

APPENDIX A – Item 8 (Pages 63-76) – CB/14/03675/FULL – Poppy Hill Farm, Cambridge Road, Langford.

Comments from Agricultural Advisor's on behalf of applicant and Council.

Comments from Applicant's Agricultural Advisor

14/03675

16 SEP 2014

AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL

Prepared for:

Mr T. W. & Mrs L Simpson
of
Simpson & Sons

Planning Application to Central Bedfordshire Council
for a temporary Agricultural Workers Dwelling

At

Poppy Hill Farm, Langford Bedfordshire
SG18 9PL

30 SEP 2014

September 2014

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1.0 Introduction

This appraisal has been prepared for Mr T. W. & Mrs L Simpson of Simpson & Sons, for a Planning Application to Central Bedfordshire Council for a temporary agricultural workers dwelling at Poppy Hill Farm, Langford.

This appraisal shall assess the need for the temporary agricultural workers dwelling, at Poppy Hill Farm to support the existing farming enterprise. The proposed temporary dwelling will be occupied by, Mr T. W. & Mrs L Simpson and their two sons.

2.0 Location & Description

Poppy Hill Farm is located off Cambridge Road, Langford, having been established in its current location by the applicant approximately 4 years ago. **(See Appendix 1 location plan)**

Poppy Hill Farm is the main farming base for Simpson & Sons. The business extends to 305 Acres (123.43 Hectares) and operates a mixed arable and livestock holding.

2.1 Land

The land at Poppy Hill Farm is utilised for arable and livestock farming purposes being predominantly Grade 2 land according to the Agricultural Land Classification Maps. The farm is registered under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and is a recognised agricultural holding.

The arable operations extend to some 225 Acres (91.05 Hectares) with land located at Poppy Hill Farm & Balls Farm Langford, Edworth Road and Bleak Hall, Biggleswade as detailed on the attached land holding Plan (**Appendix 2**).

The grassland enterprise currently extends to approximately 80 Acres (32.38 Hectares) and is principally located at Poppy Hill Farm (owned by Simpson & Sons) further grassland is rented within Langford and is used for grazing and hay making purposes.

Approximately 160 acres (64.75 Hectares) is owned by Simpson and Sons, with a further 145 acres (58.68 Hectares) occupied under contracting farming arrangements and a Council, Farm Business Tenancy.

The main farm premises are at Poppy Hill Farm, all livestock, arable produce and machinery are located at Poppy Hill Farm. The farming enterprise is actively seeking additional land to purchase and rent in order to grow the holding.

2.2 Cropping & Livestock

The arable enterprise currently grows combinable winter & spring cereal crops (winter milling & spring malting barley) using a plough based cultivation system. All straw is baled to provide bedding for the livestock system any additional straw is sold. The farm has grown considerably within the last 4 years.

The grassland enterprise occupies an area of 80 acres (32.38 Hectares) and is split between permanent pasture and 5 year leys that provide silage, hay and grazing.

The land is grazed during the late spring summer months and maintained during the winter, with harrowing and muck spreading taking place.

The farm has some 14 pedigree Angus breeding cows, all currently in calf, 11 followers all of which will be kept on, two pedigree in calf Hereford cows with two calves at foot and together with a pedigree Hereford bull. Approximately £30,000 has been invested in new cattle and a pedigree bull in the last 18 months.

The applicant is currently expanding the herd and it is the intention to retain any heifers to grow the herd with steers being sold on. The applicant is seeking a 50 cow breeding herd.

Cattle calve from March through to November with all cattle calving at Poppy Hill Farm, after calving cattle remain in the buildings until early spring, when they are turned out to grass with followers at foot. Once the calves/followers are old enough they shall be weaned in the buildings at Poppy Hill Farm and overwintered before being finished on the grass at Poppy Hill Farm.

Since the withdrawn application Mr Simpson has increased his cattle enterprise, to include Hereford cattle as indicated in our earlier assessment, clearly demonstrating the commitment to the farming business.

The applicant currently has 3 breeding sows with 9 piglets. The pigs are housed at Poppy Hill Farm and the applicant wishes to expand the pig enterprise going forward.

The applicant also produces free range eggs from approximately 160 chickens currently on site at Poppy Hill Farm; these are currently kept within a grass paddock adjoining the access road and farm yard. Other livestock includes approximately 30 duck and 11 geese.

Since our earlier appraisal the applicant has 4 breeding ewes and is intending to expand their flock as the farm continues to grow.

2.3 Property & Buildings

Photographs of the farm yard and buildings at Poppy Hill Farm are shown within **Appendix 3**

The buildings comprise a modern range of steel portal framed buildings including:

- 3 bay steel portal framed modern grain store, with concrete grain walling sections 90ft x 60ft with leanto for machinery storage.
- 3 bay steel portal framed open fronted cattle building
- 2 bay steel portal framed open fronted cattle shed/shelter with Yorkshire boarding
- 5 bay steel portal framed open fronted building for fertiliser, straw and machinery store.
- 6 bay steel portal framed cow and calving building.
- 2 bay steel portal framed feed store.

The farmyard benefits from a hard surfaced yard with purpose built areas for storage of silage bales and machinery.

All commodities, livestock, machinery and equipment are stored at Poppy Hill farm.

The applicant currently lives at Bleakhall approximately 5 miles by road (10 minute drive) from Poppy Hill Farm, which is currently rented under a short term Farm Business Tenancy, from the Council. A round trip is approximately 8 miles and can take up to 20 minutes. Given the short term nature of the applicants Tenancy they have little security as the dwelling could be taken back or sold at short notice.

Bleakhall is a rented farm with a small range of farm buildings, none of which are suitable to modern farming and the requirements of the applicant.

2.4 Machinery

Principle machinery on the holding is modern and includes, a Combine, 3 Tractors, JCB Forklift, farm vehicle, range of trailers, arable equipment and grassland equipment, together with specialist livestock equipment, grain store equipment and workshop equipment.

All machinery is bought back to Poppy Hill Farm every day with the exception of the combine during harvest which dependant upon the weather conditions may be parked in a field overnight.

3.0 Business Structure

The farm is operated as Simpson and Sons with Mr Tony & Mrs Linda Simpson being the business partners. The farm employs Mr Simpson, together with part time help during the busy winter and summer periods from his two sons and a local resident. Mrs Simpson also assists on the farm and undertakes all farm paperwork and associated administration.

Mr Simpson has been involved in agriculture since a young age and has a good range of agricultural knowledge & experience. The proposed dwelling is for Mr Simpson (aged 48) his wife and two sons.

Mr Simpson established the business in 2009 and has seen it grow to its current level of production and efficiency.

4.0 The Proposed Development

The proposed development is for a temporary agricultural workers dwelling for Mr T. Simpson, his wife and their two sons at Poppy Hill Farm. The proposed temporary agricultural workers dwelling shall be a single storey building with horizontal timber cladding.

The temporary dwelling will provide a total floor area of approximately 140.sq m, and is approximately 20m in length by 7m in width.

The location of the temporary dwelling has been considered and is proposed to be located adjoining the existing farm yard complex within sight and sound of the applicants livestock, as shown on the site plan within **Appendix 4**.

5.0 Planning History

The undernoted planning history has occurred at Poppy Hill Farm:

- CB/14/00146/FULL – Erection of 2 Farm Buildings as storage/feed building and cattle shed/calving unit (Granted)
- CB/13/03591/FULL – Siting of Mobile Home on Existing Farm (Withdrawn)
- CB/13/02293/FULL – Siting of Mobile Home on Existing Farm (Withdrawn)
- CB/12/00818/FULL – Erection of 3 farm buildings for storage, hay and cattle (Granted)
- CB/11/03437/FULL – Erection of conventional portal framed agricultural building to store machinery and grain (Granted)

5.1 Central Bedfordshire Council – Core Strategy & Development Management Policy

The above policies recognise the need for agricultural workers dwellings within the district, detailing that any application must satisfy the criteria detailed within National Guidance, currently contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and the former Planning Policy Statement 7 as detailed below in 5.2 & 5.3 below.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The guidance set out within the above policy document, recognises that sustainable development should be the golden thread within the local authorities' decision taking. It is considered that matters such as reduced need to travel, social, economic and environmental benefits created through the proposed development meet the objectives of this document.

Paragraph 28 supports and encourages the development of rural businesses. The provision of a temporary agricultural workers dwelling would allow the business to become more sustainable and grow. Furthermore it is stated that authorities should “*support the sustainable growth of rural business*”. There is an established need for more than one worker to work on the holding and the introduction of a temporary agricultural workers dwelling would allow the existing business to be more sustainable and provide for future growth.

Paragraph 55 recognises the need to promote sustainable development in rural areas and recognises that new homes in the countryside should only be permitted where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. It is considered that based on the function information provided there is an essential need for the applicant to live on site to tend to the needs of the farm.

5.3 Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in the Rural Areas (2004)

Using the assessment criteria contained with the revoked Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in the Rural Areas (2004) the proposed development is considered to accord with the objectives set out within PPS 7 and specifically considers the requirements of Annex A.

Paragraph 1 recognises there will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at or very close to, the site of their work.

In considering the proposed application, Paragraph 3 has been considered in accordance with the undernoted requirements:

- There is a clearly established existing functional need. – *See 6.0 Below*
- The need relates to a full time worker, one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to any part time requirements. – *See 6.0 Below*
- The unit and agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years and have been profitable for at least one of them and are currently financially sound and have clear prospect of remaining so. – *See 7.0 Below*
- The functional need cannot be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other accommodation in the area which is available and suitable for occupation by the workers concerned. – *See 8.0 Below*
- Other planning requirements in relation to access or impact on the countryside are satisfied.

Paragraph 6 recognises that protection of livestock and animal welfare grounds should also be considered when assessing the functional requirements of the holding and further details of animal protection incidents and welfare are detailed within section 9.1 below.

5.4 Localism Act

The Localism Act promotes the rural economy and the sustainable development of rural businesses, giving considerable support for the growth and expansion of rural economies and businesses at a local level.

The introduction of a temporary agricultural workers dwelling at Poppy Hill Farm would fulfil the essential need/requirements of the holding whilst allowing for future growth of the business.

6.0 Assessment of Need for a Temporary Agricultural Dwelling at Poppy Hill Farm

- 6.1 In accordance with the criteria detailed below it is considered the applicant has a genuine and essential need to reside at Poppy Hill Farm.
- 6.2 A temporary agricultural worker's dwelling based on the existing enterprise is justified. The functional need has been assessed in accordance with the criteria detailed in Annex A of PPS 7 and is set out below.
- 6.3 The functional need as detailed within PPS 7 Annex A is fully satisfied as there is a recognised need for in excess of 1 full time worker on the farm using a Standard Man Day calculation.

The Standard Man Day calculation is an established method of estimating labour requirements; the calculation requires a single worker to provide 275 standard man days.

It is considered there is a need to have a 24 hours presence on site, in order to fully undertake the necessary security and management requirements of the 305 acre arable holding including the welfare of the breeding cattle, pigs and poultry. The applicant has been farming as Simpson and Sons since March 2009.

6.4 The applicant often spends late nights at Poppy Hill farm dealing with both the arable and livestock enterprises, during calving the applicant can spend all night at the farm.

6.5 Detailed below are the typical daily routines for winter and summer for Mr T. Simpson:

Table 1 – Winter Typical Day - Mr T. Simpson

6.00am	Leave house & travel to Poppy Hill Farm
6.20am	Inspect cattle, and feed with silage, check pigs and chickens, feed and collect eggs.
8.30am	Breakfast
9.00am	Complete office work, address deliveries, collections
10.00am	Check Cattle
11.00am	Milling Corn, concentrates for cattle feed, collecting straw for bedding, fence repairs, maintenance. Fertilising, spraying of arable crops
12.30pm	Check Cattle
1.30pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Muck out cattle yards, bedding down, maintenance, fertilising, spraying of arable crops.
5.30pm	Check and Feed cattle, deliver eggs.
7.00pm	Arrive home

Out of normal working hours Mr T. Simpson attends the Farm during calving and the winter months work outside the above hours as detailed below.

- 9pm – Cattle Checks for wellbeing and calving
- 11pm – Cattle Checks for wellbeing and calving
- 11pm – 6am Calving with many calving activities happening during the night time period.
- The applicant is attending many incidents at Poppy Hill Farm throughout the night and this will increase as the herd expands. Mr Simpson has as the journey time from his current residence at Bleakhall of 10 minutes, and in some cases longer if he has to de-ice his vehicle before travelling.

Table 2 – Summer Typical Day - Mr T. Simpson

6.00am	Leave house
6.20am	Inspect cattle in fields and addressing any problems. Check and feed pigs & chickens. Collect eggs.
8.30am	Breakfast
9.00am	Addressing office paper, work, update cattle and cropping records etc.
10.00am	Servicing machinery, unloading deliveries etc.
11.00am	Start combining, baling or cultivations
4.00pm	Check Cattle, deliver eggs
11.00pm	Finish combining, baling, cultivating etc
11.30pm	Arrive home

During the summer months the drying of corn, combining and cultivations can often take place throughout the night and this requires Mr T. Simpson to be onsite beyond normal working hours, the applicant regularly checks stock turned out to grass in the early morning day time, later evening and night.

Following the increasing theft of machinery and following a number of incidents all machinery is now bought back to Poppy Hill Farm each day, with the exception of the Combine during the harvest season which is sometimes left in the field due to its size. The farm has suffered a number of break-ins as detailed within section 9.1.1 below.

7.0 Financial Assessment

Details of the financial accounts have been supplied by Simpson and Sons and their accountants McMorran Accountancy. Having reviewed the accounts they confirm that since the business was established in 2010 the business made a profit in 2011, 2012 a loss in 2013 and a profit in 2014.

The applicant has invested heavily in the farming enterprise using their own resources and in recent year's income generated by the farming business.

Investment in new machinery is essential and the farming enterprise owns a modern range of farming equipment and machinery having invested approximately £420,000 over the last 4 years, with a further £30,000 invested in livestock, clearly demonstrating the applicant's commitment to increased efficiency and investment in the holdings future.

McMorran Accountancy has confirmed that the business is financially sound with the ability to remain so. This has been confirmed in their supporting letter (**Appendix 6**) which states "*the farm continues to grow profitably, sales are up 9% on 2013 and profit healthy*".

8.0 Availability of Local Housing

Poppy Hill Farm is located adjoining the village of Langford. At the present time there are 11 properties for sale within Langford. Having reviewed the available properties the closest dwelling is off Cambridge Road. **Appendix 5** details a plan of the available dwellings.

Having reviewed the available housing within Langford, all properties are located within a built up, residential areas and the location of such dwellings are not within site and sound of the applicants farmyard, the applicant needs to hear if cattle and livestock are distressed, and have immediate access to services, attend to incidents urgently and in the shortest amount of time possible.

9.0 Reason for Proposal

There is a justified need for in excess of one full time worker to be employed on the holding and there is an established need for the applicant to live on site, within sight and sound of the animals and farm yard as most of the work is outside of normal working hours.

The farming business has established well and the applicant is actively farming, investing and expanding in the business, which meets the criteria of both National and Local planning polices for supporting rural based businesses.

This is a family run business and the introduction of a temporary agricultural workers dwelling will allow the business to prove it is sustainable and viable, whilst operating

with greater efficiency providing for the future and ensuring the animals receive a greater level of health and wellbeing.

The applicant has no secure dwelling available to them and the proposed temporary agricultural workers dwelling will enable the applicant to grow and operate their business.

9.1 Security & Animal Welfare

9.1.1 Security

Poppy Hill Farm has been subject to a number of break-ins, theft and emergencies over the last 4 years and these have been detailed below:

- May 2011 – Damage to Buildings (Crime Ref URN NO73)
- 2012 Damage to farm buildings, attempted fire & injury to livestock(JD36473 2012)
- 2013 – Break in to buildings – (JD18327 2013)
- 2014 – Theft of poultry
- Regular youth problems & Fly tipping

Given the recent break-ins over recent years the location of the proposed development would allow greater supervision of the holding and a greater presence on site. The total value of items stolen within the above period is in the region of £5,000 with the applicant having invested approximately a further £5,000 in additional fencing and a security gate.

Over recent years and particularly within the last 12 months rural areas have seen a significant increase in rural crime, with theft of livestock now receiving national coverage. The applicant has within the last 12 months experienced theft of poultry from Poppy Hill Farm and other attempted break-ins.

The applicant is unable to store any diesel fuels, oils or tools on site at present without an onsite presence they believe these would be stolen.

9.1.2 Animal Welfare

During the normal working year there are a number of additional livestock emergencies as detailed below, which require additional supervision and management and support the need for a dwelling on site.

- Milk Fever – This is a low calcium deficiency and cows need immediate attention and unbroken supervision and if not addressed can lead to death and often requires two or more people to undertake this supervision.
- Grass Stagers – This is a magnesium deficiency and again the cows need immediate attention and unbroken supervision.

- Bad calving – in this case additional assistance is always required and often requires two or more people to attend and in some cases also requires assistance from a qualified vet.
- Calf feeding - A selection of cattle choose not feed their new born calves and as a result some have to be tube fed immediately and every two hours until strong enough to be bottle fed which has to be undertaken at regular intervals and often requires additional labour to help.
- Water supply repairs – Cattle drink on average 30 litres of water per head per day, livestock regularly break fittings and fittings have to be regularly maintained during winter months to prevent freezing, both of which can have a direct impact on animal welfare.
- Missing Cattle – This occurs when the cattle are turned out to grazing and requires immediate search and normally rescue.
- Cattle getting out – if gates are left open cattle often escape and involves two or more people to safely round up the cattle.

The above information clearly confirms that there is an established and essential need for a temporary agricultural workers dwelling at Poppy Hill Farm, to ensure the efficient operation of the farm, with Mr T Simpson needing to be available on site day and night in the interests of animal welfare, security and efficient management of the farm.

Within the previous submission the external consultant referred to the use of CCTV for inspecting animals. Advice has been sought from the applicant's vet who has advised that CCTV will not alert any unusual sounds or distress noises, cannot cover all areas and difficult to see when animals are in distress. The use of such a system will not cover the surrounding grass land and cannot be used for close up inspections.

During the last month the pigs on the farm have farrowed and the applicant despite attending throughout the night was unable to prevent over 50% of the piglets dying. If the applicant was able to reside on site this would not have happened.

9.1.3 Additional functional needs

During calving difficulties can occur and problems with trapped animals and mucus to the airways can be encountered and if not attended to immediately can result in the death of a calf. Many calvings happen during the night and on many occasions more than one cow will be calving requiring a minimum of two people on site at all times.

Calving problems can affect welfare through weakness and stress if not attended to immediately. If a cow is left unattended it will strain until exhausted and could eventually die, with the number of cattle on the holding a single worker is unable to attend to all calving cattle and if there is a complication it often requires two or more people.

In the time it can take Mr T Simpson to travel from his current residence at Bleakhall to Poppy Hill Farm the animal's welfare could be compromised, factors such as de-icing the car and road conditions during the winter months all impact on the time it takes travelling to the farm. These factors can make the difference between an animal living or dying.

The profitability and efficiency of the livestock unit can be compromised if stock and buildings are not well managed.

10.0 Supporting Letters

In support of the proposed application the letters from McMorran Accountancy, Royston Veterinary Clinic and the National Farmers Union have been provided and are considered relevant to this application. Full copies of the letters are contained within **Appendix 6**.

11.0 Conclusion

Having examined the current farming enterprise that there is an essential requirement for at least one full time worker on the holding and there is clear evidence that whilst the business is young it is operating on a clear and sound financial basis.

Further support for the proposal is recognised by Royston Veterinary Clinic and the National Farmers Union.

Having considered other accommodation within the surrounding area it is considered that the functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling within Langford or the surrounding area.

It takes the applicant on average 10 minutes to get to Poppy Hill Farm travelling from their current residence at Bleakhall. In the time it takes to get to Poppy Hill Farm the animals' welfare could be compromised, factors such as de-icing the car and road conditions during the winter months will increase the time it takes travelling to Poppy Hill Farm.

The location of the dwelling has been carefully considered and has been located to allow access from the existing farm access road and to take advantage of the natural screening, whilst remaining within site and sound of the farm yard complex. It is considered that the proposed location and access shown have satisfied the requirements in this respect.

The criteria for establishing an agricultural workers dwelling as detailed within PPS 7 annex A, is considered to be fully satisfied, as there is clearly an established and growing business that requires in excess of one full time worker to reside on site for 24 hours a

day under the Functional tests, this is further demonstrated in the need to attend to many night time incidents that require two or more members of staff to be present outside normal working hours.

From the financial information supplied by McMorran Accountancy it is evident that the business has been established for at least 4 years, having been profitable for at least one of them, is a financially sound business and has the prospect of remaining so. It is further advised that the costs of undertaking the proposed development can be met by Mr T and Mrs L Simpson.

The proposed development will provide a sustainable future for younger generations coming into the farming business whilst meeting an essential need.

The applicant is an established farming business seeking consent for a temporary mobile home for a period of 3 years to be occupied by the applicant as an agricultural worker. There are no other suitable dwellings available to the applicant and the rented property they currently live in provides little security, which furthermore is not within sight and sound of Poppy Hill Farm.

Planning Policy recognises that agriculture is an important part of rural life and brings many benefits to rural areas.

This report has demonstrated that there is an essential need for Mr T Simpson to live on site at Poppy Hill Farm in the interests of animal welfare and the farming business.

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James Bailey MRICS, MBIAC, MARLA

September 2014