

Lydhurst Estate - Vision Paper

15th November 2024

Lydhurst Estate aspires to be the best in class at producing healthy, home-grown, produce with local traceability, accessing niche artisan markets using primary produce grown or reared at Lydhurst. The Estate extends to 292.78 acres, comprising 110.95 acres of pasture and 155.18 acres of woodland.

The importance of homegrown food in Britain has become increasingly significant, particularly in light of contemporary challenges such as climate change, food security, and the desire for more sustainable lifestyles. Homegrown produce will offer numerous benefits for individuals, local communities, and the nation.

Below are the ventures in which the estate will explore within the next 6-24 months.

Market Garden

The estate will repurpose the walled gardens. Historically they would been used to grow food for the main house and supporting community. It is our ambition to invest heavily in this area to facilitate the production of fruit and vegetables on a commercial basis. The produce will be marketed to local establishments.

Livestock

The estate will experiment with both rare heritage breed livestock and conventional breeds. The aim being to produce unique quality products. The estate will look at non-conventional stocking systems to explore how best to minimize artificial inputs. Stock will include goats, sheep, cattle, water buffalo, deer and chickens. The existing agricultural buildings at Barlands will form a key location for lambing and overwintering stock. Primary products created will include meat and milk. These primary products will be processed on the estate to add value.

Orchards

The estate already supports a modest orchard, sadly it has been neglected over the years. The ambition is to restore and plant a significant orchard portfolio starting with two acres in Middle Field. Our vision is not to follow the status quo with what is traditionally planted but experiment with new varieties of fruit trees which may better suit the British changing climate. The fruit will then be sold in both its primary form but also pressed to create a range of ciders and fresh juice.

Livery

In keeping with the traditions of horses featuring on the estate, a new livery and sand school is envisaged. The design of which will have animal husbandry at the heart of its design. Our vision is to create something unique yet practical but in keeping with the landscape.

Forestry

Woodland management offers numerous benefits for both the environment and local communities. The active management of woodlands ensures their health, sustainability, and resilience while maximising their ecological, economic, and social value. The estate will create and implement a Woodland Management Plan approved by the Forestry Commission.

Standard practice for estates of this scale is to sell the timber to a contractor or directly to a mill. The ambition at Lydhurst is different. The aim being to use as much of the timber in house by processing timber with an estate sawmill and seasoning the products in the farm buildings.

Buildings

The ambition extends to converting the use of buildings situated around the courtyard. The aim is to step away from traditional Sussex farming and explore new opportunities, transforming the estate into a thriving, multi-faceted business founded on products grown or reared on the estate. It is our ambition to produce artisan cheeses, butchery, charcuterie, creamery, picklery and honey. The courtyard will be transformed into a thriving hub for the estate.

Employment

Ambitions of this scale will require a skilled and talented workforce. It is envisaged in time the farm will support 10-15 new employment opportunities. The estate is prepared to use a proportion of the 14 residential properties as staff accommodation. This will bring extensive benefits to the local community.

Investment

We are prepared to invest significantly in this vision. The estate will be the home of the owners and thus its success is and will always be a priority. Additional infrastructure will be required to support the estate in the form of;

- Improving farm track infrastructure.
- The construction of a new agricultural building which will form the main hub for machinery and forestry equipment.
- We are ambitious in exploring new systems for growing produce in a greenhouse environment and will seek to build a new greenhouse to explore cultivating techniques.

This strategy not only enhances the resilience of the farm in fluctuating market conditions but also offers the chance to connect with new customers and the local community. With the growing demand for locally sourced, sustainable products, the farm will continue to innovate while preserving the heritage of their land, ensuring both economic growth and environmental stewardship.