



RSK ADAS Ltd
4205 Park Approach
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8GB
Tel: 0113 2321632

10th February 2025

LPA: Mid Sussex District Council

Planning Officer: Joanne Fisher

Planning Reference: DM/24/3104

Proposed Application: Temporary agriculturally tied caravan accommodation.

Site Address: Sandhill Farm Sandhill Lane Crawley Down Crawley

Dear Joanne,

We have reviewed the above planning application that was submitted by Adrain Kirkpatrick of Sandhill Farm, Sandhill Lane, Crawley, RH10 4LE. The application relates to a temporary agriculturally tied caravan accommodation.

This appraisal is based on written information received for the planning application as provided by Mid Sussex District Council and supplementary information provided by the Applicant following the initial appraisal. ADAS has not conducted a separate site visit.

Agricultural Consultant's Appraisal

Background

Sandhill Farm is a 55-acre agricultural holding comprised of an Atcost barn, timber sheds, stables, 50 acres of grassland, and approximately 5 acres of woodland and footpaths. The farm has been under the Applicant's management since 1995, initially under employment and subsequently as an owner upon inheriting the land in 2013. Due to a recent divorce, the sole dwellinghouse on the property was sold and no longer forms part of the agricultural holding, leaving no on-site residential accommodation.

The business lets out 6 acres of land and some barn space to Baker Livery Services who have 6 Liveries plus 2 personal horses. The long-term aim is to rent them 10 acres of land. A further 6 acres is let to Safe and Hound Dog walking.

The Applicant is employed full time by West Sussex Fire Service working 3 days on and 3 days off (40 hours per Week). Work on the farm is done in the evenings after work and on the days off. The Applicant is assisted by Sophie Baker who does 2 to 3 hours per day feeding and mucking out.

The Applicant has entered 16.24 ha of the land area into the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme which will bring in £9,211 in the first year and then £8,886 in the second and third years of the scheme.

The business currently has the following stock on site.

- 6 beef calves aged 4 months.
- 1 beef calf 9 months
- 20 in lamb ewes - due to lamb in March 2025
- 15 lambs from 2024 to be sold as meat
- 1 Ram
- 45 laying hens
- 8 geese - selling a number to leave 3 females and 1 male.
- 11 ducks - 4 to be sold in March 2025
- 7 Silkie Chickens - selling 4 in March 2025
- 6 Pygmy Goats
- 3 goats
- 2 pigs
- 1 Alpaca
- 2 Donkeys
- 2 Shetland Ponies

The Applicant has stated that the plan is to increase stock numbers in 2025. The plan is to buy 8 calves and to increase the sheep flock by retaining ewe lambs for breeding. The aim is to increase the flock by another 14-16 head. This will bring the breeding ewe numbers to 36 head though 40 is used in the farm business plan. The aim stated in the business plan is to get to 60 breeding ewes by 2028.

Mr Kilpatrick has stated that his long-term plan is to cease working for the fire service and expand the farm so he can live off the farm. He has stated that he plans to build another barn in 2025 and has stated that this will be funded from personal savings.

Labour Requirement

It is normal practice to determine the labour requirement in Standard Man Days using information from the John Nix Pocketbook 55th edition 2025.

The following table shows the standard man days required for the stocking and land area provided by the Applicant.

Stock	Current Number	Proposed number	Standard Man Days /head/hectare	Total Standard Man Days Existing System	Total Standard Man Days Proposed System
Beef animals 18-month system*	7	15	1.6	11.2	24.0
Ewes with lambs	20	60	0.5	10	30
Rams	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Laying hens	45	45	0.06	2.7	2.7
Geese and Ducks	26	14	0.06**	1.56	0.84
Goats	9	9	1.5***	13.5	13.5
Sows	2	2	2.25	4.5	4.5
Donkeys and Ponies	5	5	5	25	25
Grassland for Hay	15.39	13.77	1.39	21.39	19.14
Sub Total				90.35	120.44
Maintenance		Add 15% to cover maintenance		13.55	18.07
Total				103.9	138.51

*Although Cattle less than 6 months old have a labour requirement of 1.2 Standard Man days per head per annum the greater figure of 1.6 standard man days has been used for finish cattle

**No Data available for Ducks so Laying hens' data used

*** Data taken from the ABC Costings Book May 2023 which states ducks require 20 hours per year per head.

The Standard Man Days are based on an 8-hour day, and it is assumed that one labour unit works 2200 hours per year or 275-man days per year.

Therefore, using the data for the stocking and cropping on the holding of 103.9 standard Man days the unit has a labour requirement of 0.38 labour units. When the proposed farming system is up and running the business will require 138.51 standard man days which equates to 0.49 labour units.

Given the number and type of stock farmed by the business, there is no justification for a permanent dwelling to be on the site. Beef cattle, Sheep, Goat and Donkeys/Ponies can be managed by someone living off site if they are inspected daily. It is obviously easier to inspect the stock daily for someone living on site. The poultry and Donkeys/Ponies will need to be let out each morning and shut up at night, which might be considered enough justification for someone to live on site.

Financial viability

The Applicant has provided a business plan covering 2024 through to 2027 and accounts for the years ending 30th September 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The business trades as Sandhill Farm Limited (09232322) and the accounts can be summarised as follows:

	30 th September 2022	30 th September 2023	30 th September 2024
Sales	£15,118	£6,805	£15,671
Less Cost of Sales	£10,181	£15,077	£2,813
Gross Profit (Loss)	£4,937	(£8,272)	£12,858
Less Administrative Expenses	£4,879	£15,418*	£5,049
Operating Profit / (Loss)	£58	(£23,690)	£7,809

*Includes provision of £12,000 for bad debt.

The financial statement for 2024 shows Sales of £15,118 whilst the business plan shows a prediction of £23,870 which was going to give a profit of £13,470, however in reality the profit was £7,809. therefore, one must question the level of accuracy in the business plan for the years 2025 to 2027. Can the business achieve the level of sales within the business plan going forward? The business plan is forecasting a doubling and trebling of income for the farm. Although the SFI income of £9,211 will go a long way to explain the increase in income the rest is coming from increased animal sales.

The accounts have a balance sheet as follows:

	30 th September 2022	30 th September 2023	30 th September 2024
Fixed Assets	£3,629	£2,478	£1,327
Current Assets	£19,439	£2,834	£2,812
Current Liabilities	£139,733	£145,667	£136,685
Net Liabilities	(£116,665)	(£140,355)	(£132,646)
Directors Loan Account	£139,733	£143,080	£136,184

Net Worth excluding Directors Loan	£23,068	£2725	£3,538

The Directors loan has been included in the Current liabilities each year, and this is the money that the Director Mr Kilpatrick has put into the business to keep it afloat. If you exclude the director's loan from the liabilities as this is unlikely ever to be repaid the business has a poor Net Worth at £3,538 at the end of September 2024.

I should however point out that the Fixed asset valuation in the account is only for Plant and Machinery and includes no valuation for the land, which I understand is owned by the business.

When the land value is considered, the business will be asset rich and cash poor and will continue to either rely on Mr Kilpatrick's non farming income to fund investments on the farm or borrow against the land value. Paying off any loans would however still have to be funded by Mr Kilpatrick from outside the farming business.

The farming business meets the financial viability criteria laid down as the business has made a profit in at least one of the last three years, though I doubt the farming business could support the level of income Mr Kilpatrick gets from the fire service currently, without him taking his fire service pension on stopping work for the fire service.

Locally available properties

A check on Rightmove this morning reveal that the cheapest property currently listed within 0.5 miles of the postcode is £95,000 for a one-bedroom Park Property (static caravan style), but most of this type are £140,000 plus. Ground floor flats are almost £200,000 for a one bedroomed ground floor flat.

Planning Consultant's Appraisal

The National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF') 2024 sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied in the determination of planning applications.

NPPF Paragraph 84 states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the provided list of circumstances apply. Point a) of this list refers to where 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.

NPPF Paragraph 85 indicates that planning decisions should help to facilitate the expansion and adaptability of businesses, whilst also taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities. Furthermore, Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, in addition to promoting rural diversification.

NPPF Paragraph 89 states that planning decisions should recognise that sites needed to meet local business needs may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements. This has been considered in relation to this Application.

As stated within the agricultural consultant's assessment, the information available relating to the farm needs, financial position and availability of other properties indicates overall that there is enough justification provided for the need for the rural worker to be on site. It is also deemed that the worker could be accommodated in a temporary caravan as opposed to a permanent dwelling. As a result, it is deemed that this application is supported by the above paragraphs of the NPPF.

In regard to local policy, Policy DP15 New Homes in the Countryside of the Mid Sussex District Plan is relevant to this proposal as this addresses rural workers dwellings. Policy DP15 states that permanent agricultural (includes forestry and certain other full time rural worker) dwellings will only be permitted to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units where it meets the relevant criteria, including where:

- The need cannot be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on or any other existing accommodation near the agricultural unit; and
- It can be proven that it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times; and
- It can be proven that the farming enterprise is economically viable; and
- It can be proven that the size of the dwelling is commensurate with the established functional requirement of the agricultural unit.

As stated above, ADAS has not carried out a site visit and as such is not in a position to comment on the above considerations. However, it is noted that Policy DP15 mirrors the position of the NPPF in regard to demonstrating an essential need for the agricultural workers dwellings. Notwithstanding the information provided, the above criteria set out in Policy DP15 are deemed to be met, and as such we consider that this proposal accords with Policy DP15.

Conclusion

Given that the application is for a temporary tied caravan accommodation I consider that the business has justified the requirement for people to be on site, though most livestock do not need someone

on site all year round and could be managed by someone living within ½ to 1 mile away if affordable accommodation could be found. A search for properties to rent within ½ mile of the site revealed no properties currently available and the local properties for sale are outside the affordability range for an agricultural worker.

The business has demonstrated it is financially viable having shown a profit in two of the last three years, though investment on the farm must be supported by the Applicant's full-time job as farm profits are insufficient to repay any significant borrowings.

The criteria set out within Policy DP15 of the Mid Sussex District Plan have been met. On this basis, we raise **no objection** to the proposal.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Watson
Principal Agricultural Consultant

Evan Williams
Planning Consultant