

Mid West Planning Ltd

Chartered Planning & Building Design Consultants

14 August 2026

Sullivan Archer MRTPI
Senior Planning Officer
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Hinckley Hub
Rugby Road
Hinckley
Leicestershire
LE10 0FR

By email

Dear Sullivan Archer,

Re: Planning Application 26/00368/FUL – Erection of an Agricultural Worker's Dwelling and Detached Garage

Groby Parks Farm, Leicester Road, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9RH

Response to Officer Comments – Scale of the Proposed Dwelling

I write further to the Council's comments on the above application. We are grateful for the Council's confirmation that the principle of an agricultural worker's dwelling at Groby Parks Farm is accepted, and that the functional and financial tests set out in Policy DM5 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016) are met, with no suitable alternative dwelling available on the farm or within the locality to meet the established need.

We understand that the single outstanding matter concerns the scale of the proposed dwelling and its residential curtilage, and specifically whether the floor area, driveway and turning provision are greater than is required to meet the needs of the farming operation. Policy DM5 requires that a rural worker's dwelling be of "appropriate size and scale relative to the operational needs of the enterprise," with vehicle provision separately addressed under Policy DM18. We set out below, room by room, why the proposed gross internal floor area of 166.83m² satisfies this test and is not excessive, before turning to the justification for the scale of the residential curtilage.

Home Office

The Agricultural Worker's Dwelling Appraisal submitted with the application establishes a standard labour requirement of 8.51 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers across the holding, of which 5.82 FTE relates to the dairy and calf-rearing enterprise alone. An enterprise of this scale carries a genuine and continuous administrative burden: herd health and movement records, medicine and withdrawal records, TB testing schedules, milk buyer and Red Tractor assurance documentation, and the day-to-day financial management

of the business. A dedicated office is a functional necessity that flows directly from the scale of enterprise the Council has already accepted generates the essential need for this dwelling, not a discretionary addition.

Utility Room

The utility room is served by its own secondary entrance directly from the farmyard and will function as the point at which the resident worker enters and leaves the dwelling during the working day, removing boots, overalls and other PPE before proceeding into the main body of the house. This is standard, indeed essential, provision on a working dairy farm. It maintains basic biosecurity and hygiene standards – of particular importance on a holding managing calving cows and young calves – and prevents dirt, slurry and pathogens from being carried into habitable rooms. Without it, hygiene standards would be compromised, or an equivalent function would simply need to be accommodated elsewhere within the dwelling.

Kitchen, Dining and Living Room

On a working farm of this nature, the kitchen table routinely serves as the practical meeting point for veterinary visits, AI technicians, feed and machinery representatives, milk buyer field officers, and Red Tractor or TB testing personnel – visits that occur throughout the working week and are a defining feature of how a family farm business operates. The open-plan kitchen, dining and living space has been sized to accommodate this dual domestic and business function, rather than as an oversized amenity space provided for the resident family alone.

Bedrooms

The dwelling is limited to three bedrooms, a modest provision by any reasonable standard, reflecting both the current residents and the reasonably foreseeable needs of the next generation of the Fletcher family. Family succession is a well-recognised and legitimate consideration in the provision of rural workers' accommodation: enabling the family to grow and remain on the holding, and in time take on responsibility for it, is fundamental to the long-term viability of a family-run enterprise of this kind. A three-bedroom dwelling is not an excessive provision against that reasonable need.

Plant Room

The dwelling has been designed with 200mm cavity walls and an air-source heat pump system to achieve a high standard of thermal performance, reducing both the farm business's running costs and the development's carbon footprint, consistent with the NPPF's objective of moving toward a low-carbon economy. This requires a dedicated plant room to house the incoming service pipework and heating manifold. This is a wholly functional, non-habitable utility space – not additional living accommodation – and should not be weighed in the assessment of scale in the same way as habitable floorspace.

Detached Garage

The detached two-bay garage will provide secure, covered storage for the household's vehicles, together with the small hand tools and equipment required for day-to-day land and garden maintenance, as set out at paragraph 3.3 of the submitted Design and Access Statement, and space for the quad bike/utility vehicle used in the daily management of the herd. This is a modest, functional outbuilding common to virtually all working farm dwellings of this type, and is separate from, and should not inflate, the assessment of the dwelling's own floor area.

Residential Curtilage, Driveway and Turning Area

The residential curtilage, and in particular the scale of the driveway and turning area, should not be assessed against the benchmark appropriate to a standard three-bedroom terraced or semi-detached dwelling with

roadside frontage and two allocated car parking spaces. This is a rural worker's dwelling functionally tied to a working dairy enterprise, sharing part of its access with the farm itself, and its access arrangements must be capable of safely accommodating the vehicles that a farm of this nature genuinely generates.

The resident worker must, at short notice and at any hour, be able to take a 4x4/pick-up and livestock trailer directly from the dwelling to respond to a calving emergency, an injured animal, or a veterinary call-out – the very same emergency-response function that the Council has already accepted as the essential functional need underpinning this application (Design and Access Statement, paragraphs 6.3–6.4). A Land Rover or pick-up towing a typical livestock trailer is commonly in the order of 9–10 metres in overall length, considerably longer than the family car for which a standard residential driveway is designed and requires a correspondingly larger hardstanding and turning head to enter, turn and re-emerge onto the private access in forward gear, consistent with the safe access already committed to at paragraph 10.1 of the Design and Access Statement. Reversing a livestock trailer along a shared farm access, particularly during the hours of darkness when many welfare emergencies arise, would represent an unnecessary and avoidable safety risk to the driver, other farm traffic and any livestock being carried, and cannot reasonably be treated as an adequate substitute for sufficient on-site turning provision.

The dwelling and garage are set back approximately 32 metres and 21 metres respectively from the farmyard boundary (Design and Access Statement, paragraph 8.1), with access taken via the shared farm courtyard and existing private driveway to the A50. The curtilage has been sized to reflect this shared, functional access arrangement, not simply the amenity needs of the resident family. Judged against this context, rather than against the benchmark appropriate to a standard urban or suburban plot, the driveway and turning provision is proportionate, necessary, and directly justified by the same operational and animal welfare considerations that the Council has already accepted as the basis for approving this dwelling in principle.

Overall Proportionality

The gross internal floor area (GIA) of the property has been reduced by approximately 8%. Taken together, a significant proportion of the revised dwelling (166.83m² down to 154.00m² GIA) is accounted for by rooms that are not conventional 'living' accommodation at all – the home office, utility room, pantry and plant room – but which perform specific functions tied directly to the operation of the enterprise. For reference, the Government's Nationally Described Space Standard sets a minimum GIA of between 86m² and 95m² for a single-storey, three-bedroom dwelling depending on bedspace provision. The core residential accommodation proposed – the bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, dining and living space – sits close to that recognised benchmark; it is the addition of the functional office, utility and plant room space, each justified above by direct reference to the operational needs of the enterprise, that accounts for the balance. The dwelling is also single storey throughout, which inherently requires a larger footprint than an equivalent two-storey home to deliver the same habitable accommodation. The same principle applies to the curtilage: it is the functional, farm-related vehicle provision – not excess residential amenity space – that accounts for its scale.

We trust the reduction in gross internal floor area and the above justification demonstrates that the scale of the proposed dwelling has been carefully considered and is directly proportionate to the established functional need already accepted by the Council, rather than reflecting generic or unjustifiably generous market provision. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further, or to provide any additional information that may assist in resolving this point. Given that the principle of development and the functional and financial tests are all agreed, we would respectfully ask that this matter now be resolved so that the application can proceed to a positive determination without further delay.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Plant BSc (Hons) MRICS

Director

Mid West Planning Ltd

phil.plant@midwestplanning.co.uk

On behalf of: Fletcher and Sons, Groby Parks Farm