SELBY RURAL
Chartered Surveyors & Agricultural Valuers

JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF A SMALL DOG EXCERCISE AREA AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

Date: 26th March 2025

LAND OFF B5102

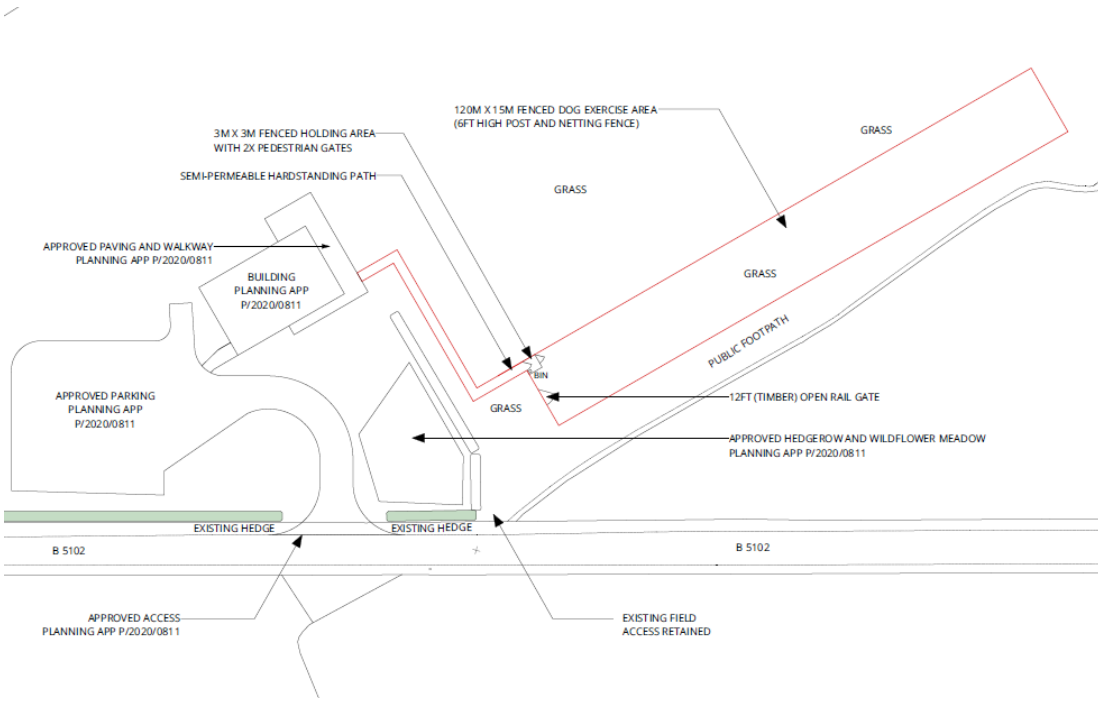
LLAY

WREXHAM

LL12 0AB

On Behalf of Messrs Jones

Ref: C395



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1. INTRODUCTION

The applicants. Messrs Jones have instructed Selby Rural to produce this report and submit an application for the change of use from a small area of agricultural land to a dog exercise area and its associated works.

This is for the conversion of a small area of agricultural land into a secure grass paddock that will provide local residents and visitors with a safe area to exercise their dogs, to walk and exercise their dogs off-lead, with secure fencing to ensure the dogs are secure.

The site is located along the "*Straight Mile"* B5102 between Rossett and Llay.

The total dog walking area will cover 0.44 acres (0.18 ha) being one single secure paddock. The vast majority of the remaining field area will continue to form part of the existing farming operations, predominantly the growing of maize crops for fodder production.

The access to the site will be via an existing entry point, which meets and exceeds all the necessary regulatory standards, with sufficient visibility in both directions. The change of use is not expected to have any negative impact on the surrounding area.

1.1. Qualifications and Expert Duty

I, Tom Selby, am a rural Chartered Surveyor and fellow member of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and work for the firm Selby Rural. I understand my duties in the preparation of this report and have complied with that duty, and:

I, Carys Studley am a rural Chartered Surveyor and fellow member of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and work for the firm Selby Rural. I understand my duties in the preparation of this report and have complied with that duty.

The substance of the instruction we have received and the information we have been provided with are set out within this report and its appendices.

We act on behalf of farming and rural businesses across North Wales and Cheshire.

1.2. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to fully justify the Planning Application for the farm diversification project. The report will show how this application is fully justified within the contents of the Local and National Planning Policy.

2. PROPOSED SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1. Site Situation

The paddock is to be located in a well screened area, behind existing hedgerows and trees, situated off the highway with existing access and car parking facilities. The site can be seen on the aerial map below:



Figure 1: Proposed Site Location, NB development in the locality has taken place since the last aerial mapping

2.2. Site Details

The site where the dog exercise area is to be located can be seen on the plans included within appendix 1 and 2. The wider farmed area is also included within appendix 4.

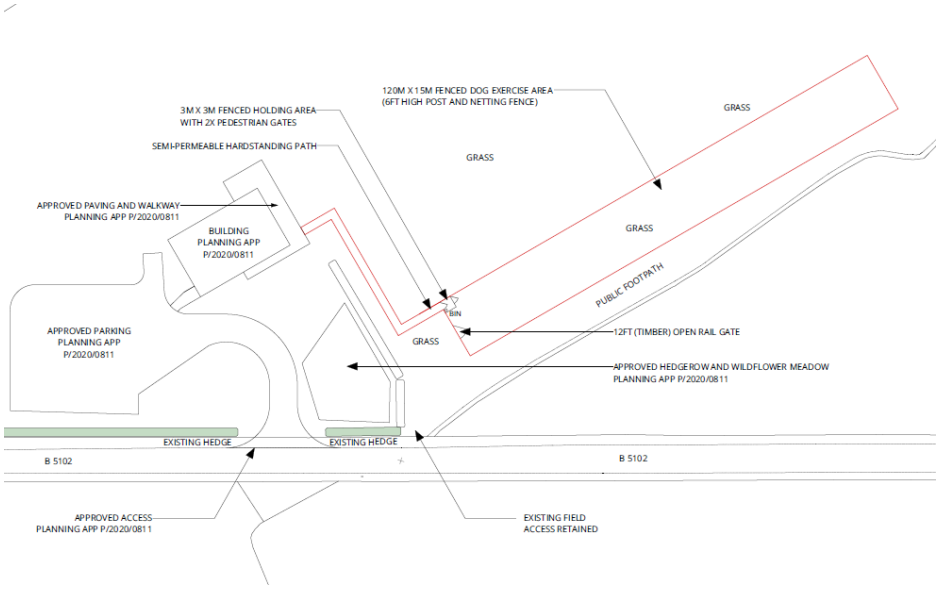


Figure 2: Site Plan

2.3. Reason for the location of the site

The site has been chosen specifically for the following reasons:

- The proposal is not expected to have any negative impact on the site or its surroundings due to the nature of the intended use.
- The scale of the development is very minimal in relation to other business operations, such as the farming enterprise, which is the predominant use of the land.
- The site is very small and will not have a detrimental impact to the farming operations – this small diversification project will work in harmony with the current land use.
- The site is seen as low value in terms of its biodiversity and was an obvious location to use. There will be very minimal impact to the biodiversity on site. This is explored further in the supporting ecological reports.

- The site offers the opportunity to gap up hedgerows adjacent to the site to further screen the paddock. This proposed planting will enhance biodiversity on the site, providing a net gain. Further proposals for mitigation and matters surrounding biodiversity are provided within the supporting ecological report.
- The applicants plan to install secure and appropriate fencing around the site to create a secure paddock, research into the best fencing materials for this type of use has been conducted, noting that the work will be undertaken in accordance with the proposed reasonable avoidance measures (See appendix 5)
- The applicants propose to use existing access on site. As only one person can book the site at any one time, it is predicted that in almost all cases, this will only be one car using the site during any set period. A small car parking area is included within the proposals.
- The proposals work in harmony with the landscaping requirements of the planning consent conditions imposed as part of the Farm Shop consent (ref: P/2020/0811).

3. ASSOCIATED WORKS

3.1. Fencing and Gates

The paddock is proposed to be fenced in an appropriate material that is fit for this specific purpose. The applicants have carried out extensive research and the proposed fencing it to be 6ft high post and netting, to ensure the area is safely and adequately fenced.

3.2. Highways and Car Parking

There will be very minimal effect on the highway as a result of this proposal. The existing access point is proposed to be utilised, which meets the required standards for access, together with an existing car park area.

4. ECOLOGY

The proposed development will have no detrimental effect to wildlife or the surrounding ecology as the area is already a highly intensive agricultural piece of land which receives a large amount of fertiliser to grow the maize crop on an annual basis. This land has been used for maize growing for many years prior and has very little biodiversity.

Due to the intensive agricultural use of the land, the ecological and biodiversity impact of this proposal would be minimal, particularly given that the site extends to 0.44 acres (0.18 ha).

The supporting ecological report and habitat plan has been provided to evidence the minimal impact the proposal will have on the site and also put forward the proposals to deliver any Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB).

The proposed dog exercise area is not likely to impact on habitats or protected species. The conversion of arable land to permanent grassland is positive especially for soil biology.

There are opportunities for wildlife enhancement to build upon those already underway from the previous farm shop development. The proposed new habitats will strengthen what is already present and extend the core wildlife habitat area around the farm shop and nearby ponds, it will create a link between two hedgerows.

Biodiversity Net Gain will be delivered by the creation of:

- 0.25ha of wildflower meadow.
  Enhancement of 270m of native hedgerow from poor condition to good condition species rich hedgerow.
- Planting of 10 trees.
- Provision of 4 bird boxes and 4 bat boxes.

Furthermore, the proposal will not increase phosphorus runoff into the catchment area, as waste will be managed and disposed of in an efficient manner.

Further details can be found within Appendix 5 with copies of the full report.

5. CONTROL OF WASTE

Dog waste will be promptly collected, bagged in individual waste bags, and placed in designated dog waste bins. These bins will be very clearly labelled and placed in prominent positions. The proposal is to have a bin at the exercise area and another at the car park.

It is proposed that this sealed bin will be double-bagged before being transferred to a waste container, which will be left out for collection on the appropriate morning by a licensed waste disposal service.

The proposed waste management plan for this project is detailed below:

Picking up of the waste: Each owner will be responsible for picking up and putting the faeces in the bins provided from their own dog, this is something that is laid out in the terms and conditions when the field is booked via the website, and there will be signage at the gate and near to the waste bins too, saying *"All dog waste is the responsibility of the owner, please pick up and place in the bins provided"*

At the end of each day or after the last booking has left the field, the applicants will undertake a check of the field also and pick up and waste that may have been missed or left by users of the field. All waste must be collected in bags and put into the cadies provided. The cady bins in the field will be emptied daily.

Waste Collection: A contract for the collection of the waste is proposed to be set up with a specialist company, such as "Pet Waste Solutions" a commercial animal Waste removal company. Within the contract it has been agreed that they will provide cady bins to put by the gate of the field and one on near the car park, for users to put their waste into, these will be emptied on a daily basis into a 140 litre wheelie bin provided again by "Pet Waste Solutions" Pet Waste Solutions are contracted to empty the large wheelie bin every 3 weeks, on a specified agreed day of the week, yet to be agreed due to the fact the applicants are not actively in business yet. The caddy's and the wheelies bins are specific for dog waste only and another bin will be provided for all other waste, emptied again daily. The applicants have a general waste contract in place for the farms existing business with Veolia Waste Management.

6. FARM DIVERSIFICATION

This proposal is a small-scale farm diversification project. The applicants have carried out extensive research into various diversification options, the family determined that this change of use is the most sustainable and suitable for their location. This is not only as the business proposal would meet the demand within the locality, but also as it is a management diversification to be operated as part of the wider farming business.

The applicants have visited similar ventures and engaged in detailed discussions with operators. They have also observed that there are very few comparable sites in the local area.

According to DEFRA and the Welsh Government, a diversified enterprise is defined as "*the entrepreneurial use of farm resources for a non-agricultural purpose for commercial gain.*" This includes activities such as non-agricultural contracting, renting buildings for non-agricultural purposes, processing and selling farm products, and using farm resources for tourism, sports, and recreation. On-site energy generation, either for internal use or export to the grid, is also considered a form of diversification.

Rural diversification is becoming increasingly important for those involved in agriculture and rural communities.

As farming, faces growing uncertainty, diversification offers a way to supplement income and improve the financial sustainability of a farm business. It reflects a reduced reliance on agriculture as a primary income source and highlights entrepreneurial efforts by farmers. According to DEFRA's guidance on farm diversification, any activity involving farm resources, such as land or capital previously used for agriculture, would be classified as a diversified activity.

By utilising a very small area of land, which would not have a detrimental impact on the farming operations, the applicants can receive a different income stream other than that dependent on the volatile agricultural markets. This income will be more secure in comparison to that of a farming enterprise which is exposed to extremely high input costs (such as feed, fertiliser, seed and bedding) and the fluctuation and seasonality of milk prices.

The proposal can be managed as part of the family farming business and is very much a typical, small scale farm diversification project.

7. FURTHER JUSTIFICATION – DOG EXERCISING OFF LEAD

It is proposed that all sessions at the dog exercise site will be pre bookable only, via an online booking system.

The sessions will be available in 30 minute slots (of which multiples can be booked if required. i.e two slots provides 60 mins sole use) and any dog owner/carer will only be permitted access after booking a time slot on a bespoke online booking system, which will in turn provide them with a unique code to open the gate. This will be a "one time only" code and will only be able to be used once. By booking a slot, each user will have exclusive access of the site for the allocated time slot.

It is proposed that a Site Management Scheme shall be prepared prior to operating, and shall include details relating to:

- Booking system, with appropriate buffer between users, no use without appointment – Further details on this
- Site rules and signage
- Management of any dog or owner who displays excessive noise, aggressive, destructive or unreasonable behaviour;
- Reporting procedure of any site issues/incidents;
- Biosecurity measures and waste/waste management – please also see details on waste collection/management within this report.

Some of the justification for this farm diversification project has derived from the demand for this type of facility. The following part of this report explores national statics surrounding dog ownership to provide further context to this application.

The number of dog owners continues to rise each year and according to the Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA), in 2024, over half of UK adults own a pet.

28% of these people own dogs, which result in a UK dog population of 10.6 million. There are at least 800 homes within walking distance to the proposed site. If 28% of these people own a dog, based on these statistics, that results in 224 dogs which are now cared for as pets, within walking distance. This is without the need of a car or any other mode of travel.

The PDSA annually prepare the "Paw Report 2024" and statistics show that:

- 92% of dog owners agree that owning a dog improves their life
- 86% state that owning a dog makes them physically healthier

- 88% state that owning a dog makes them mentally healthier

These statistics speak for themselves as to why most dog owners enjoy having a pet and the additional health and wellbeing benefits that are derived from it.

Ensuring that dogs receive the regular exercise they need is ever more important. Off lead walking is very popular and can provide dogs with much of the exercise they need in a shorter period. Furthermore, many public spaces are operated on an "on lead" policy, which further restricts the availability of safe places for dogs to be exercised off lead.

Statistics from the Paw Report 2024, also state that *"Our findings show that the amount of time that dogs are left alone for is continuing to return to the same levels as in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many owners being at home with their pets for longer periods of time"* – The available time owners have therefore to exercise their dogs is limited and such the need and demands for an exercise, off lead area is demonstrated.

Training is also a key component of responsible dog ownership, with recall being one of the most fundamental commands. It is challenging to train this vital skill without access to a secure space where dogs can be off-lead. The proposal will provide just such an environment, offering dog owners the opportunity to train their dogs in a safe and controlled setting, ultimately contributing to better, healthier lives for their pets.

Many dog owners and their pets experience anxiety when in public places due to behavioural issues or poor training, which can often result in staying within their own homes and gardens to avoid causing harm or distress to others. This proposal will offer a safe, secure space where these dogs and owners can exercise freely.

Additionally, dog theft has significantly increased since the pandemic, driven by a surge in demand for puppies. DogLost reported a 250% increase in dog thefts recently. With dogs often stolen for resale, breeding, or ransom, this proposal will provide a secure paddock where owners can always keep their dogs in sight. The site will also implement a booking system to prevent unauthorised access.

The location of the site is in close proximity to large villages and developed areas, and local walks have become increasingly busy, contributing to rising incidents of livestock worrying on the farm holding. The applicants have experienced this issue firsthand, as many footpaths in the area pass through farmland, where dogs, particularly those without sufficient training, may chase livestock.

Given the popularity of the area among dog walkers, the activity on the land is not expected to generate significant noise, and a noise survey is not considered necessary. The clients will provide dog waste bins on-site and will ensure regular collection and disposal. A strict policy will be enforced to ensure all users clean up after their dogs and dispose of waste in the designated bins.

8. HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Upon investigation with CADW, there are no designated sites on or around the application sites. The search included that of Listed Buildings, SSSI, Registered Landscapes, Registered Historic Parkland, Protected Sites and World Heritage Sites.

9. FLOOD RISK

The Development Advice Map and associated planning policy TAN15: Development and Flood Risk is the current framework for assessing flood risk to and from new development. According to the Development Advice Map, this site is Zone A - at little or no risk of fluvial or coastal/tidal flooding. The need for any further assessment on flooding is therefore not required.

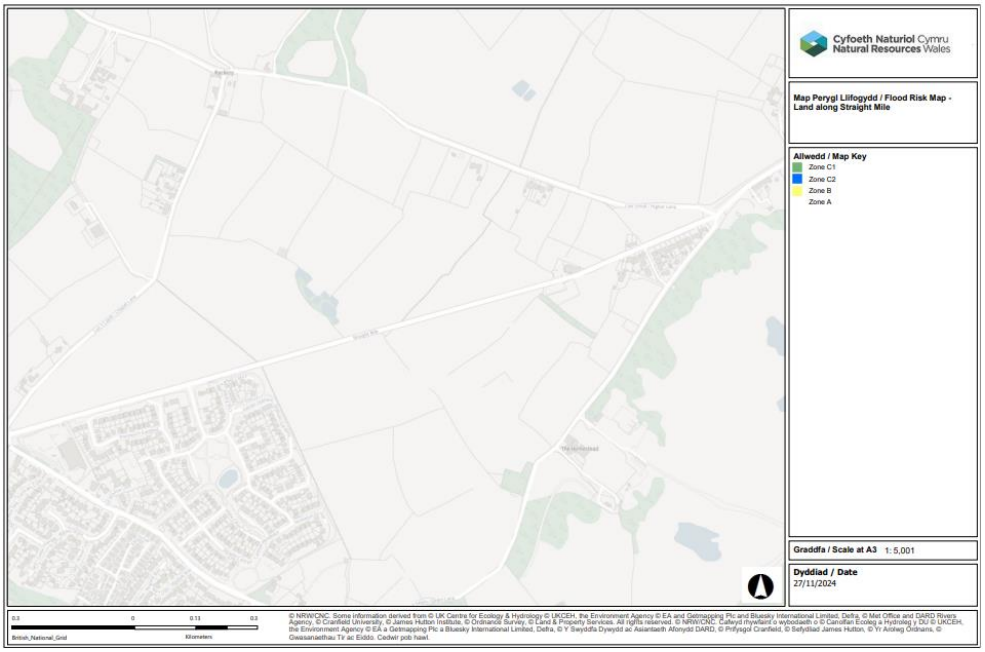


Figure 3: Flood Risk Map showing site within Zone A

10. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

There are no public rights of way crossing the proposed site, or any footpaths which would be affected by the site proposals. Below is an extract of the definitive plan from WCBC showing the nearest footpaths in purple. This further emphasises the network of dog walkers in the area that can access the site from the existing highway after using one or many of the below footpaths in the locality.

The footpath LLA/3 is near to the proposed site. There will be approximately 10m channel between the roadside hedge and the perimeter fence of the paddock, to enable to footpath to continue being used without any interference.

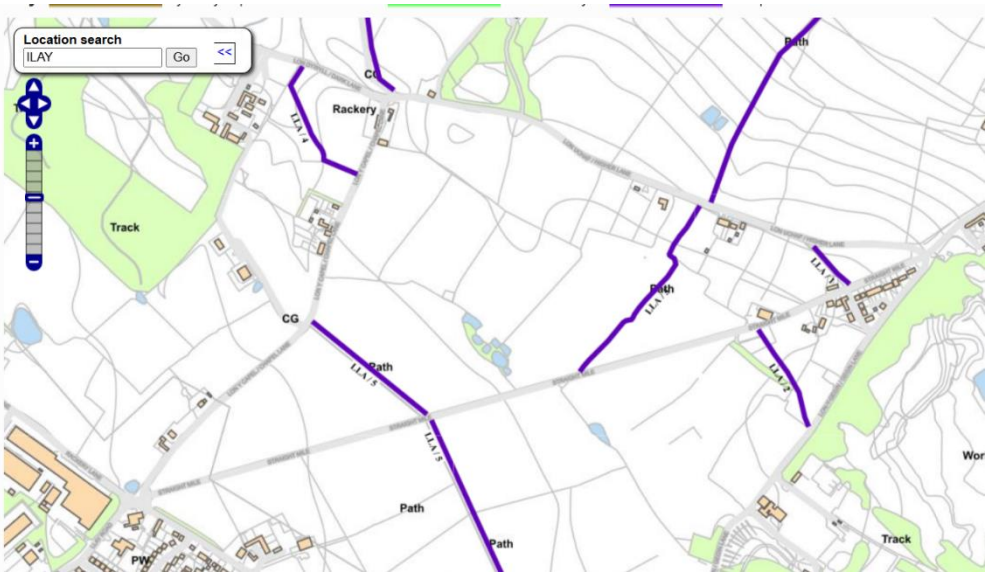


Figure 4: Extract from WCBC Definitive Map

11. PLANNING POLICY CONTENT

This section of the report will highlight how this proposal fits within the national, regional and local planning policy, referencing the relevant policy numbers and their key policy messages.

- National Planning Policy - Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11 February 2021) Chapter 7 - Supporting the Economy.

  The term economic development is defined by Welsh Government as "*development of land and buildings for activities that generate wealth, jobs and incomes*". Economic land uses include the traditional employment land uses (offices, research and development, industry and warehousing), as well as uses such as retail, tourism, and public services. The construction and energy sectors are also important to the economy and are sensitive to planning policies.

It is essential that the planning system considers, and makes provision for, the needs of the entire economy and not just those uses defined under parts B1-B8 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order. Policies on other economic sectors are also found elsewhere in Planning Policy Wales: in relation to Retail and Town Centres (Chapter 10); Tourism, Sport and Recreation (Chapter 11) and Infrastructure and Services (Chapter 12).

The planning system should support economic and employment growth alongside social and environmental considerations within the context of sustainable development.

To this end, the planning system, including planning policies, should aim to ensure that the growth of output and employment in Wales as a whole is not constrained by a shortage of and for economic uses. Local planning authorities should aim to facilitate the provision of sufficient land required by the market, except where there are good reasons to the contrary. In addition, wherever possible local planning authorities should seek to guide and control economic development to facilitate regeneration and promote social and environmental sustainability.

In so doing, they should aim to:

- co-ordinate development with infrastructure provision;
- support national, regional, and local economic policies and strategies;
- align jobs and services with housing, wherever possible, so as to reduce the need for
- travel, especially by car;
- promote the re-use of previously developed, vacant and underused land; and deliver physical regeneration and employment opportunities to disadvantaged communities.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)

TAN 6 states that strong rural economies are essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. A strong rural economy can also help to promote social inclusion and provide the financial resources necessary to support local services and maintain attractive and diverse natural environments and landscapes.

Paragraph 25 under Development Related to Farm Diversification states the following:

'Small on-farm operations such as food and timber processing and food packing, together with services (e.g. workshop facilities, equipment hire and maintenance) to other farms, sports and recreation services, and the production of non-food crops and renewable energy, should be encouraged. Local planning authorities should, however consider the nature and scale of activity that would be appropriate.'

Local Planning Guidance Note 32 – Biodiversity & Development

The above planning guidance note provides further detail in relation to the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity on an application site. With reference to relevant policy, please see below the commentary as to why this proposal meets within the criteria of the policy.

Policy	Description	Commentary
Policy PS2	Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.	The proposals for this site do not materially affect the countryside, landscape, character or quality of the natural environment.
Policy PS11	Encouragement will be given to proposals which improve the biodiversity value of sites and to the establishment of local nature reserves where the nature conservation and landscape interest of the land will be protected and enhanced.	The proposals within this application include the planting of a "multispecies herbal grass ley" together with the gapping up on adjacent hedgerows.
Policy EC4	Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted.	The proposals include no loss or damage to significant trees and furthermore, the proposal will include a scheme of "gaping up" hedges on the hedgerow adjacent to that of the exercise area. In fact there is proposals to establish more trees on site to increase habitat and biodiversity.
Policy EC6	Development either within or close to sites of biodiversity interest will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature	This site is believed to not have a high level of biodiversity interest. As above, enhancement measures are proposed. This is evidenced in the

	conservation value of the site. Where such development is permitted, damage should be kept to a minimum, and compensatory measures should be provided. Measures to improve the biodiversity value of sites and enhance their natural conservation interest and landscape quality including the establishment of local nature reserves, will be supported	supporting Ecological reports.

12. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is urged that the planning authority support this farm diversification project. In its nature, this is a small scale, manageable farm diversification opportunity which will bring an additional income to the farm business.

There is a clear demand for such facility and the well thought our plan for waste control, efficient booking and management of this project will ensure that the facility will sustainably and safely serve the needs and demands of many of the dog owning population, which can be evidenced through the recent surveys referenced in this report.

By utilising existing hardstanding and access, this proposal includes a very small, 0.44 acre loss of farmland, however will be sown to grass. Together with the installation of bespoke fencing and gate system, this project is a feasible, yet sustainable addition to the farm.

Very little impact on biodiversity will be had. The proposals include many additional measures which in fact increase the biodiversity of the area, producing more habitat for invertebrates, and farmland birds by providing more and joining up existing hedgerows, pondscapes and other habitats and also providing the multispecies grass ley with a variety of flowers and herbs.