

Planning/Design & Access Statement

Site Address: Dog Walking Field, Burroughs Road, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0LU

Author: Sarah Collins of SC Planning

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is in support of a retrospective planning application (Section 73A) to change the use of agricultural land (formerly arable land) into a dog walking field. It has been operational since mid-October.

2. Background

- 2.1 The UK has over 13 million dogs. While England has many public footpaths, parks and even public dog parks, approximately 30% of dogs are reactive or cannot be let off the lead in public. Reactive dogs are scared or react badly in some way to other dogs, humans, animals or cars or simply run away at the first opportunity. Many cannot be taken to a public dog park without significant stress. Without a large garden, many dogs can never walk or run off the lead. Dog walking fields provide a safe place to train and exercise any dog, not just reactive dogs, because the fields are fully fenced off and have only one booking per hour, so each visitor has the field all to themselves. Dog walking fields are designed to be a calm environment for dogs and the dogs in each booking will know each other, therefore barking is minimised.
- 2.2 Dog walking fields therefore provide a vital service for many dogs and their owners, and also reduces the numbers of dogs being walked or trained in public areas, which improves safety and reduces dog waste in public spaces. Dog walking fields also reduce the use of public footpaths in protected wildlife areas, reducing disturbance to flora and fauna.

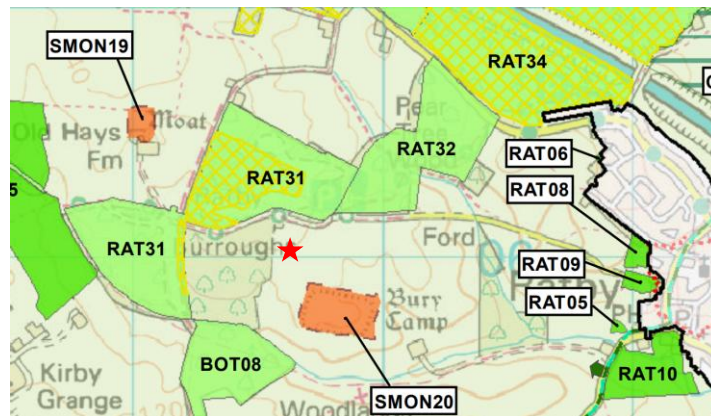
3. Site Description

- 3.1 The field measures approximately 3 acres (1.25Ha) and was previously used for arable farming (wheat/barley). The land is grade 3 agricultural land (not the best and most versatile, which are grades 1 and 2). The field forms a small part of a 77 acre landholding within the larger 550 acre farm estate (see site outlined in red and 77 acre landholding map below), and the farm needs to earn an income from the field to support the ongoing farming enterprise as a form of farm diversification. The access onto Burroughs Road will continue to be used by the farm to access adjacent fields.



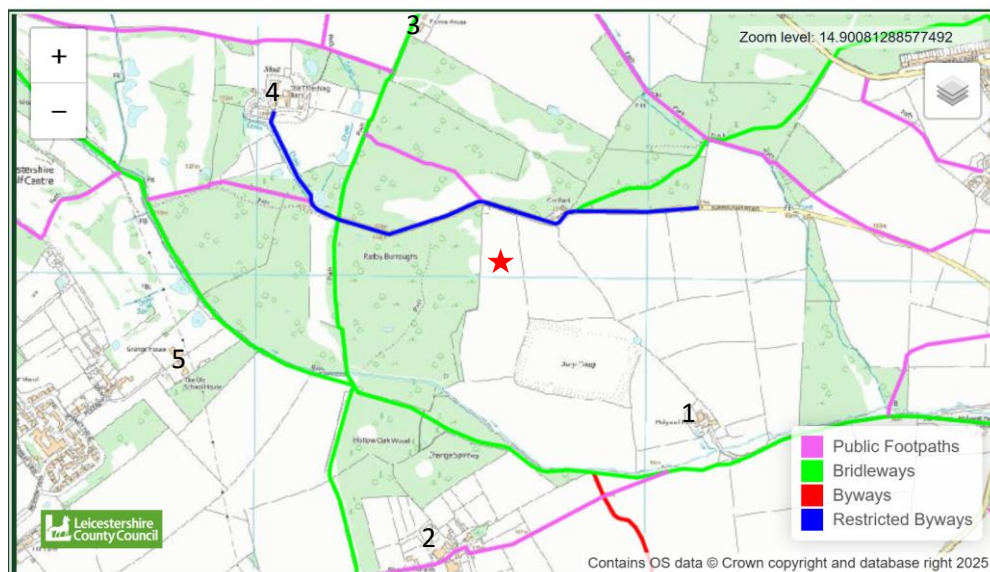
Map of Site Owner's Landholding

- 3.2 The site is located within Ratby Parish, approximately 1.5km West of Ratby (about a 3 minute car journey time), and about a 15 minute car journey from Leicester City Centre and the local planning authority is Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. The site lies within the National Forest and within the regional forest of Charnwood, more specifically within the Charnwood Forest (Fringe Settled Forest Hills) landscape character area. The Burroughs Road area is described in the Ratby Village Design Statement (2011) as a "recreational 'breathing space' favoured by walkers, horse riders and cyclists." (p.54)
- 3.3 The site is not designated for any specific purpose in the adopted local plan (see policies map extract below).



Extract from Policies Map (site denoted by red star)

- 3.4 To the North of the site, on the other side of Burroughs Road, is Burroughs Wood – a natural and semi-natural open space accessible to the public and on a National Trail of the National Forest, which contains Priority Habitat (Deciduous Woodland) and Ancient Woodland. To the West of the site is Ratby Burroughs which also contains Priority Habitat (Deciduous Woodland) and there are two paintballing facilities within these woods.



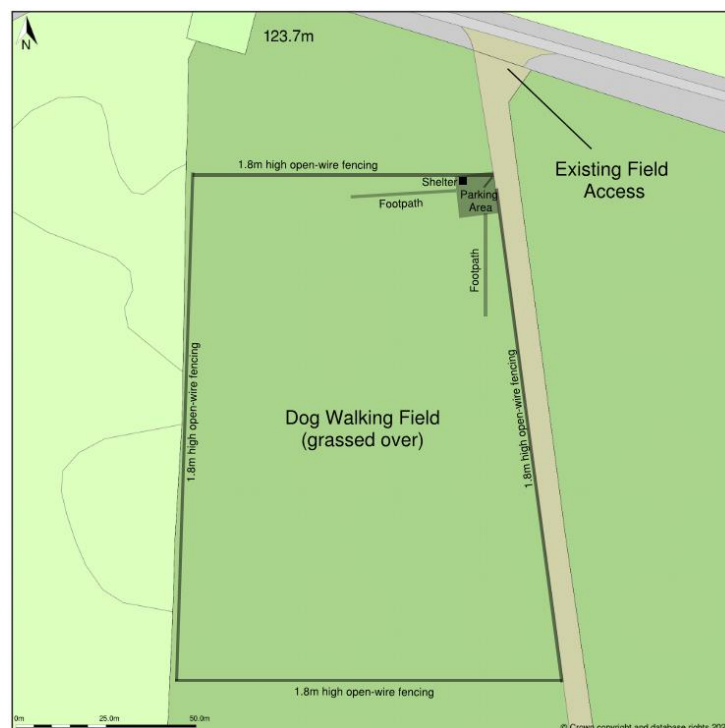
- 3.5 The nearest residential properties to the site are approximately 0.5km from the site (numbered on the map above):
1. Holywell Farm (about 500m away)
 2. Woodlands Farm, Old Woodlands Farm and Hollowoak Farm (about 600m away)
 3. Lane's End and Fleece House (about 570m away)
 4. Old Hayes Farm (about 650m away)
 5. Grange House and The Old School House (about 700m away)
- 3.6 The site lies to the Northwest of Ratby Camp, a Scheduled Monument. There are no other heritage assets close to the site.

- 3.7 The site is not within an area at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea, or from surface water.
- 3.8 The site benefits from an existing field access and therefore planning permission is not required for the access.



Old/existing field access (Google Streetview, 2022)

4. The Proposals

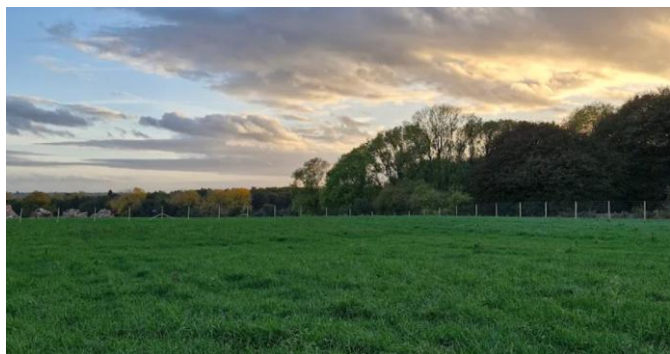


Extract from Proposed Site Plan

- 4.1 The proposal is for the continued use of the site as a dog walking field, which is accessible by appointment only and the entrance gate to the dog walking field is set back approximately 40m from Burroughs Road, allowing the farmer to continue accessing the surrounding fields. The entrance gate to the dog walking field is secured with a combination padlock and monitored by a solar-powered CCTV camera. Only 1 customer can book the field per hour for 55 minutes (to prevent overlap of visitors). Slots are available from 6am to 10pm daily. The terms and conditions of use of the field stipulate several rules for dog walkers using the field, including: *“Do not play music, unnecessarily shout or create loud noise, allow your dogs to bark unnecessarily or do anything that might be a nuisance for others living near the field.”* Dog poo bins and poo bags are provided near the entrance and customers are asked to take any personal waste home with them.
- 4.2 The field is fully fenced around the perimeter of the field, and is a wire stock fence with 7.5cm apertures with wooden posts and approximately 1.8m high. The fencing is positioned well away from the woodland to the West of the site and does not affect any trees or hedges. The fencing connects to the entrance gate which is a 1.8m high, 3m wide metal deer gate. The parking area for customers is within the dog walking field, so that dogs are securely within the facility when entering and exiting their vehicle. There is sufficient space for vehicles to park and turn in the parking area.
- 4.3 There is a shelter with seating for customers near the entrance. The shelter is a simple timber frame with no foundations, fixed to the ground with 4 fence posts, with a corrugated roof made of onduline (bitumen, recycled paper and resin) and covered with fabric on 3 sides to act as a wind break. It measures 2.4m long x 2.4m wide x 2.1m-2.4m tall. Drawings of the shelter are provided in the application submissions. There is also dog agility equipment and a bench within the field.



View of dog walking field from Burroughs Road entrance



View from within dog walking field facing South

- 4.4 The surface of the parking area comprises a base of hard core finished with road planings, which is a permeable surface. Two pathways with the same surfacing lead from the parking area into the field, to maintain the grass around the parking area by guiding visitors onto the pathways.

5. Policy Analysis

NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated February 2025) provides the framework for how the Government's planning policies for England should be applied for the preparation of local development plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF states that "...applications for planning permission (should) be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

Development Plan

- 5.2 The Development Plan for the site comprises: the Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy DPD (2009), the Site Allocations and Development Management policies DPD (2016) (the SADMP), the Hinckley Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD (2011), and the Earl Shilton & Barwell Area Action Plan DPD (2014).

- 5.3 The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and guidance are a material consideration in planning decisions, but do not form part of the Development Plan:

The Good Design Guide SPD 2019
 Ratby Village Design Statement (2011)
 Agricultural Land Study 2020
 Landscape Character Assessment 2017
 Landscape Sensitivity Study 2017

- 5.4 The proposed dog walking field is a form of farm diversification, whereby grazing land that was no longer needed has been put to a use that generates additional income for the farm, which is supported by the Core Strategy and policy DM4 of the SADMP. It is an appropriate use that retains the landscape character as the field remains grassed over, the fencing is open-wire and therefore unobtrusive in the landscape and the trees and hedges to the field boundaries are not affected. The shelter is small, utilitarian and does not harm the local landscape character. The proposal therefore protects Charnwood Forest and the National Forest, in compliance with Core Strategy policies 21 and 22, and protects the countryside, in compliance with policy DM4 of the SADMP.
- 5.5 The dog walking field provides a valuable facility for the local area, promoting healthy communities and supports Ratby Parish's aspirations for outdoor recreation in the Bourroughs Road area. The site is easily accessible from Ratby and Leicester beyond, encouraging and enabling dog walking in a sustainable location. It offers an alternative place to exercise nervous or aggressive dogs away from local public footpaths and parks. This improves public safety, making local footpaths and parks more appealing to locals and visitors, supporting Core Strategy objectives for tourism and recreation - specifically Policies 8 and 20 of the Core Strategy, which promote Ratby as a 'gateway village' to the National Forest, whilst helping to prevent the overuse of the National Forest. It also has the benefit of reducing stress on dog owners and allows dogs to run free off-lead in a safe and secure environment. The facility also reduces disturbance

of wildlife in Burroughs Wood and the wider Charnwood Forest and National Forest, in compliance with policy DM9 of the SADMP.

- 5.6 Trip generation is controlled by the appointment system and will result in a maximum of 2 trips per hour, which would not have a material impact on the local road network.
- 5.7 The nearest dwellings are over 0.5km from the field and therefore the use of the site as a dog walking field would not have a material impact on the amenity of local residents.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 It has been demonstrated that the proposed dog walking field is a much-needed facility that has the following benefits:
 - It provides a safe facility for dogs and their owners that are otherwise restricted to walks on a lead in public areas that can be stressful for nervous dogs and their owners and the general public;
 - It removes those dogs and their excrement from public spaces, and
 - It reduces disturbance to wildlife in the nearby Burroughs Wood and other publicly accessible areas.
- 6.2 The field is in a sustainable location within a 3 minute drive of Ratby and 15 minutes from the centre of Leicester. The trip generation is limited to a maximum of 2 trips per hour due to the booking system, which would not have a material impact on the local road network. The nearest dwellings are located over 0.5km away, therefore residential amenity would not be materially affected by the development.
- 6.3 No trees or hedges are affected by the development, the field is grassed over and the fencing is open-wire so that there is no detrimental impact on the local landscape character. The field is only a very small portion (3 acres) of the farm estate (550 acres) and is Grade 3 agricultural land, providing the farmer with a valuable income as a form of farm diversification, which is supported by local plan policies.
- 6.4 The proposal complies with the Development Plan and represents sustainable development, in compliance with policy DM1 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD. Therefore, as stated in paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application should be granted planning consent.