

**PLANNING APPLICATION
Ref (P/2020/0738)**

**JUSTIFICATION & SUPPORT STATEMENT FOR ESSENTIAL FARM
WORKERS DWELLING**

Applicant

Mr I C Edwards & Mrs A L Edwards.

Oaks Farm, Bronington, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 3EU

Application Location

Halan Y Ddaear, Higher Lanes, Higher Wych, Malpas, SY14 7JT

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LOCATION Fig 1



1. Introduction

Will Phillips of P&L AgriConsulting has been instructed by Messrs Edwards of Oaks Farm to prepare a statement to provide information to support and justify the application for an essential farm workers dwelling at Halan Y Ddaear, Higher Wych. This is additional information to that already submitted with the application.

The basis of the application is that it should meet planning policy objectives on both a national and local basis. This report shows that there is an **essential need for a new farm workers dwelling** so that the farm can function correctly and provide adequate care for the stock located at Higher Wych.

The term farm workers dwelling is used to indicate that the property is required for that purpose, whoever may be resident in the dwelling, and the primary need is so that the animals at Higher Wych are properly cared for.

The current proposal is that Mr and Mrs Edward re-locate to the proposed property while their daughter, Grace Edwards, will remain at Oaks Farm as she currently manages the dairy herd at Oaks Farm.

The current scale and nature of the enterprise at Higher Wych is such that a responsible person living within sight and sound of the stock is believed to be essential.

The business is well established and employs three family members and a part time herdsman. On occasions and to work round holidays there are part time workers for relief milking and seasonal field operations. The business has a sound financial base and accounts, and budgets can be provided if required.

This report sets out to show that a new dwelling is required because -

1. There is essential need.
2. There are sufficient Standard Labour Units to justify the development
3. The scale of the enterprise requires an additional dwelling.
4. There are no buildings believed to be suitable for conversion on the farm
5. No buildings or dwellings have been sold in the past.
6. No suitable property is available in the area to either rent or purchase.

The application is for -

- A rural enterprise dwelling and garage.

Note - A General Purpose Portal Frame Building for Dairy Youngstock is also planned and an application has been submitted (P/2020/0739) and withdrawn pending additional information. It is intended for this application to be re-submitted in due course

2. Site and Location

The site for the proposed dwelling is adjacent to the existing building. This is a stable type building which is used to shelter dairy youngstock. The south boundary is the road 'Higher Lanes'. Where a large mature hedge determines the boundary.

Other boundaries are hedges located in open fields. The land is owned and farmed by the applicant.

Photo of the site (from North)

Fig 2



3. Current Farming Operations

3.1 Messrs Edwards farm a total of 339 acres (**137 hectares**).

3.2 The farm consists of the dairy herd located at Oaks Farm, Bronington. This is 80 acres (32 hectares). The business milks **120 dairy** cows at Oaks Farm and rears baby calves 0-3 months with average numbers per year at circa 50. The enterprise is run by Grace Edwards who has recently taken over the management of the dairy unit.

Milk is sold to Arla Dairies and the farm also sells its own ice cream directly to customers and local retailers. The ice cream business (Oaks Farm Ice Cream) has been very successful and there are options to expand in the future securing jobs in the local rural community.

Labour

The farm business employs 3 family members plus a part time herdsman and also part time staff for relief milking and seasonal field work.

3.3 Additional land, totalling 86 acres (34.8 hectares), is rented which provides summer grazing and is cut for silage and forage crops.

3.4 Land at Higher Wych - (Proposed Location)

The largest block of land farmed is at Higher Wych - the location for the proposed development. This consists of 176 acres (71 hectares).

Cropping is predominantly grassland, with some catch cropping mainly for re-seeding due to outwintering of cattle. (e.g. stubble turnips / swedes)

Stock numbers are shown below in Table 1

The stock kept at Higher Wych consist of dry cows, bulling and in-calf heifers, younger dairy heifers and beef animals including in-calf heifers which will calve in 2022. TB regulations allow movements from the dairy herd at Oaks Farm to Higher Wych and cows and maiden heifers can return to join the dairy herd when they have calved- otherwise all movement is restricted.

Overall the stock kept at the Higher Wych land totals the equivalent of approximately 149 Livestock Units (LSU) which results in a stocking rate of 2.1 LSU's per hectare. This indicates that the business has a reasonable stocking rate and cannot considered as intensive.

The total stock including the cows at Oaks Farm bring the stock numbers to 244 LSUs and allowing for all the land including the rented ground (137 hectares) results in a stocking rate of 1.78 LSU per hectare.

This would indicate that the land is farmed on the basis of an average stocking rate and the land to animal ratio is the equivalent of more than one acre per adult cow.

Table I below shows the stock numbers and conversion to Livestock units
The lower section in the table show the calculated stocking rates

Table 1

Stock Numbers and Livestock Units			
			Total
	Av Number	LSU per head	LSUs
Dairy Cows * (circa 25 dry cows	120	1.00	120.00
Dairy Calves 0-6 mths	55	0.35	19.25
Dairy Heifers 6-9 mths	30	0.35	10.50
Dairy Heifers 9-12 mths	30	0.35	10.50
Dairy Heifers 12-24 mths)	60	0.65	39.00
Dairy heifers over 24 monts	0	1.00	0.00
Beef Suckler Cows	0	0.75	0.00
Beef heifers & steers 0-12mths	20	0.35	7.00
Beef heifers & steers 13-24mths	20	0.65	13.00
Breeding Bulls	2	0.75	1.50
Total Cattle	337		220.75
Ewes	200	0.12	24.00
Lambs (overwintering)	0	0.05	0
Total Livestock Units			244.75
Stocking Rates			
	Hectares	LSUs	Stocking Rate
			LSU per Ha
Total Hectares Available	137.00	244.75	1.786
Land at Higher Wych	71.00	149.75	2.109
Stocking Rate at Higher Wych includes 25 Dry cows			

4. Justification as to why a dwelling is required at the proposed site.

There is a building at the site known as the 'Stables' which is used for feed and some very limited accommodation for dairy heifers, dry cows, young calves and sheep. A new heifer building is proposed so that cattle can be housed over the winter. Currently, all animals are outwintered.

This has an adverse effect on the land with potential leaching and surface run-off. Cattle conditions can be far from ideal with valuable stock in excessively muddy conditions when there is adverse weather conditions. This can require re-seeding. The heifer building is also required on animal welfare grounds with animal requiring 'reasonable shelter'.

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB)

Animals are required to remain on the land at Higher Wych due to TB regulations which does NOT allow the movement of animals to other premises. This means that animals grazing at Higher Wych cannot be moved to an alternative location other than for slaughter. (More details can be supplied as required, however this a key consideration in the requirement for a livestock building and an essential dwelling).

Other Accommodation

No other buildings or dwellings are available that could meet the need. As such the construction of a dwelling to support the business is justified and necessary in this case, and complies with the requirements of policy.

5. There is a clear and existing functional need for the dwelling.

There is a need for a manager to be at the Higher Wych site to attend to the animals on a twenty-four-hour basis. The main requirements include -

- **Calving Cows** – this could be up to 50 head based on current numbers including heifers.
- **Beef Cows to calve** - 20 head
- **Lambing** which requires 24-hour monitoring at certain times of the year.
- Attending to calves and younger animals.
- Attending cattle when out at grass especially for high risk conditions such as ‘grass staggers’ (Hypomagnesaemia).
- Attending ewes pre lambing when ‘Twin lamb disease (Pregnancy Toxaemia) is a high risk and common condition.
- Pregnancy diagnosis and watching the dry cows and in calf heifers is also essential. The same applies to the younger heifers due to replace cows in the dairy herd.

The above are key reasons why a suitably experienced person should be available within ‘sight and sound’ of the animals at all times.

The nearest property available is at Oaks Farm is 3 miles away and is the only dwelling available to the business and Grace currently lives with her parents.

Grace is managing the dairy herd and it is appropriate for her to have her own accommodation. It is proposed that Grace will remain at Oaks Farm and Mr and Mrs Edwards will re locate at the new property. By doing this, the business will create a much improved system for the care and welfare of the animals and meet the requirement shown above.

Summary of reasons why it is essential to have a member of the management team on site -

- Calving assistance and supervision.
- Sick cow supervision and administration of treatments.
- Monitoring the animals at times when disease risk is at its highest (pre and post calving)
- Livestock escaping.
- Security

The dwelling needs to be close to the farm buildings allowing:

- Accessibility for calving cows or any animal in need of urgent attention
- Quick response to theft or injury of livestock
- Improved welfare for stock

In Summary

With the prevention of transporting animals back to Oaks Farm due to TB regulations as set out by the Welsh Assembly Government. There is a requirement for animals to be kept at Higher Wych over winter and taking account of the scale of the operation, it is considered that a responsible manager must be on site.

6. Other benefits of the development

Traffic Reduction

A benefit of the proposed development is that it will greatly reduce the amount of both vehicle and agricultural machinery on the road.

Security

There have been accounts of criminal damage, trespassing and dumping of waste in the fields. On one account there had been three gates opened and a fence vandalised (reported to police). Having personnel on site will significantly improve security.

7. The level of labour available to the farm.

(Time Test and Standard Man Days).

The standard man days is a key part of assessing the labour required to run the farm. Table 1 below, shows the livestock currently on the farm (and likely to be in future) and the standard man days required for each enterprise.

This information is supplied by **Agro Business Consultants** (ABC book Nov 2020). It is assumed that a labour unit is one person working 2,200 hours per year or 45 standard working weeks of 39 hours after holidays etc. Plus, an average of 10 hours' overtime for each week.

These total hours are converted into 275 notional **Standard Man Days** of 8 hours.

Table 2 shows that the farm has a standard requirement of **3.53** standard operators.

A further factor to be considered, which is not taken into account in the calculations, is the additional labour required for field work and other farm operations. The above also excludes management time.

It should also be taken into consideration that Mrs Edward is primarily working with the ice cream business and this is not included in the total labour requirement.

Labour requirement Standard Man Days ref ABC - Agro Business Consultants			
Animals	Number	Standard Man Days	Total
		per year	
Dairy Cows	120	4.38	526
Dairy Calves 0-6 mths	55	1.63	90
Dairy Heifers 6-9 mths	30	1.75	53
Dairy Heifers 9-12 mths	30	1.75	53
Dairy Heifers 12-24 mths)	60	1.75	105
Dairy heifers over 24 monts			0
Beef Suckler Cows	0	2.25	0
Beef heifers & steers 0-12mths	20	1.75	35
Beef heifers & steers 13-24mths	20	1.75	35
Breeding Bulls	2		0
Total Cattle	337		
Ewes	200	0.38	76
Lambs (overwintering)	0	0.25	0
Total			971
Standard Man Days per year		275	3.53

ABC suggests an additional 15-20% could be added to account for general maintenance, repairs, and management.

Adding the lower figure of 15% would increase the labour requirement to 4.05 labour units to work on the farm business. This calculation shows that there is a justification for the dwelling based on the labour required.

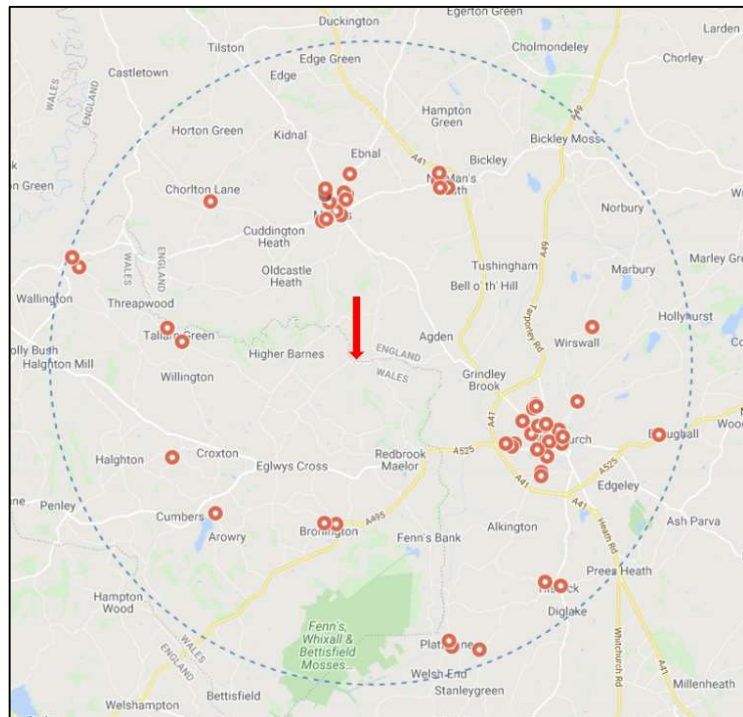
8. Is alternative accommodation available to rent or buy?

(See Fig 3 below showing search results)

In investigating the essential need for an additional dwelling, the option to either rent or purchase a property has been investigated. Local searches have not identified a property to either buy or rent on a long term basis close enough to the farm to meet the criteria of being close to the hub of the enterprise or within site or sound of the animals.

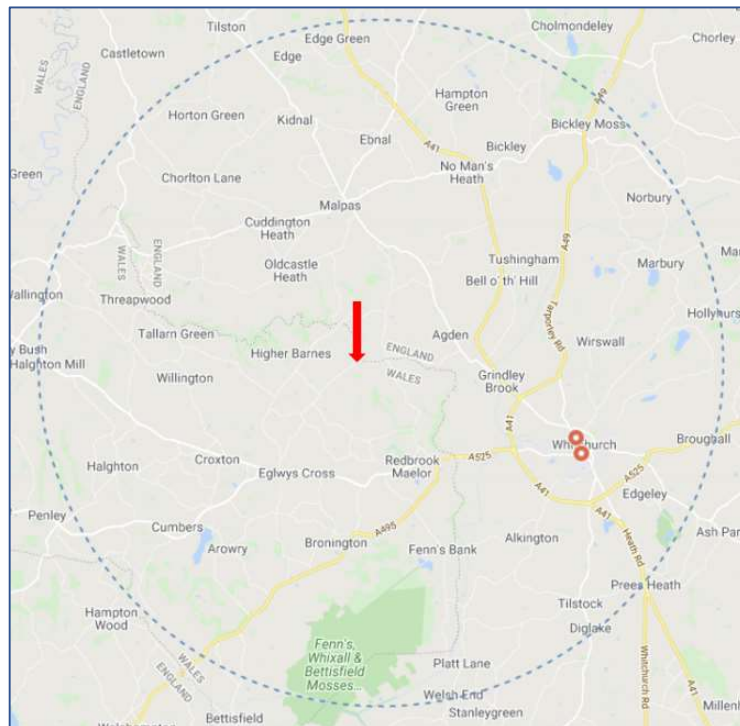
It is therefore not possible to meet the essential need by acquiring local property.

Fig 3 - Search on 'Rightmove' for properties to Purchase 28.1.21 - 5 mile radius from proposed site.



No suitable properties were available to purchase close to the site and not within sight and sound.

Fig 4 - Search on 'Rightmove' for properties to Rent 28.1.21 - 5 mile radius from proposed site (2- 4 beds)



9. Financial Test

The house which they have chosen to build will come under affordable housing. The frame and erection of the initial timber frame costs circa £65,000 and frame erection cost £11,000

Business Viability

There are accounts that are available as required with forward business plans.

10. Conclusion

This report has looked at the requirements primarily for the animals kept at the land at Higher Wych and the essential need for a dwelling.

Due to TB restrictions and movement orders, the animals cannot be simply moved to alternative accommodation even if is available.

With around 150 Livestock units at Higher Wyche - equivalent to 190 head of cattle, plus 200 sheep, I believe there is a very sound case for an experienced person to be on site especially to assist with calving and lambing.

The need to travel from Oaks Farm several times per day is not environmentally friendly but it is also inefficient as stock welfare issues can be missed.

Grace Edwards is a young farmer looking to develop the business in exciting ways that will enhance both the countryside and the general environment. I believe it is essential that young people are encouraged to get into farming, and it is certainly a key cross cutting theme with the 'Farming Connect Programme in Wales.

It should also be considered reasonable that Grace should have her own accommodation and should she be required to stay at Oaks farm with her parents.

This development is in keeping with local and national planning policy and will allow the farm to develop.

Will Phillips

28 January 2021

Appendix 1 Proposed Site Plan

Proposed Site Plan at Lower Wych - (indicative only)

