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AGRICULTURAL WORKER'S DWELLING APPRAISAL

FOR THE FARMING BUSINESS

FLETCHER & SONS

OPERATED FROM

GROBY PARKS FARM

LEICESTER ROAD

MARKFIELD

LE67 9RH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
2.0	THE SITE VISIT AND INSPECTION	3
3.0	THE BUSINESS DESCRIPTION	3
4.0	THE PROPOSAL	5
5.0	LABOUR	6
6.0	DWELLINGS	8
7.0	PLANNING POLICY	9
8.0	EVALUATION OF THE BUSINESS AGAINST PLANNING POLICY	12
9.0	CONCLUSION	19
	Appendix One	
	Standard Labour Calculations	21
	Appendix Two	
	Standard Labour Calculations – Groby Parks arm	23

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mid-West Planning Ltd has been instructed by the applicants, Mr Stephan Fletcher and Mrs Alison Fletcher to prepare an Agricultural Appraisal for submission with the planning application for the erection of a new permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at the agricultural holding known as "Groby Parks Farm, Leicester Road, Markfeild, LE67 9RH. This appraisal addresses the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was first published in 2012, and last updated in December 2024, and the Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006-2026 "Site Allocations and Development Management Policies".
- 1.2 Philip Plant is the Managing Director of Mid-West Planning Limited and is a former employee of ADAS and Acorus Rural Property Services. Philip Plant has been employed in the position of Senior Consultant at the aforementioned companies for approximately twenty years during which time he has provided rural planning advice to both applicants and to many Local Planning Authorities including Stafford Borough Council and South Staffordshire District Council.
- 1.3 Philip Plant holds a Bachelor of Science with Honours Degree in Rural Enterprise and Land Management from Harper Adams University and is a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
- 1.4 The farming operation farms owned land and additional rented land, which are farmed as one farming business by the Fletcher family partnership. This appraisal examines the need or otherwise for the presence of an additional key worker, to reside at Groby Parks Farm on a permanent basis to assist in the operation of the farming business.

2.0 THE SITE VISIT AND INSPECTION

2.1 The site visit and inspection of the business was undertaken by Philip Plant of Mid-West Planning Ltd, by appointment, on the 1st of August 2025 at Groby Parks Farm in the company of the applicants Mr Stephan Fletcher and Mrs Alison Fletcher. During the course of the site visit Mr Fletcher took Mr Plant to the area proposed for the dwelling and around the farm.

2.2 At the meeting Mr & Mrs Fletcher described the history of the family run business, land acquisitions and tenancies, and explained how the business was operated on a day-to-day basis.

3.0 THE BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

3.1 The business trades as Fletcher & Son, a farming partnership which founded in 1953 (73 yrs). The partners are:

Mr P J Fletcher

Mr S Fletcher

Mr Ian Fletcher

Mr Mark Fletcher

Mr E S Fletcher

3.2 Groby Parks is owned by the partnership and has a 4-bedroom stone and brick-built house with the dairy complex and land extending to 58.65 Ha. Land rented next to Groby Parks at Groby Lodge Estate is 89.86 Ha. Other land farmed in the area is approximately 131 Ha.

- 3.3 The total land owned by the partnership is 173.26 Ha. The total land rented by the partnership is 220.86 Ha. The farming partnership farms a total of 394.12 Ha of land.
- 3.4 Approximately 6 miles away at Kirby Muxloe, Barons Park Farm is the base for the arable farming operation and the contracting enterprise. This is also the business address.
- 3.5 Thorneyfields Farm is where the dairy replacements are reared from 3 months onwards and the Angus beef calves are reared through to finished from 3 months onwards.
- 3.6 Newbridge Farm at Kirby Muxloe is where the grain dryer and storage are.

Address	Area owned	Area rented
Groby Parks Farm	58.65 Ha	
Groby Lodge Estate		89.86 Ha
Other land owned at Kirby	114.61 Ha	
Other land rented in the locality		131 Ha
	173.26 Ha	220.86 Ha
Total land farmed	394.12 Ha	

Figure 1 Land Farmed.

Dairy Herd (Groby Parks Farm)

- 3.7 The dairy herd comprises 260 Holstein dairy cows and is based at Groby Parks Farm. The cows are milked twice a day through the milking parlour at the farm. Cows are served with sexed Holstein semen for two services then swept with Aberdeen Angus semen.

- 3.8 Cows are calved throughout the year at Groby Parks and calves are reared to 3 months old at Groby Parks Farm. At three months the calves are transferred to Thorneyfields Farm where dairy replacements remain until they calve and join the dairy herd. Angus beef calves also remain at Thorneyfields Farm until they are finished.

Arable Farming Operations

- 3.9 Arable farming operations are carried out alongside the dairy and beef farming operations. The arable cropping regime in 2025 was:

Crop Type	Area
Fodder Maize	56.66 Ha
Winter Wheat	121.41 Ha
Winter Barley	121.41 Ha
Fodder beet	4 Ha
Grassland	90 Ha

Figure 2 Crop Areas

- 3.10 The farm produces around 800t of grass silage in up to 4 cuts in addition to the maize silage and fodder beet for use on the farm. Approximately 200t of cereals are also used as animal feed with the remaining tonnage sold. All grassland management, arable cultivations, combining and silage harvesting is done in-house.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Mr Stephan Fletcher and Mrs Alison Fletcher currently reside in the farmhouse at Groby Parks Farm. The proposal is to build a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling with a detached garage, for occupation by the applicants; Stephen and

Alison to move in to. This will allow their son, Edward (33yrs) to reside in the Groby Parks farmhouse. Stephen and Edward are both employed full time in the farming business and based at the dairy enterprise at Groby Parks Farm.

- 4.2 Edward currently resides in a one-bedroom log cabin sited within the farmyard at Groby Parks Farm. This temporary arrangement has served the business well by providing on-site accommodation for a key worker, however as Edward gets older a more permanent solution is required. The applicants have considered other alternative dwelling in the locality; however, none are considered to be suitable or close enough to Groby Parks Farm to meet the essential or functional needs of the farming operation.
- 4.3 The proposed dwelling will be sited adjacent to the existing farm buildings as depicted in the site plan; 101910_FLETCHER_001_PL01_R1_LOCATION PLAN submitted with the application. This is considered the most ideal location on the farm for accessibility to the farming hub where the dairy herd is housed and where cows calve and the youngstock are reared.
- 4.4 The proposed dwelling is smaller in comparison to the principal dwelling; Groby Park Farmhouse. This is intended to maintain subservience to the original, existing dwelling on site through its smaller footprint, height and mass. Please refer to the Planning, Design and Access Statement and the submitted drawings and plans for more information.
- 4.5 In summary, the proposed farm worker's bungalow will have an external gross floor area of approximately 190.20m² and a maximum ridge height of 5.77m².

5.0 LABOUR

- 5.1 The farming enterprise: Fletcher & Sons employ the following workers:

Name	FT/PT	Job/Role
Stephen Fletcher (65 yrs)	Full time	Partner. Managing dairy unit, herd management, co calving GFW.
Edward Fletcher (33 yrs)	Full time	Partner. Milking, Slurry management, farm maintenance, GFW.
Ian Fletcher (58 yrs)	Full Time	Partner. Managing arable farming operations, morning milking, youngstock feeding and fieldwork/silage operations.
Mark Fletcher (55yrs)	Full time	Partner. Cow foot trimming, scanning cows/heifers, Beef cattle management, tractor/combine driver, GFW.
Peter Fletcher (83yrs)	10hrs/week	Partner. Farm office,
Tom Fletcher (27yrs) (Ian's son)	Full time	Employee. Crop Spraying, Fertilizer applications, cattle feeding, tractor driver, GFW.
Tim Grocock (lives in Groby village)	Full time (Saturday to Wednesdays)	Employee. Herdsman, milking duties and herd management.
Emma Adams (lives at Queniborough)	Full time (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday and 1 weekend day)	Employee. Dairy worker, milks, calves,
Luke Brown (lives at Coalville)	Full time (Weds, Thurs, Friday and 1 weekend day)	Employee. Dairy worker, milks, calves,
Ollie Lane	Full time	General Farm Worker.

Figure 3 Current Employees

- 5.2 The standard labour calculation for the entire Fletcher and Sons business is contained at Appendix One. The labour requirement at just Groby Parks Farm (where the essential need arises) has been calculated from the activities carried out on this sector of the business alone. This comprises the management and daily care of the dairy cows and young calves at Groby Parks Farm, as illustrated at Appendix Two.
- 5.3 The whole farming enterprise standard labour requirement is approximately 8.51 full time equivalent workers. The standard labour requirement for primarily the dairy enterprise and the small calf rearing enterprise is 5.82 full time workers.
- 5.4 The entire standard labour has been calculated for the land farmed and the associated livestock and arable enterprises operated by Fletcher and Son Ltd. The essential need for the worker (Edward Fletcher) to be retained at Groby Parks Farm relates to the dairy enterprise and the calf rearing operation, therefore the labour calculation at Appendix Two assesses the needs of Groby Parks Farm in connection with these livestock enterprises only. Grassland management and fodder production have limited essential need for a worker to reside at the site of production, but livestock enterprises have a need for on-site supervision to meet the required welfare standards.

6.0 DWELLINGS

- 6.1 The applicant currently resides in the Farmhouse at Groby Parks Farm with his wife Alison. Edward Fletcher has resided on the farmyard in a timber lodge for a number of years. It is understood that there is no planning permission for the log cabin; it was sited in late 2018 to accommodate Edward in close proximity to the farm operation because he is a key worker and wanted to live independently from his parents.

- 6.2 Other dwellings in the control of the business or partners in the business include Thorneyfields Farmhouse (LE9 2BE) which is approximately 6.25 miles away from Groby Parks Farm.
- 6.3 Tom resides with his wife Becca Fletcher at Desford approximately 7 miles away from Groby Parks Farm.
- 6.4 Peter (83 yrs) and Jane Fletcher reside at Baron's Park, some 6 miles away from Groby Parks Farm. (This is a recently built house) The business lost three dwellings recently when the landlord sold old Barons Park Farm for redevelopment.
- 6.5 Mark and Emma Fletcher reside at Newbridge farm, some 6 miles from Groby Parks Farm.
- 6.6 The proposed dwelling would allow for Mr Stephan Fletcher to reside with his wife Alison, and to continue to work on the farm as a key worker whilst providing accommodation for their son Edward Fletcher, who is a key worker in the dairy and calf rearing operations to continue to live and oversee these enterprises. Edward needs to be within sight and sound of the calving cows and young calves to be able to respond to emergencies that often occur outside of normal working hours.

7.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 7.1 National Planning Policy relevant to this proposal is the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) which was first introduced in 2012, and updated most recently in December 2024. The 2025 update is currently out for consultation.

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF

7.2 Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) **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;**
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - i. is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - ii. would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

7.3 Considerations that are relevant to take into account when applying paragraph 84a) of the NPPF include:

Evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land based rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on-site attention 24-hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health or from crime, or to

- 7.3 *deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products.*

The degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future, whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process.

Whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

- 7.4 Hinckley & Bosworth BH.C Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD includes Policy 21 DM5 – Enabling Rural Worker Accommodation which permits agricultural dwellings where it is demonstrated that they are essential to the business, socially sustainable, there are no alternative adequate dwellings and that the dwelling is of appropriate scale.

New development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the countryside and Green Belt.

Subject to the further controls over development that apply to the Green Belt, development proposals on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefits, particularly where they relate to:

Small-scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy, including farm diversification schemes; dwellings to house agricultural, forestry or other essential countryside workers and other affordable housing / accommodation to meet a local need in accordance with national planning policies and Policies CS11 and CS12;

With regard to the above two types of development, applicants will be required to demonstrate the need and benefit for the development proposed. Development will be expected to take place primarily in recognisable named settlements or be linked to other existing development and business activity where this is appropriate.

8.0 EVALUATION OF THE BUSINESS AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

8.1 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF allows for the provision of new houses in the countryside, particularly ‘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’.

8.2 Further guidance is provided on the Government Guidance Planning website: - *How can the need for isolated homes in the countryside for essential rural workers be assessed? Considerations that it may be relevant to take into account when applying paragraph 84a of the NPPF could include: evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar-land based rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on-site attention 24-hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products); the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the*

future; whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process; whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

Employment on an assembly or food packing line, or the need to accommodate seasonal workers, will generally not be sufficient to justify building isolated rural dwellings.

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 67-010-20190722

The Essential, or Functional Need for the Dwelling

- 8.3 The applicant has a responsibility for the livestock in his care including any welfare and veterinary emergencies that might occur both within and outside of the normal working day, for example, at calving time, or for very young calves.
- 8.4 A responsible person living on site will also be able to deal quickly with any injuries to the cattle arising from using feeding equipment, indoor accommodation or pasture.

- 8.5 The relevant legislation, notwithstanding a moral duty, is the 2006 Animal Welfare Act. This legislation makes owner responsible for ensuring that the animals' welfare needs are met. These include the need: for suitable environment (place to live) for a suitable diet to exhibit normal behaviour patterns to be housed with or part from other animals (if applicable) to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Dairy Cows Calving Welfare

- 8.6 The dairy enterprise contributes to the functional need to live on site. Cows and the replacement heifers calve all year round. Calving is a time when on site presence is essential. Constant monitoring of cows due to calve and rapid reaction to cows in difficulty is essential to avoid death of a cow and or calf. Dairy cows need close supervision at calving time because cows can get into difficulty delivering their calf. Sometimes cows give birth to twins, and this adds to the potential for problems at birth such as breach birth or a backwards presentation for delivery of the calf. On average there is a calving every one or two days throughout the year.

Dairy Cows - General Welfare

- 8.7 Milk Fever. Early detection of milk fever is imperative to ensure the correct medication (calcium) is administered as soon as possible. Late diagnosis will result in death of the cow.
- 8.8 Disease Risk. To closely monitor the animals' general health and welfare and particularly to ensure early detection of any infection at the earliest of stages.

- 8.9 Fertility. This must be closely observed within the herd to make sure that the animals are returned back in-calf as soon as practically possible. This keeps the cow productive and in the dairy herd. 'Barren' cows (cows that are not in calf) have to be culled from the herd.
- 8.10 Staff & Cow Management. The milking herd is milked twice a day. This is normally at 12-hour intervals, meaning that members of staff are required to be on site, with partners of the business required to be available if required to deal with emergencies and make important decisions at all times of the day and night. (Such as whether or not to call a vet out to a calving cow).

Calves

- 8.11 New-born calves are vulnerable to many things and have to be monitored very closely for the first 24 hours. Calves need to be suckled with their mother to ensure that they take the 'colostrum' or first milk. This contains the antibodies that pass the mother's acquired resistance to diseases on to the calf. Without this, the calf will be more prone to diseases that are inherent in the herd but normally resisted.
- 8.12 Newborn calves need to stand to suckle, and the key worker might have to assist the calf stand to suckle. This can be a dangerous position to put a worker in, because some newly calved cows can be very protective of their new-born calf and can try to drive the worker away. Two workers are sometimes required to deal with over-protective mothers.
- 8.13 Newly born calves have navels that need treating to prevent infection. It is the stockperson's job to do this as soon as possible to prevent infection.

8.14 Calves are dependent on a milk-based diet in the first few weeks and consequently prone to scouring. Calf scouring is a serious problem for calf rearers, and very early intervention is essential if dehydration and death is to be prevented.

8.15 Calves are also prone to pneumonia and again early observation, and intervention will often prevent the loss of the calf. Enzootic pneumonia in young calves is a disease that occurs mainly in two different systems: in housed dairy calves reared for replacement or in housed calves reared for beef in a herd other than the herd of origin. Dairy calves are likely to suffer from the disease at any age, with it manifesting itself as a chronic, coughing pneumonia, or as a more acute, enzootic calf pneumonia.

Labour Requirement

8.16 The whole farming business has a standard labour requirement for approximately 8.51 full time workers. (shown at Appendix One) The livestock operations carried out at Groby Parks Farm have a standard labour requirement of approximately of 5.82 full time workers (Shown in Appendix Two). Not all workers required to run the livestock enterprises are required to live at Groby Parks Farm. As long as there are sufficient workers living within sight and sound of the main farming operation to deal with emergencies that often occur outside of the normal working day, the other workers can reside elsewhere.

8.17 Arable cropping operations and fodder harvesting are operations that can be carried out by workers not resident at Groby Parks Farm.

- 8.18 It is the livestock enterprises, comprising the dairy herd and the young calf rearing operation that give rise to the need for a key worker to reside at Groby Parks Farm.

Sustainability of the Farming Business

- 8.19 The farming business trading as Fletcher and Sons is a multi-generational family partnership. The business is well-established and has traded successfully for 73 years.
- 8.20 Mr & Mrs Fletcher have presented trading profit and loss accounts for the business, prepared by Harris Clarke LLP, Chartered Certified Accountants for the three trading years to March 2025. The accounts show a business with a level of profit in sufficient to cover the cost of labour employed in the business and the annual cost of a permanent dwelling amortised over 25 years as depicted below.

8.5 full time workers (£24,000 each)	£204,000
Net build cost of dwelling @	£200,000
Annual cost of dwelling @ 6% over 25 years	£ 15,600
Total	£219,600

- 8.21 The business generates a surplus after trading expenses, and the above costs have been deducted. The cost of the new permanent dwelling is estimated at £200,000 amortised at 6% over 25 years. Add this to the cost of the workers required to operate the business, and this leaves sufficient income for the management and risk the owner is taking in running a substantial sized enterprise. Based on the trading profit and loss accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025, and the cost of all worker's labour and the annual expected cost of a permanent dwelling, the business is considered to be sustainable.
- 8.22 Copies of the trading accounts for the previous three years to 31 March 2025 will be submitted to the Council in confidence. The applicant requests that these confidential documents are not placed in the public domain.

Other Available, Suitable Dwellings

- 8.23 There are no other permanent dwellings or buildings suitable for conversion at Groby Parks Farm.
- 8.24 An internet search of the local area on 30 January 2026 has confirmed that there no suitable dwellings for sale in the immediate locality which are close enough to the enterprise to allow the essential regular and close supervision of the activities concerned.
- 8.25 It is generally recommended that essential dwellings required to supervise large livestock enterprises should be situated with sight and sound of the enterprise concerned.
- 8.26 There are no dwellings for rent in the local area, and nothing available within sight and sound of the livestock operations.

8.27 The Groby Parks Farmhouse is available to the Fletcher and Son farming operation and would be occupied by Edward Fletcher (Partner of Fletcher & Son) and would still be used as an agricultural dwelling after the erection and occupation of the proposed dwellinghouse.

8.28 Other normal planning requirements, e.g. on siting, access and design are satisfied.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 The business has operated at Groby Parks Farm since 1963. (63 yrs). The applicants are living in less-than-ideal conditions which are due to the essential need for two key workers to reside on site. The granting of planning consent would allow Mr Edward Fletcher to reside on the farm permanently.

9.2 The standard labour requirement for the livestock enterprises at Groby Parks Farm is 5.82 full time workers or equivalent. It is mainly the livestock enterprises that give rise to the number of workers with essential need to live on site for at least two workers.

9.3 The farming partnership has traded for 73 years and been profitable for at least the three trading years to 31 March 2025. The accounts for the business show sufficient profits to cover the cost of an appropriate agricultural wage for the workers required to operate the business, based on standard labour requirements, and the annualised cost of a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at Groby Parks Farm.

- 9.4 The existing dwelling will continue to accommodate Mr Edward Fletcher. There are no dwellings available in the locality that are suitable for the proper supervision of the enterprises at Groby Parks Farm. It is my opinion that nothing short of a dwelling on or very near to the farmyard at Groby Parks Farm to accommodate Mr & Mrs Fletcher will meet the essential need requirements of the farming operation at Groby Parks Farm.
- 9.5 The site indicated to me at my meeting with the applicant Mr Stephan Fletcher and Alison Fletcher is ideally situated to meet the functional needs of the farming business.
- 9.6 Having visited the business and interviewed the key workers responsible for the farming operation based at Groby Parks Farm, I consider the business meets the criteria set out in the NPPF for a permanent agricultural worker's dwelling at Groby Parks Farm.

Philip J. Plant BSc (Hons)MRICS

Mid West Planning Ltd

January 2026

STANDARD LABOUR CALCULATIONS FOR THE WHOLE FARMING OPERATION

Fletcher and Sons – Total Farm Labour Calculation January 2026

Enterprise Type	Unit	NO	SMD/Unit	Enterprise Total
Dairy Cows	Head	260	4.36	1133.60
Dairy Replacement Heifers	Head	65	2.9	188.50
Beef Cattle	Head	70	1.8	126
Grassland Production	Ha	149	0.93	138.73
Silage Production (up to 4 cuts)*	Ha	149	1.19	177.51
Winter Wheat Production	Ha	109	1.15	125.79
Winter Barley Production	Ha	32	1.15	36.80
Fodder Beat Production*	Ha	4.8	0.93	4.46
Forage Maize Production*	Ha	77	1.02	78.54
Winter Bean Production	Ha	14.89	16.2	0.92
Hemp Production	Ha	10	10.20	1.02
Sub-total				2035.02
Plus, Maintenance, Repairs and Management Factor @ 15%				305.25
Total				2340.27
Equivalent Standard Workers @ 275 days 8.51 P.A.				

Source: - The John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook 56th addition 2026. Items marked * is an estimated figure based on comparable data.

It is generally accepted that agricultural workers work an average of 275 Standard Man Days (SMDs) per year. Therefore, the standard labour requirement for the whole farming business is approximately 8.51 full time workers.

APPENDIX TWO

STANDARD LABOUR CALCULATIONS – GROBY PARKS FARM

Groby Parks Farm Labour calculation January 2026

Enterprise Type	Unit	No.	SMD/Unit	Enterprise Total
Dairy Cows	Head	260	4.36	1133.60
Dairy Replacement Heifers to 3 months	Head	65	2.9	188.50
Beef calves to 3 months	Head	70	1.0	70.00
Subtotal				1392.10
Plus, maintenance, repairs and management factor @15%				208.82
Total				1600.92
Equivalent Standard Workers @ 275 days P.A. 5.82				

Source: - The John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook 56th addition 2026. Items marked * is an estimated figure based on comparable data.

The labour requirement for Groby Parks Farm associated with the livestock enterprises is approximately 1600.92 Standard Man Days: or approximately 5.82 full time workers.