity.

Paragraph 79 of the current National Planning Policy Framework states that:

*“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.”*

Further stating at paragraph 80:

*“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...”*

The proposed development fully complies with the NPPF, as it will enable rural workers, in connection with a horticultural business and tree surgery business, to live at their place of work.

Planning Policy is supportive of rural enterprise in the heart of Shropshire through the siting of this appropriately sized essential workers dwelling.

### Local Planning Policy

#### Shropshire Council Core Strategy 2006 – 2026

Shropshire Council formally adopted the Core Strategy on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2011. It sets out the strategic planning policy for Shropshire, including a 'spatial' vision and objectives. It also sets out a development strategy identifying the level of development expected to take place in Shropshire (excluding the Borough of Telford and Wrekin) up until 2026. Below is a brief outline and explanation of Local Policies that relate most to this proposal.

Policy CS5: Countryside and Green Belt. There is direct policy support in the way of development that offers support to the agricultural industry provided there are no unacceptable adverse impacts, particularly where they relate to small-scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy. Policy CS5 of the local plan echoes much of what is portrayed in the NPPF in regards toward overall support in favour of rural enterprise development.

Provided that development meets CS11 and CS12 and national policy, dwellings to house rural workers in the countryside will receive support from the local authority. It is proposed that Policy CS5 is the underlying basis for this particular development, in light of the need for a dwelling to be present on the holding that directly houses the applicants at Hare Hill Farm.

#### Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan

Policy MD7a of the SAMDev Plan is particularly relevant to this application which states:

"Dwellings to house essential total workers will be permitted if: -

- a. There are no other existing suitable and available affordable dwellings or other buildings which could meet the need, including any recently sold otherwise removed from the ownership of the rural business."*

There is a temporary dwelling at the farm currently, and other than this there are no buildings which could meet the need.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

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On the basis of the information provided by the applicants there is a clear need to remain living on the holding on a permanent basis to provide the requisite management and protect their business from theft and intrusions. The applicants work long and unsociable hours to make sure tasks get done as well as operating a market stall and undertaking deliveries of produce. They have previously struggled with several cases of trespassing and theft and living on site is the key to limiting this. They have worked tirelessly to grow the business whilst growing a family, and the next logical step is to have a permanent home at the site.

The proposed development is in accordance with planning policy and meets the functional and financial requirements set out in planning policy guidance which is still relevant to applications for occupational dwellings.

The applicants have been living in the temporary dwelling for 3 years and now require a permanent dwelling in order to remain on the site and have a 24/7 presence. They have demonstrated that the business has continued to thrive and develop further since they began living on site. Remaining in a static caravan is not a viable option and therefore the proposal is for a new dwelling.

The couple are committed to Hare Hill Farm and if granted permission for a permanent dwelling, will continue to grow their business and provide benefits into the local community.