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PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

THE PROPOSED ERECTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS DWELLING

GROBY PARKS FARM

LEICESTER ROAD

MARKFEILD

LE67 9RH

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been produced by Kirstie Edwards MRTPI of Mid-West Planning Ltd and has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), and with regard to the National Planning Practice Guidance (Design: Process and Tools), which provides the most up-to-date national guidance on the form and content of Design and Access Statements. The Statement also reflects the design principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).”
- 1.2 Kirstie Edwards is a Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and has over 25 years’ experience in Planning in both the Public and Private sector.
- 1.3 This report and planning application have been prepared following the instruction of Mr Stephan Fletcher, Fletcher and Sons, Groby Parks Farm, Leicester Markfield, LE67 9RH.
- 1.4 The proposal is to build a permanent agricultural worker’s dwelling with a detached garage, for occupation by the applicant together with the provision of associated residential curtilage and landscaping scheme.
- 1.5 If the proposal is approved, the existing dwelling on the site would be occupied by Edward Fletcher, thereby providing the necessary accommodation for the two full-time agricultural workers on the farm, Edward and Stephan Fletcher.

2.0 *RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY*

2.1 A search of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's planning records shows only historic applications, all of which relate to approved farm building developments on the site. As these are not directly relevant to the current proposal, they have not been listed below.

2.2 Only one application has been deemed relevant to this proposal as it demonstrates the expansion of the dairy enterprise on site and supports the argument that labour on the site is substantial enough to require an additional agricultural dwelling on the farm.

This application is reference 14/00257/FUL – Extension to agricultural building and hardcore apron – approved 21st July 2014.

3.0 *LOCATION AND SITE BACKGROUND*

3.1 The application site is located in Open Countryside accessed from the A50 and the associated private road, approximately 1.83 Miles from Markfield, Leicester.

3.2 The dwelling will be situated adjacent to the existing farm buildings as depicted in the site plan below (Fletcher PL-02) and submitted alongside this 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. It is located directly adjacent to existing built form on the site and therefore does not result in significant encroachment into the open countryside and appears as a natural extension to the existing cluster of development.



Figure 1 Proposed site plan.

3.3 The proposal comprises a modest detached bungalow to be occupied as an agricultural worker's dwelling, providing the on-site presence necessary for the continuous supervision and effective care of the livestock on the holding. The accommodation includes a kitchen/dining room, living room, three bedrooms, a home office, utility room and two bathrooms. The proposed garage will offer secure, covered parking together with additional storage space for small hand tools and equipment required for day-to-day land and garden maintenance.

4.0 *USE*

4.1 The application site forms part of the wider agricultural holding owned and operated by Fletcher and Sons. Mr Fletcher is a Partner within this long-established, family-run farming enterprise.

5.0 *THE PROPOSAL*

- 5.1 The development proposes a permanent single-storey agricultural worker's dwelling, together with a single-storey two-bay garage, the formation of an appropriate residential curtilage, associated landscaping, and the installation of a private sewage treatment plant. The application also includes the necessary change of use of land from agricultural to residential.

6.0 *RURAL HOUSING NEED*

- 6.1 An 'Agricultural Worker's Dwelling Appraisal' report is being submitted in support of this application which should be read in full, with the relevant information repeated below for ease of reference. The whole farming enterprise has a standard labour requirement of approximately 8.51 full-time equivalent workers. Of this, the dairy enterprise and the associated young calf-rearing operation account for 5.82 full-time equivalent workers. The essential need for the worker, Edward Fletcher, to be retained at Groby Parks Farm arises directly from the essential operational demands of these enterprises. His presence on site is required to ensure the effective day-to-day management of the dairy herd and the welfare of the calves, both of which necessitate a worker being readily available at most times of the day and night.
- 6.2 The business has recently lost three dwellings following the sale of Old Barons Park Farm by the landlord for redevelopment. The proposed dwelling would enable Mr Stephan Fletcher to reside on site with his wife, Alison, allowing him to continue in his role as a key worker within the farming enterprise. It would also provide essential accommodation for their son,

Edward Fletcher, who is a primary worker within the dairy and calf-rearing operations.

Edward's presence on site is critical to the effective running of these enterprises. He must remain within sight and sound of the calving cows and young calves in order to respond promptly to emergencies, many of which arise outside normal working hours. The proposed dwelling would therefore ensure that the farm retains the necessary on-site labour to safeguard animal welfare and maintain the proper functioning of the enterprise.

- 6.3 The applicant has a responsibility for the livestock in his care, including responding to welfare and veterinary emergencies that may arise both within and outside normal working hours. This is particularly critical during calving and in the management of very young calves, where issues can develop rapidly and require immediate on-site intervention to safeguard animal welfare.
- 6.4 A responsible person living on site is also essential to respond quickly to any injuries sustained by the cattle, whether arising from the use of feeding equipment, indoor housing or while out at pasture. Immediate intervention is often required to prevent further harm and to ensure appropriate treatment, reinforcing the need for a worker to reside permanently at the farm.
- 6.5 The relevant legislation, in addition to the clear moral duty owed to livestock, is the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This legislation places a legal responsibility

on owners and keepers to ensure that the welfare needs of their animals are met at all times. These needs include:

- The need for a suitable environment
- The need for a suitable diet
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behavioural patterns
- The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals as appropriate
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

These statutory duties reinforce the requirement for a responsible person to be readily available on site to respond promptly to welfare issues as they arise.

- 6.6 There are no alternative dwellings available within the locality that are within sight and sound of the enterprise and therefore capable of providing the level of supervision required for the proper management of the operations at Groby Parks Farm. None of the nearby properties offer the proximity or oversight necessary to meet the functional needs of the dairy and calf-rearing enterprises, reinforcing the requirement for an on-site dwelling.

7.0 *AMOUNT AND SCALE*

- 7.1 The proposed brick and tile dwelling will have a footprint of approximately 226.12m².
- 7.2 The maximum height to the ridge of the proposed dwelling will be 5.77m.
- 7.3 The proposed dwelling will have a gross internal floor area of approximately 166.83 m² and will comprise an open-plan kitchen/dining room with an

adjoining utility and pantry, three bedrooms, two bathrooms (including an en-suite to the primary bedroom), a home office and a plant room.

- 7.4 The residential curtilage associated with the dwelling will include a dedicated parking area, accessed via a driveway leading from the Groby Park Farm courtyard. The courtyard itself is served by an existing private driveway which connects directly to the A50. This access arrangement is illustrated on the submitted location plan accompanying the application and will remain unaltered:

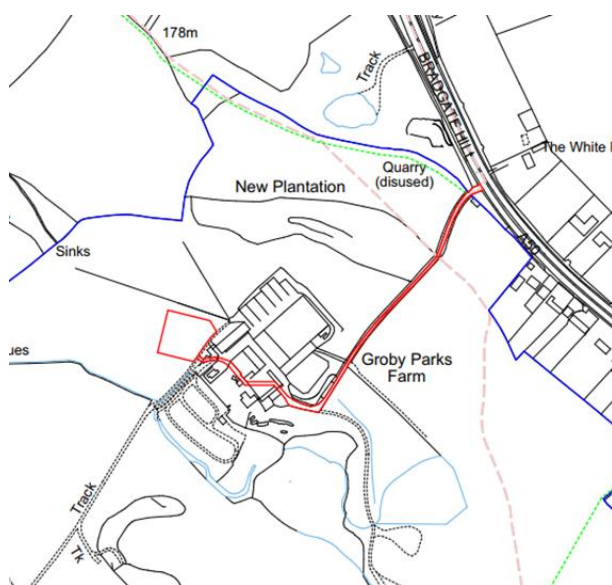


Figure 2 Site location plan.

- 7.5 A 'Klargester Biodisc Ba' six-person package sewage treatment plant, will be installed in the rear garden, details of which are attached to this application.

8.0 LAYOUT

- 8.1 The proposed agricultural worker's dwelling will be positioned within sight and sound of the main farm buildings, ensuring convenient and rapid access to the farmyard and livestock. The cottage will be set back approximately

32 metres from the farmyard boundary, with the associated garage located to the side and front of the dwelling, positioned around 21 metres from the site boundary.

8.2 The bungalow is entered via a central hall foyer. The bedrooms are located on the east side of the building, with the home office positioned nearby on the west side. The main bathroom and the open-plan kitchen/living area are situated to the rear, with an adjoining pantry and utility room providing additional storage and support for the kitchen.

8.3 The utility room is served by a secondary entrance, providing agricultural workers with convenient access to and from the farmyard. This arrangement enables movement in and out of the dwelling during the working day without introducing dirt or unhygienic conditions into and through the main dwelling. The farm office further supports this functional layout, offering a space for undertaking management tasks while maintaining visual oversight of the holding.

8.4 The garage is positioned to the northeast of the dwelling providing additional secure vehicle storage in association with the proposed dwelling.

9.0 *APPEARANCE AND DESIGN*

9.1 The application site lies approximately 1.83 miles from the centre of Markfield, where the built environment reflects a blend of traditional Leicestershire materials and more contemporary finishes. Red brick is the most prevalent material within the local area, complemented by the use of stonework, often Charnwood Stone, in older buildings and boundary treatments. More modern development does not follow a single architectural

style and incorporates a variety of finishes, including render, limewash, bare brick, and occasional elements of composite or timber cladding for detailing.

- 9.2 The dwelling has been designed to reflect the surrounding vernacular while safeguarding the character of the existing farmhouse. It will be single storey and constructed using traditional materials and design principles appropriate to this rural part of Leicestershire. The use of brick and slate, combined with sustainable and thermally efficient construction methods and architectural detailing, will deliver a low-carbon, energy-efficient home that complements, protects and enhances the character and appearance of the area. In addition, the dwelling has been specifically designed to align with the form and appearance of the nearest neighbouring property (aside from the main farmhouse on site), located approximately 129 metres from the site entrance.



Figure 3 Image of dwelling of similar appearance within the locality.

- 9.3 In addition, the proposed dwelling incorporates a stone gable feature with brick-detailed window surrounds, reflecting and reinforcing the architectural character of the existing farmhouse at Groby Parks Farm.

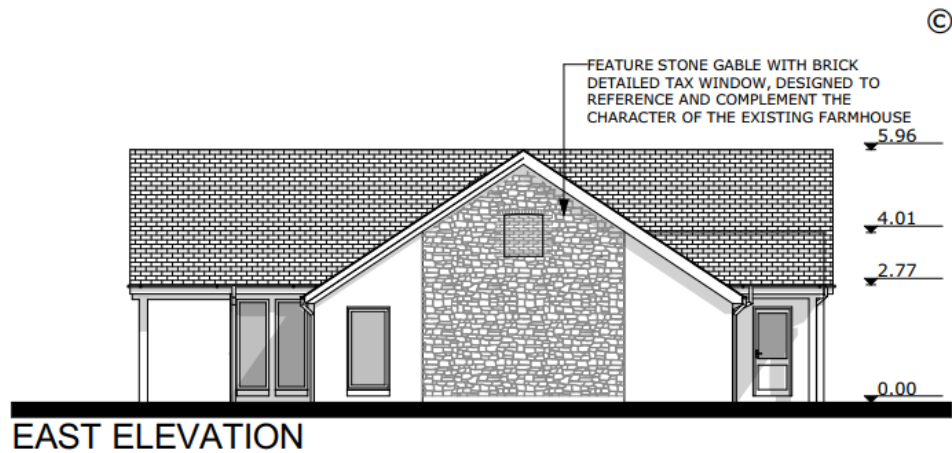


Figure 4 Stone Gable Feature on Proposed Dwelling.

9.4 The design of the property incorporates traditional architectural features while utilising materials commonly found within the local area, such as red brick. It is considered that the scheme achieves an appropriate balance between respecting the locally distinctive design characteristics of older buildings in the vicinity and delivering a modern, efficient dwelling constructed using cost-effective and sustainable materials.



Figure 5 Oak Framed Porch to South Elevation.

9.5 An oak framed gable porch has been incorporated on the dwelling's south elevation to provide a covered amenity area accessed via glazed doors. This

is considered the most appropriate location for this feature as it is located to the south of the dwelling where it does not overlook any other dwellings thereby protecting both the privacy of the occupants of the new dwelling and the existing occupants of the main farmhouse on site.

10.0 *ACCESS AND PARKING PROVISION*

10.1 The proposal for a single dwelling will not materially increase traffic movements to or from the site, particularly when considered in the context of the existing vehicular activity associated with the farming enterprise and the established dwelling. The new dwelling will be served by an appropriate, policy-compliant level of parking, and the layout provides sufficient space for vehicles to manoeuvre within the site, enabling them to enter and leave the private driveway in a forward gear.

10.2 In addition to the outdoor parking provision, two undercover parking spaces are available within the two-bay garage which will serve the proposed dwelling only.

11.0 *LANDSCAPING*

11.1 The proposal incorporates additional landscaping, including native tree planting along the eastern boundary of the dwelling and a pear tree positioned at the northeast corner of the site. Within the garden area, bluebells, daffodils and lavender will be introduced to enhance the natural character and visual appeal of the setting. The landscaping scheme also includes Ilex crenata ‘Luxus’ hedging, together with ornamental shrub species such as Red Robin, Choisya and Euonymus, providing year-round structure, colour and biodiversity benefits.

- 11.2 The vehicular entrance to the dwelling will incorporate a cattle grid to prevent livestock from entering the site, leading onto 10mm gravel edged with reclaimed granite kerbstones. The principal retaining wall will be constructed using boulders sourced from the farm, ensuring the boundary treatment remains sympathetic to the rural setting and consistent with the original character of the area.

12.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in March 2012 and last updated in December 2024, to streamline planning policy at a national level.

At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is the stance to be taken in determining applications in accordance with local development plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 12.2 Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development, sets out the three overarching objectives of achieving sustainable development, the ‘Economic, Social and Environmental’ objectives. The objectives support sustainable development and need to be considered in the drafting and adoption of local plans.

‘Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a. An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right*

types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b. A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c. An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

12.4 The proposal will meet the needs of the applicant and contribute to the Council’s 5 year housing land supply and the rural community. The modest property will provide a comfortable home for the applicant and his partner to live and work on the farm, thereby supporting the longevity of the enterprise. During the construction phase the development will create employment for local builders and trades people providing a short term boost to the economy and the creation and occupation of the dwelling will result in regular council tax payments providing a long term boost to the economy. The proposal therefore meets the Economic objective of the NPPF.

12.5 The proposal also supports the social limb of the NPPF in providing the applicant with the ability to live and work on their farm which supports their lifestyle and ensures the safety and welfare of the livestock on site.

12.6 In relation to the economic limb of the NPPF, the proposal is compliant as it would reduce the need for repeated daily journeys to and from the site. Without the dwelling, several trips each day would be unavoidable, resulting in increased vehicular movements and a greater carbon footprint. The provision of an on-site dwelling therefore supports the efficient functioning of the enterprise and contributes positively to its overall sustainability.

The proposal does not give rise to any ecological harm, as evidenced within this submission. Furthermore, the siting of the dwelling does not result in any significant encroachment into the open countryside, making use of existing access points and ensuring only minimal land take.

12.7 At Chapter 5 ‘Delivering Sufficient Supply of Homes’ the NPPF seeks to support the government’s objective to boost the supply of homes. In particular paragraphs 82 to 84 are concerned with Rural Housing. At paragraph 82 the Framework states that ‘in rural area, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.’ Whilst paragraph 84a talks specifically about homes for rural workers where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside which could allow planning authorities to grant planning permission for an isolated home in the countryside.

12.8 *‘Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following apply: 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.'

12.9 In Chapter 6 the NPPF talks about '*building a strong, competitive economy*' with a subsection relating specifically to '*supporting a prosperous rural economy*'.

86. Planning policies should:

- a. Set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to the national industrial strategy and any relevant Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;*
- b. set criteria, and identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;*
- c. pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics*
- d. seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and*

- e. *be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, and allow for new and flexible working practices and spaces to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.*

12.10 Supporting a prosperous rural economy

88. *Planning policies and decisions should enable:*

- a. *the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;*
- b. *the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- c. *sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d. *the retention of development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.'*

12.11 89. Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlement, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by

cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

- 12.13 At Chapter 12 The NPPF is concerned with achieving well-designed places paragraph 126 states that ‘The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.’
- 12.14 The NPPF promotes good design and high-quality buildings and places. Planning applications for new buildings should seek to improve the quality of an area, not just in the short-term, but for the lifetime of the development. Development should be sympathetic to the local vernacular and reinforce the sense of place.
- 12.15 At Paragraph 132 the NPPF states that *‘Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans*

and by encouraging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.'

- 12.16 The proposal does not give rise to an isolated dwelling. The application clearly demonstrates an essential need for an additional rural worker to live within sight and sound of the enterprise. The dwelling would provide a mutually supportive arrangement that enables the family to continue managing the livestock and farming the land effectively, ensuring the ongoing welfare of the animals and the efficient operation of the holding.

13.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 13.1 In line with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the most important policies for determining the application need to be identified. It is clear from the judgement 'Wavendon Properties Ltd v SoSoHCLG & Milton Keynes Council [2019] EWHC 1412 (Admin)' that the collection of most important policies should be considered in the round.
- 13.2 Most important policies should only be those that govern the development proposed in a particular area. More generic policies that can apply to multiple types of development should not logically be considered as most important policies. This approach is therefore adopted in the below assessment of the relevant policies.
- 13.3 The relevant planning policies are contained within the adopted Local Plan 'Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016)'. This document provides the statutory framework for assessing the proposal, setting out the authority's expectations for design quality, sustainable development, and the protection of local character. The scheme has been developed with careful regard to these policies, and the following section

identifies the key provisions of relevance and explains how the proposal responds to them.

13.4 Policy DM1 of the SADMP establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, confirming that proposals which accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

13.5 Given the site's location outside the settlement boundary of Markfield, and therefore within the open countryside in policy terms, Policy DM4 of the SADMP is directly engaged. Policy DM4 seeks to protect and enhance the intrinsic value, beauty, openness and landscape character of the countryside by resisting forms of development considered unsustainable. In particular, the policy does not generally support new residential dwellings in the countryside unless they provide essential accommodation for a rural worker in accordance with Policy DM5 whilst also meeting the additional criteria set out in the second part of DM4.

The proposal is fully compliant with these requirements. It provides essential accommodation for a rural worker and would not result in any significant adverse impact on the intrinsic value, open character or visual qualities of the countryside. The development would not undermine the physical or perceived separation between settlements, nor would it introduce or exacerbate ribbon development. As such, the scheme accords with the aims and objectives of Policy DM4 insofar as they relate to rural worker accommodation.

13.6 Policy DM5 – Enabling Rural Worker Accommodation seeks to ensure that the intrinsic value, beauty and open character of the countryside is protected and safeguarded from inappropriate development, including the creation of

new isolated dwellings. The policy does, however, allow for rural worker accommodation as an exception where specific criteria are met.

These criteria include demonstrating that it is essential for one or more workers to be readily available at most times to support the proper functioning of the rural enterprise; that those workers are, and will remain, in full-time and permanent employment directly related to the enterprise; that the enterprise is economically sustainable with a clear prospect of remaining so; that no suitable alternative buildings are available for purchase or conversion either within the local area or on the holding; and that the proposed dwelling is of an appropriate size and scale relative to the operational needs of the enterprise.

The proposed single-storey, three-bedroom dwelling clearly meets the objectives of the policy. It has been sensitively designed to protect and enhance the character of the surrounding landscape and is proportionate to the functional requirements of the enterprise. The applicant must be within sight and sound of the livestock to ensure animal welfare and the effective day-to-day running of the farm. There is no alternative means of meeting this operational need, and as such, this element of the policy is also satisfied.

- 13.7 Policy DM7 – Preventing Pollution and Flooding seeks to ensure that development does not give rise to adverse impacts from pollution or flooding. The policy requires proposals to demonstrate, inter alia, that they will not detrimentally affect the water quality, ecological value or drainage functions of nearby water bodies; that the design will avoid light pollution; that noise or

vibration will not harm the tranquillity of the area or the amenity of users; and that the development will not create or exacerbate flood risk.

The proposal is for a domestic dwelling within a site that already accommodates an existing dwelling and is surrounded by farmland. The development will not generate noise, vibration or lighting impacts that would harm the character or tranquillity of the area. The site is not located within a flood zone and is not identified as being at risk from surface water flooding. Drainage will be appropriately managed as part of the development.

On this basis, the proposal is considered to fully comply with the requirements of Policy DM7.

- 13.8 Policy DM10 – Development and Design seeks to ensure that proposals do not have a significant adverse effect on the amenities of nearby residents; that development complements or enhances the character of the surrounding area; that building materials respect those used locally; that a high standard of landscaping is incorporated; that drainage is appropriately managed; and that the principles of ‘Secured by Design’ are maximised.

The proposed rural worker’s dwelling has been sensitively designed to sit comfortably within its local context, reflecting and complementing the established built form. The residential use is appropriate in this location and will not give rise to any harm to neighbouring land uses or residential amenity. The scale, appearance and materials have been selected to integrate

effectively with the surrounding landscape, and drainage will be managed in accordance with best practice.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to be fully compliant with the requirements of Policy DM10.

- 13.9 Policy DM18 – Vehicle Parking Standards requires development to provide an appropriate level of parking provision for the proposed use. The scheme fully accords with this requirement, as it incorporates sufficient on-site parking together with adequate manoeuvring space to ensure vehicles can enter and leave the site in a forward gear. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy DM18.

14.0 CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The proposal for an agricultural worker's dwelling is fully compliant with the relevant national and local planning policies and is therefore acceptable in planning terms. The application provides robust evidence of an essential functional need for an additional worker to live within sight and sound of the enterprise, meeting the requirements of the NPPF for rural worker accommodation. The dwelling directly supports the efficient, safe and continuous management of livestock, ensuring the welfare of the animals and the long-term viability of the holding.

The development does not create an isolated home in the countryside; rather, it forms part of an established agricultural unit and supports a family-run enterprise that relies on close-proximity supervision. The siting has been carefully selected to minimise landscape impact, utilise existing access arrangements and avoid any significant encroachment into open countryside. No ecological harm arises, as demonstrated within the

submission, and the proposal contributes positively to the sustainable operation of the business by reducing unnecessary vehicle movements and associated carbon emissions.

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the proposal satisfies the policy tests for rural worker dwellings, aligns with the economic and environmental objectives of the NPPF, and delivers clear functional, operational and sustainability benefits. On this basis, the development is policy compliant and should be supported.

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Mid-West Planning Ltd.

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