



24th October 2024

Mid Sussex District Council
FAO Anna Tidey
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

RSK ADAS Ltd
13 Beecham Court
Pemberton Business Park
Wigan
WN3 6PR
Tel: 01942 493255

Dear Mr Gardner,

Planning Application Ref: DM/24/1931

Description of Development: Application to retrospectively apply for a mobile home and hardstanding for the continued care of livestock on site and management of land.

Site Address: Burleigh Oaks Stables East Street Turners Hill West Sussex

I have reviewed the above Planning Application that was submitted by Stephen Langer of Stephen Langer Associates Ltd on behalf of D Hill-Upperton of Rod Gaskin Ltd, The Old Straw Barn Cuckfield (RH1 5BG) relating to the Application to retrospectively apply for a mobile home and hardstanding for the continued care of livestock on site and management of land at Burleigh Oaks Stables, East Street, Turners Hill, West Sussex. This appraisal is based on written information received for the Planning Application as provided by Mid Sussex District Council. ADAS has not conducted a separate site visit.

National Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF') 2023 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.

Agricultural Consultants Appraisal

The applicant wishes to apply retrospectively for a mobile home and hardstanding for the continued care of livestock on site and management of land. This is a new business with no accounts. Stocking on the land is 30 sheep in total in three flocks and 200 laying hens, which are housed in mobile Eglu Chicken Coops. The business rents 20 acres of land (8 ha) and is run by two volunteer staff. It should be noted that the exact area of land farmed by the business has not been provided by the applicant. Aerial photographs of land have been provided which add up to approximately 2.5 ha, so the total farmed area could be 10.5 ha.

Labour Requirement

It is normal practice to determine the labour requirement in Standard Man Days using information from the John Nix Pocketbook 54th edition 2024. The table below shows the standard man days required for the stocking and land area provided by the applicant.

Stock	Number	Standard Man Days /head/hectare	Total Standard Man Days
Sheep	30 ewes	0.5	15.00
Laying Hens- Free range	200	0.06	12.00
Grass Grazing	10.5	0.4	4.20
Sub Total			31.20
Maintenance	Add 15% to cover maintenance		4.68
Total			35.88

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 35.88 standard Man days the unit has a labour requirement of 0.13 labour units. Given the number and type of stock farmed by the business there is no justification for a dwelling to be on the site.

Financial Viability

The applicant stated that this was a new enterprise and there were no financial accounts available for the business. The applicant has however provided farm performance data for the 200 laying hens. They state that the hens lay an average 0.6 eggs per bird per day which generates an income of £12,500 per annum.

200 birds x 365 days x 0.6 eggs per day equates to 43,800 eggs produced per annum or 3650 dozen eggs.

The eggs sales from 3650 dozen are £12,500 which makes a dozen eggs worth £3.42 per dozen.

If the sheep achieve a lambing percentage of 175%, the 30 ewes will produce 52 saleable lambs per annum, which at a sale price of £100 per lamb through the auction marts will generate a total income for lambs of £5,200 per annum.

Total income from the business will be around £17,700 before costs are taken off.

With free range egg costs at around £22.65 per bird before housing costs and cleaning are accounted for and average Ewe cost at £46 per ewe before forage, the business will have costs of production amounting to £5,200 for feed, vets, marketing costs, shearing etc. The business will also have several costs described as fixed costs which include rent, fuel, electricity, insurance, labour, machinery repairs, property repairs, accountancy, PAYE/NI, bank charges and interest etc. When these costs are taken into consideration, the business is not likely to generate sufficient profit to be a viable business.

The John Nix Pocketbook for 2024 shows an average gross margin for lowland sheep of £69 per ewe excluding forage (page 77) or £55/ewe after forage. Thus 30 ewes will generate a Gross Margin of £1650 per annum. On page 101 John Nix gives a gross margin for free range hens of £8.69 per bird or in this case £1738 for the flock. Thus, the total farm Gross Margin would be £3,388 using John Nix data. £3,388 would not cover the business fixed costs previously described. The stocking described is to me a hobby farm, which would be managed by someone with a full-time job elsewhere.

Locally Available Properties

At the time of writing this letter, a search on Rightmove reveals that the cheapest property currently listed within 1 mile of the postcode is £140,000 on Turners Hill Park, but there is an age restriction of 50 years old on these properties. The prices then seem to jump to £390,000 plus with some properties listed in excess of £3 million. Apart from the Turner Hill Park properties, the local property market is beyond the potential for an agricultural worker to afford.

Conclusion

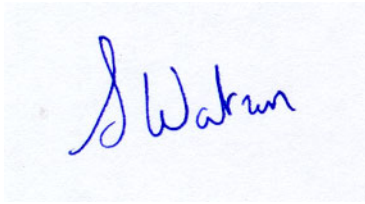
I consider that the business has not justified the requirement for people to be on site and being a new enterprise has not produced any budgets to show that the business is viable. Sheep and poultry will need to be checked a couple of times per day and the eggs collected daily. The poultry housing described would suggest that the hens are free range and the Eglu's will be in grass fields all year round. The sheep will also be out doors in the fields for at least 11 months of the year, only being housed for lambing.

Looking at the potential income from the stock the business will have an income of around £17,700 per annum before costs of production and fixed costs are deducted. The John Nix data suggests that a business of this size will have a total gross margin of £3,388 per annum to cover all the fixed costs.

Although the local property market shows a significant cost for accommodation the business has not shown a need for staff and that the business is viable. John Nix Gross Margin data from the 2024 Pocketbook show that the business will not generate sufficient Gross Margin to cover the fixed or overhead costs every business must fund.

I conclude the business is not viable from the information supplied by the applicant and that there is no labour justification for the granting of the planning permission.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Watson', on a light blue textured background.

Stephen Watson

Principal Agricultural Consultant