



AGRICULTURAL APPRAISAL RELATING TO THE
PLANNING APPLICATION & CONSTRUCTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL WORKER'S
DWELLING

AT BREACH GORSE FARM, SUDBURY, DERBYSHIRE, DE6 5HH

ON BEHALF OF
MESSRS D J & K L LEADBETTER

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1.0 Introduction

The report is being produced to support the planning application at Breach Gorse Farm for the construction of an agricultural worker's dwelling. Doug and Katherine Leadbetter run a successful dairy and arable farm at Breach Gorse Farm.

At present Doug, Katherine and their 4 children live in a static caravan at the farm and have done so for about 9 years. The static caravan is very cramped for the family and it is vulnerable to harsh weather conditions such as cold weather, high winds and periods of extreme heat.

Doug and Katherine own 40 acres of the farm and the static caravan and dairy buildings are located on this part. It is intended to replace the static caravan with the new farmhouse in a location that offers security and immediate full time access to the dairy cow enterprise.

In preparing the agricultural appraisal report additional National and Local considerations have been taken into account.

2.0 National & Local Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in February 2019 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. There is a focus on sustainable development meaning the development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There should be an economic, social and environmental objective. There should also be consideration to an up to date development plan, locally.

Specific to Rural Housing there should be an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently or near their place of work in the countryside.

From a business perspective there should be support for investment, expansion and adaption for rural businesses in considering planning applications

South Derbyshire District Council has an adopted Local Plan dealing with development for 2011 to 2028. Policy H25 deals with Rural Worker's Dwellings and supports permanent rural worker's dwellings where there is an established existing essential need. Also the business supporting the need should be economically sustainable and the need for the dwelling can not be fulfilled by an existing dwelling in the locality.

3.0 Proposed Dwelling

Planning Permission is being sought for the erection of a detached farmhouse to house the Leadbetter family, Doug & Katherine Leadbetter and their 4 children.

The location of the house would be just to the East of the farmyard and buildings. It is set back from the public highway and largely screened by a nearby wood. This location offers security to the premises, safety to the family and 24 hour per day accessibility to the farming operation.

The extent of the house is planned to be four bedrooms with sufficient living and working space downstairs to accommodate the needs of a working dairy farm. This would include office space and downstairs boots, clothes and WC facilities. It is sensible to plan more than one access point to allow for a working and non working entrance to the house.

Detailed plans and accompanying design and access statement are being prepared by Sally Price of Price Planning Associates.

4.0 The Farm Business

Since 2006 Doug and Katherine have been working to expand their farming operation at Breach Gorse Farm. Over this time they have established their Holstein Friesian milking herd such that they have now bred a pedigree herd of about 80 milking cows along with 85 replacement heifers and dairy youngstock.

They have generated a high yielding herd based on a twice a day milking system with the cows being housed and fed on a silage based home produced ration. Their milk profile is aimed at producing consistent milk supply with an all year round calving pattern.

Breach Gorse Farm extends in total to about 160 acres, 36 acres owned including the site of the proposed dwelling and the farmyard and buildings, 4 acres is owned at nearby Scropton and 120 acres have been rented by Doug & Catherine and their extended family since 1921. The land is cropped with a mixture of grass, wheat & forage maize which is all harvested and fed back to the livestock in their herd. (Appendix 2 – blue = owned, red = tenanted).

There has been significant capital investment to reach the current position and the extent of this illustrates their commitment to the business at Breach Gorse Farm. The construction of farm buildings is obvious but other infrastructure such as mains services, fixed equipment, machinery, stocking, cropping and their labour input should not be overlooked. These efforts have been rewarded in regional competitions and national journals (See Appendix 3).

5.0 Dairy Enterprise

Doug & Katherine Leadbetter own and manage their own Pedigree Holstein Friesian Dairy Cow Herd with the milk being sold to Muller Dairies. They have adopted a housed all year round calving management system to make the best use of the inputs available to them. This system is serving them well and they have recently won several Regional awards for their dairy farming.

They grow about 50 acres of grass, 60 acres of wheat and 50 acres of maize, and harvest these crops in a variety of ways to create a feed ration for their milking cows & youngstock. In addition they acquire further forage crops from land on a licence basis. The grassland is typically mown four or five times each year for silage.

Housing the milking cows all year round means the workload with the livestock is demanding but consistent and as a result Doug and Katherine are able to improve production to achieve a more consistent supply of milk whilst making the maximum use of the crops grown on their farm.

Alongside the milking herd the calves are reared as replacements. At weaning they are grazed for approximately 6 months and then at 12 – 15 months housed so they can be

monitored closely for AI management. Depending on the time of year in calf heifers and dry cows are grazed until close to calving.

Farmyard & Buildings

The farmyard and buildings comprise:

Parlour Building with an 8:16 herringbone parlour, dairy with 6000 litre bulk milk tank.

7 bay steel portal frame 64 place cubicle shed

7 bay steel portal frame shed loose housed cattle shed

7 bay steel portal frame youngstock shed with 5 pen division

3 bay steel portal frame calf shed

Silage Clamp 105' x 45'

Muck Store

6.0 Labour Requirement

The demands of running a dairy farm are a full time commitment. 7 days a week, 365 days a year and 24 hours a day a skilled person or persons need to be working and on call for routine and emergency work.

The table below illustrates the actual Standard Man Day equivalent of Doug and Katherine's labour input to the farming of Breach Gorse Farm but it is perhaps equally illustrative to read the text below giving example work days.

STANDARD MAN DAY EQUIVALENT CHART (Ref. John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook)

Livestock				SMD	
Labour Requirement s			Unit	Per Unit	Total
Dairy Cows			80	4.0	320
In Calf Heifers			20	3.0	60
Yearling Heifers			25	3.07	76.8
Calves (3 – 12 Months)			20	1.5	30
Calves (0 – 3 Months)			20	3.4	68
Field Work					

Winter Wheat			24 Ha	1.75	42
Maize			20 Ha	1.5	30
Grassland			21 Ha	2.8	58.8
Reseeding			11 Ha	0.6	6.6
Management	@15%				103.8
			TOTAL SMD HOURS		796
	Equates To	2.9 Full Time	Workers		

Morning Work Starts Around 5am

Katherine will milk the cows whilst Doug scrapes out the feed and muck passages, beds the cubicles and pen areas and cleans water troughs.

By about 8.30 am the milking and feeding of young calves is completed and Doug continues with mixing up the feed ration and delivering it to the different groups around the yard. Typically this takes until around 10am (Breakfast).

The middle of the day is used by Katherine to prepare feed rations and servicing and maintenance around the dairy and parlour for the afternoon milking.

The afternoon milking commences around 5.30pm and again takes over 2 hours.

In addition to the twice daily routine Doug & Katherine fit in the ongoing Tagging, Dehorning, TB Testing, Al'ing of the herd, foot trimming (fortnightly) and a routine vet visit (3 weekly) & mucking out of loose yards (fortnightly).

On average there are about 7 calvings each month and these can occur at any time. Every calving needs to be monitored and some need assistance. When assistance is needed it is not safe to be alone

Doug & Katherine also carry out as much of the field work as they are able to do themselves. As a guide this includes:

Wheat – Muck Spreading, Ploughing, Fertilising, (Drilled by contractor), Rolling (Sprayed by contractor), (Combined by contractor), Corn Carting, Bale Carting.

Maize – Muck Spreading, Subsoiling, Ploughing, (Drilled by contractor) Rolling, (Sprayed by contractor, fertilising, (Harvested by contractor), carting and ensiling by Doug & Katherine.

Grass Leys – Muck Spreading, Ploughing, Power Harrowing, Drilling, Fertilising, Rolling, Mowing, (Tedded, Baled & Wrapped by contractor).

Doug & Katherine also do the dirty water spreading and the chain harrowing of the grass fields.

7.0 Requirements Of The Business

The demands of this farm business illustrate that at least 2 highly skilled workers are on site at all times. Depending on the time of year additional staff are needed and Doug & Katherine have managed this by employing contractors to cover these labour spikes.

The letter from their vet, McMurtry & Harding, gives a further indication of the necessity to be regularly monitoring their herd. This has to be done by someone with a high level of skill in animal husbandry since some of the animals are at the point of calving, some are in peak lactation whilst others require heat detection and insemination.

8.0 Health & Safety

Farming is the most dangerous industry in the UK. Injuries and deaths are regularly reported in the media. This farm has heavy machinery as well as full grown livestock. The danger with the livestock is their unpredictability. In general Doug & Katherine's cattle are very docile but there are times when they need to be handled and because of the size and weight it is a sensible precaution to have at least two people present. Some of the high risk work is unpredictable and takes place outside of normal work hours and therefore it is almost always carried out by Doug and Katherine rather than an outside contractor.

9.0 Essential Care At Short Notice (On Call)

Should the key workers be forced to live away from the farm the business would simply not function. Inspections and intervention with the cattle occur at the most anti-social times in the day and night, but these are essential jobs for Doug and Katherine to do if the dairy farm enterprise is to operate to the standards required. These duties can be animal welfare based or simply necessary routine management of a dairy herd. This inevitably means the hours of work are long and if Doug & Katherine were not on site the hours would be even longer and travelling to the farm would escalate the risk to their wellbeing. Only by being on the farm can a sense of reasonableness be retained by Doug & Katherine.

Increasingly there is a requirement to be on site for a security purpose. Sadly rustling of livestock and stealing from farmyards is becoming far too frequent. The location of the proposed house is ideal for Doug and Katherine's presence to be an obstacle to anyone considering this farm to be an easy target.

Only by ensuring high standards of functionality to the farm business is it possible for Doug & Katherine to achieve the financial sustainability in the modern day farming world.

10.0 Financial Sustainability

The South Derbyshire District Council Local Plan states within Policy H25 (Rural Worker's Dwellings) that the business supporting the need for the dwelling should be economically

sustainable. Doug & Katherine's business has been in operation on this site for more than 8 years. The annual accounts for the last 3 years have been made available to the District Council on a confidential basis, and these illustrate the sound financial situation that the business has achieved in very challenging circumstances. A Confidential 3 Year Cashflow Forecast is also attached at Appendix 5 to illustrate that the business is capable of funding the building and maintenance of the new house.

11.0 Summary

The proposal seeks to achieve planning permission for a permanent dwelling at Breach Gorse Farm to provide accommodation for Doug & Katherine Leadbetter and their family.

The business supporting the necessity for this dwelling has been soundly established over the last 8 years and the location of their temporary accommodation has proved to be the right position to provide a number of business functions. There are no alternative properties locally that would offer the same essential functions.

The report illustrates the essential need for permanent accommodation to be available on site for this business to continue to function and to offer the opportunity to continue to be financially sustainable. In the future Doug & Katherine will be looking to improve their business either in terms of expansion and/or efficiency in order to retain business sustainability. They will have to have accommodation on site to achieve this.

Appendix 1 – Letter From Vet.

Appendix 2 – Plans Of Farm.

Appendix 3 – Schedule Of Farming Awards & Farmers Guardian 2018 Report.

Appendix 4 – Confidential Accounts For The Last 3 Years.

Appendix 5 – Confidential 3 Year Cashflow Forecast.