



AGRICULTURAL NEED APPRAISAL FOR LAND AND BUILDINGS
FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH HEATH HOUSE FARM COTTAGE,
CHEDDLETON, STAFFORDSHIRE

Relating to a Proposed Agricultural Dwelling

AUGUST 2022

Prepared by The Brown Rural Partnership

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1. PRELIMINARY

1.1 Introduction

The Brown Rural Partnership is instructed by Mr John Carr to prepare an Agricultural Need Appraisal in respect of a planning application for a proposed agricultural dwelling on the land formerly associated with Heath House Farm Cottage.

The land and buildings formerly associated with Heath House Farm Cottage extends to approximately 56.29ha (139.09 acres) including a yard area with existing agricultural buildings. Around 10.49ha (25.92 acres) of the land surrounding the existing agricultural buildings is owned by John Carr with the remaining land being rented nearby. The labour required for the livestock operations on the farm is currently provided by John with occasional help from family members as required.

1.2 Surveyor

This appraisal has been prepared by Michael Statham BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV, Partner at The Brown Rural Partnership. He qualified as a Chartered Surveyor in 2012 and as an Agricultural Valuer in 2013.

1.3 Sources of Information

- Inspection of the holding and discussions with John Carr.
- Staffordshire Moorlands Planning Department.
- National Planning Policy Framework.
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.
- The Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book May 2020 (90th edition) published by Agro Business Consultants Ltd.
- John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook
- HSE Agricultural Information Sheet No. 35 – Handling and housing cattle.
- Agricultural Land Classification map North West Region (ALC002).
- The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007.

2. LAND AND BUILDINGS FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH HEATH HOUSE FARM COTTAGE

2.1 General

The land and buildings formerly associated with Heath House Farm Cottage is located approximately 0.40 miles to the south west of the centre of the village of Cheddleton, approximately 3.4 miles south west of Leek, approximately 5.5 miles north west of Cheadle and approximately 6.6 miles to the north east of Stoke-on-Trent. Access to the farmstead is via Ostlers Lane. The farmstead is approximately 205m (677 feet) above sea level.

The location is semi-rural with the eastern boundary of the land close to the southwestern fringes of Cheddleton. There are other agricultural units in the vicinity.

Although the majority of the land is capable of being cut for silage, approximately 28.5ha (70 acres) are used each year for grass conservation, with two cuts been taken annually. The conserved silage is then used as feed during the winter months for the animals on the farm. The remaining land is used annually for grazing, with the livestock being turned out generally from April through to October. The farm is self-sufficient in relation to grass for the livestock, both through grazing and via conservation, with the only additional feedstuffs being purchased being a corn mix for the livestock as well as bedding materials.

The land utilised as part of the holding is shown as part Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) and part Grade 4 (Poor) on the Agricultural Land Classification Map.

2.2 The Farm Business

Background and Current position

Mr John Carr farms the land as a sole trader. John has been farming the land all of this life since leaving school.

The chief enterprise on the holding is the finishing of beef cattle. Whilst previously John has calved his own cattle on the holding, due to various complications and issues during calvings, it was no longer viable to continue this element of the enterprise as there is no dwelling on site to enable John to be on hand at all times.

Currently calves are purchased onto the holding at between 3 and 6 months of age, before being reared and sold as finished cattle at between 18 and 24 months of age. The calves are generally purchased between March and November and John typically

has between 90 and 100 cattle on the holding at any one time. The majority of the cattle are housed during the winter months.

Intentions

Over the coming years, John is intending to expand the livestock enterprises on the holding through the introduction of a flock of breeding sheep.

John is looking to purchase in 50 breeding ewes with the intention to lamb all of these each spring, to then be able to sell the finished lambs.

2.3 Ownership and Labour

The land surrounding the existing agricultural buildings has been owned by the Carr family since 1946 and has been in constant agricultural use throughout the time of ownership. The rented land has been occupied since the 1980's.

John undertakes a significant amount of work himself on the holding, with occasional help from family members as required. Contractors are employed for the main grass conservation operations.

For John, the working day is typically all of the day light hours available, although more specifically arriving in the morning around 7am, working all day until around 6pm, and generally in excess of 60 hours per week. A typical day currently involves animal husbandry and welfare tasks and general farm work with the livestock and on the land. In terms of the type of work that takes place on the holding, the main duties include but are not restricted to:

- Feeding livestock indoors and outdoors ensuring water is also provided at all times.
- Cleaning out pens and replacing with clean bedding.
- Moving livestock between fields and buildings.
- Ear-tagging cattle.
- Catching and treating animals requiring medical attention.
- Foot-trimming and administering medicines.
- Regular weighing and assessment of animals.
- Unloading purchases of feed, bedding etc.
- Checking livestock indoors and outdoors.
- Maintaining buildings and machinery.
- Maintaining field boundaries.
- Administrative work.

Following the intended introduction of a breeding sheep flock, the labour requirement will increase still further to particularly in relation to the lambing of the flock.

2.4 Buildings

Agricultural building facilities are primarily provided around a central building layout, with the exception of one building, which provides suitable housing for the existing livestock number as well as the possibility for future expansion to meet the future demands of the business.

- 13.63m x 13.63m (45' x 45') Steel portal framed building, providing open cattle housing.
- 18.18m x 13.63m (60' x 50') Wooden portal framed building, providing open cattle housing and bedding storage.
- 14.55m x 16.67m (48' x 55') Wooden portal framed building, used for machinery, feeding and bedding storage.
- 18.18m x 11.52m (60' x 38') Steel portal framed building, providing cattle housing in cubicles.
- 18.18m x 15.76m (60' x 52') Steel portal framed building, providing open cattle housing.

The farm is currently serviced with mains water and mains electricity.

2.5 Machinery

John currently has the following farm machinery on the holding:

- Massey Ferguson tractor with loader and attachments
- Kawasaki Mule
- Muck spreader
- Mower
- Tedder
- Trailer
- Topper
- Flat roller (10')
- Livestock trailer
- Chain harrows
- Rotavator
- Multi harrow
- Stock handling equipment

2.6 Basic Payment Scheme and Designations

3. PLANNING CONTEXT –

This Agricultural Need Appraisal is prepared in connection with a planning application to be made to Staffordshire Moorlands Council for a proposed permanent agricultural dwelling to be situated adjacent to the farmyard curtilage at the holding.

In the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020), rural housing is detailed under part 5 of policy H1. Paragraph b) of this section states that development would be allowed for ‘a new dwelling that meets an essential local need for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere’.

In addition to the Local Plan, paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework states the following:

“local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside”.

The NPPF, since its introduction, has replaced the bulk of previous relevant Planning Policy Statements, the most relevant of which for this application would have been Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. This dealt with circumstances “in which isolated residential development may be justified” in the countryside.

Paragraph 3 of PPS7 Annex A stated that “New permanent dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well-established agricultural units, providing:

- (i) There is a clearly established *existing* functional need;
- (ii) The need relates to a *full-time* worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture and does not relate to a part-time requirement;
- (iii) The unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;

- (iv) The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned;
- (v) Other planning requirements, e.g. in relation to access, or impact on the countryside, are satisfied.

The criteria and often inflexible detail of Annex A is therefore no longer relevant when considering an application for a new dwelling in the countryside. It is considered that as the standards of PPS7 Annex A exceed those set out in the current planning guidance in the NPPF and also policy H1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020), it is a good test of the agricultural need and satisfaction of the criteria provides a more robust appraisal above and beyond the actual requirements expected of the applicant.

4. APPRAISAL

4.1 Investment and viability

The farming enterprise at the holding is well established and the fixed equipment on the unit is mostly of modern construction and able to service the specific enterprises currently undertaken. Whilst there are no new buildings planned, it is expected that the current layout and type of buildings available will be able to service the intention to expand the livestock production on the holding to include breeding sheep.

Whilst the accounting information for the last few years is variable, the holding has remained profitable throughout the period of John's agricultural production, so for in excess of 45 years. The profits for the last six available years of accounts are as follows

The above figures clearly show the volatility of the agricultural sector. Pressure on the section and markets is continually causing fluctuating on the prices that can be achieved for the finished cattle due to the potential for cheaper import from European countries as well as from the South American 'Mercosur Countries' (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) as well as the increases to 'input' prices around the corn required to be purchased for the animals and to the costs of producing silage for winter feed. Whilst the price for finished beef cattle is currently fairly buoyant, the current world events are indicating a further increase to corn prices as well as other costs to the farm.

The intention to introduce a breeding sheep enterprise to the holding indicates the continued level of commitment John has to the farm and should help to create another income stream to reduce the reliance on the beef market.

4.2 Functional Need

The purpose of the functional test is to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for key workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day

and night. This could be in case livestock or agricultural operations require essential care at short notice and dealing with emergencies that might otherwise result in serious losses of crops or livestock.

This is currently the case at the farm due to the number of livestock that require care and attention in order to satisfy welfare regulations and to be to provide general good husbandry, however will be even more so with the addition of the breeding sheep flock to the holding.

4.2.1 Labour Requirement

The current labour requirement of the enterprise in accordance with standard man day figures has been assessed at 1.37 labour units as shown in Appendix 1. It is essential that due to the nature of the livestock enterprise on site a worker is within close proximity (sight and sound) of livestock buildings at all times.

In addition to the standard man day analysis, published data from a survey of Farm Businesses (published within the ABC, 2020 edition) indicates that for beef cattle an average time of 26 hours would be spent per head of livestock per year. When using the expected number of cattle of 90 to 100 head at any one time, this would indicate a total hours of 2,340 hours. The Farm Business Survey utilises 1,900 hours as the equivalent to assume one full time worker, this would equate to 1.23 full time workers based upon the current situation at the farm.

With the intention to introduce a breeding sheep flock of 50 ewes, the future labour requirement for the enterprise would increase to 1.52 labour units. This is also shown in Appendix 1.

As above, when looking at the Farm Business Survey data, the introduction of 50 breeding ewes would add a further 260 hours of time requirement. When using 2,340 hours for the cattle, this would indicate a total time requirement of 2,600 hours or the equivalent of 1.39 full time workers.

As set out above, John currently works in excess of 60 hours per week. The Working Time Regulations 1998 state that “a worker’s working time, including overtime, in any reference period which is applicable in his case shall not exceed an average of 48 hours for each seven days”. Should John as the key worker on the holding not be able to be located on the farm, even to places such as Leek (where John currently lives), the farm would not be able to satisfy the labour requirement to correctly tend for the livestock. This could leave the farm unable to deal with emergencies resulting in losses of crops or livestock.

4.2.2 Key Worker Requirement

Key workers are defined as those required to live on the holding within close proximity (sight and sound) of livestock buildings. On a holding such as this, there can be no better definition of a key agricultural worker than one who is involved with the cattle, and in future with the breeding sheep, particularly around lambing time.

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 states in Schedule 1 Paragraph 1 that “Animals must be cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possesses the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence”.

‘Sufficient number of staff’ is interpreted as being, a number required to carry out tasks effectively and safely in order to avoid causing distress to animals as well as injuries to workers themselves, which in some cases may involve more than one worker.

The Health & Safety Executives Agricultural Information Sheet No. 35 (Handling and housing cattle) also goes onto state that handling cattle will always involve a risk of injury, the risk is increased if the work involves animals that have not been handled frequently. By having a worker on site at all times frequently handling the animals and being able to deal any issues quickly to minimise the levels of distress to the animals, the potential risks of working with cattle can be lower.

Following the introduction of the breeding ewes, lambing during the spring months can occur at any time during the day and night and all sheep require regular monitoring throughout the lambing period to be able to notice and deal with any complications that may arise both before, during and after the lambs are born. The unavailability of key workers during these at times, particularly during difficult lambings can lead to fatalities, unnecessary suffering to the animals and losses to the business. By having a key worker present at all times on site, assistance can be given immediately and also other workers can be called at short notice if it appears additional assistance is required.

Constant monitoring of the herd in buildings and outside on the land is also required in order to maintain animal health and ensure boundaries are kept secure so that no livestock numbers are lost.

With the presence of cattle of the holding, in addition to the daily husbandry operations there are a number of tasks that require the handling of cattle and necessitate more than one person in order for them to be carried out safely. Indeed

the handling of cattle that are not used to being handled increases the potential for serious injury such as crushing, kicking, butting or goring.

As highlighted above with the recent annual profits, due to the competitiveness of the agricultural market, maximising output has become even more important. Costs have to be better managed and work that would once have been dealt with by a vet or farming contractor now has to be carried out by key workers.

4.2.3 Requirement for Key Workers to be housed on the holding

Currently there is no accommodation on the land, meaning there are no key workers housed on the farm to deal with the farming operations.

The housing of a key worker on at the farmstead would allow for livestock to be checked more regularly and mean that there is always someone on hand in case of any emergencies involving either livestock or indeed a visitor to the farm.

The housing of a key worker on the farm is essential for the safety of all of the cattle currently on the farm and will be even more so with the introduction of the breeding sheep flock.

It is our view that for the proper management of the farm business to continue to develop and expand, a key worker is required to be housed within sight and sound of the farm buildings at the holding. By being close to the village of Cheddleton, it is important that to have a key worker on hand at all times to ensure the protection of livestock from theft or injury by intruders. As the farm is in an accessible position, it is therefore susceptible to potential intruders. With the increasing value of livestock and machinery over recent years cases of theft have risen greatly and it is therefore essential that there is someone at the farm to prevent this.

4.3 Current / Other Accommodation

At the time of this report there are no houses currently being marketed close to the holding on Ostlers Lane, although there are 2 houses for sale within a ½ mile radius. The prices range from , the prices ranged from £180,000 to £300,000. The properties found are both located within Cheddleton and so would require travel via the road network to reach the farm, so increasing the distance travelled.

However, this would still not comply with the animal welfare requirement of being immediately on-hand to check on livestock and are not within sight and sound of the

farm buildings. These houses are also too expensive for the business to be able to afford given the recent profits achieved.

In addition to this there are no properties available to rent in close proximity to the holding, or indeed within a ½ mile radius. Increasing this radius to 3 miles does bring in properties quoting rental figures from £550pcm (for flats) however the distant these properties are from the holding would not satisfy the animal welfare requirement of being immediately on-hand to check on livestock and are not within sight and sound of the farm buildings. Notwithstanding this, accommodation rented on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy however would give insufficient security as if the tenancy was terminated, there would be no housing for the agricultural worker. This view is supported by Embleton Parish Council & Anor v Gaston [2013].

Since 2018, there have been three houses that have recently sold close to the holding. Located on Ostlers Lane, the houses have been sold between £280,000 to £375,000. It is therefore unlikely that affordable accommodation will become available on Ostlers Lane, in close proximity to the farm and in a location that would be within sight and sound of the farm buildings.

Housing is available at lower prices in Leek (3.4 miles), however these would not be suitable due to the need to have a key worker on-site at all times and factoring travel time would not be practical for a key worker to deal with emergencies. This is currently the situation John is in with his current dwelling being located in Leek. There is therefore no affordable accommodation available in the locality and in particular none that would enable a key worker to provide the standard of care that is required in the position.

The above is largely academic however, as there is a clear requirement both in planning policy and practice to have the key worker housed on the farm within sight and sound of livestock and their housing. It would not be possible, in our view, for an agricultural worker to tend satisfactorily to all emergencies if living off the farm in the surrounding villages.

We therefore do not consider it possible that the need for an agricultural dwelling in this case can be met elsewhere.

5. CONCLUSION

Having considered the tests highlighted in the in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020) policy H1 and paragraph 3 of Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 7 in detail, we find that the land and buildings formerly associated with Heath House Farm Cottage satisfies the tests in respect of an agricultural dwelling.

With the planned development of the business and expansion of livestock numbers on the holding the requirement is shown, and indeed it would become even more important in the future, to have a key worker housed within close proximity of the livestock buildings.

The contents of the above meets the requirement of Staffordshire Moorland Local Plan policies and is above and beyond what is required under the current National Planning Policy Framework guidance. This appraisal has been prepared in such a way so as to ensure the application for the new agricultural dwelling is robust and fully informative for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

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For and on behalf of The Brown Rural Partnership LLP
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APPENDIX 1

Labour Requirement (For a standard year)

CURRENT LABOUR REQUIREMENT (for a standard year)

	Number of livestock	Standard Man Days ¹	Total
Cattle			
Calves (0-6 months)	75	1.63	122.25
Calves (6-12 months)	75	0.81	60.75
Other cattle (12 - 24 months)	75	1.75	131.25
Other cattle (over 24 months)	0	2.00	0
Sheep			
Breeding ewes	0	0.38	0.00
Lambs	0	0.19	0.00
Sub Total			314.25
Additional Annual Maintenance @ 20%			62.85
Total Standard Man Days			377.10
Total Labour Required (275 SMD per employee)			1.37

FUTURE LABOUR REQUIREMENT (for a standard year)

	Number of livestock	Standard Man Days ¹	Total
Cattle			
Calves (0-6 months)	75	1.63	122.25
Calves (6-12 months)	75	0.81	60.75
Other cattle (12 - 24 months)	75	1.75	131.25
Other cattle (over 24 months)	0	2.00	0
Sheep			
Breeding ewes	50	0.38	19.00
Lambs	75	0.19	14.25
Sub Total			347.50
Additional Annual Maintenance @ 20%			69.50
Total Standard Man Days			417
Total Labour Required (275 SMD per employee)			1.52

Please note that the numbers of livestock detailed above is the expected number throughout the entire 12 month period and not necessarily at any one given time.

¹ Agricultural Budgeting and Costings book, 2020