

# **A Planning Statement and Agricultural Appraisal in relation to an Outline Application for a Rural Workers Dwelling at Lees House Farm, Cow Ark, Lancashire BB7 3DG**

## **Introduction**

This application relates to a proposed new farm dwelling for Miss Zoe Swingler who has recently taken over the tenancy of 140 acres of land and buildings at Lees House Farm, Cow Ark.

## **Background**

Lees House Farm extends to 140 acres of pasture land approximately 10 miles north west of the town of Clitheroe.

Miss Zoe Swingler, the Applicant, has recently taken on the tenancy of the land and buildings under a Farm Business Tenancy. The farm has been let without a farmhouse and it is necessary for the tenant to have a dwelling on the farm to enable her to run the farming business efficiently and successfully. The Applicant currently lives in a property in Clitheroe, some 10 miles distant, in order for her to manage the farm and care for the stock, it is not possible or indeed viable financially or environmentally for her to travel a 20 mile round trip numerous times a day.

As well as farming the land with sheep and cutting for hay and silage, it is the Applicant's intention to diversify the farming business alongside the farming enterprise to include an equine rehabilitation centre.

## **The Proposal**

Up until the current tenancy commenced, the land has been farmed with sheep with an annual cut of hay. The land lies low and is prone to be wet and therefore not suited to arable cropping or over wintered grazing. The land is most suited to spring/summer grazing with stock housed over wintered in the farm buildings as necessary. The Applicant will be continuing the traditional livestock farming on the land along with the diversification business proposed which is an expansion of an existing business run by the Applicant, as detailed further within this report.

### **a. The Farming Business**

The farming enterprise will be based around a flock of 50 breeding ewes which will lamb in March/April each year. These ewes will be mules that can either lamb indoors or outdoors depending on the weather conditions each year. The lambs will be either sold as store lambs.

The sheep enterprise will work in harmony with the equine proposal being a low impact system which naturally helps reduce worm burden on the pasture and improves soil fertility and structure.

b. The Equine Business

Of the 140 acres, it is proposed that 10 acres will be designated for the equine rehabilitation centre. This enterprise will be based on and a development of the existing business run by the Applicant. Currently, the Applicant, a trained osteopath who has a degree in Human and Equine Osteopathy, Diploma and Masters in Animal Manipulation and is a member of the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) and Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP) operates an equine osteopathic business which has been established for the last 15 years. This currently is operates regionally with the Applicant visiting horses at their various yards and stables, meaning that over the last three years, taking on more clients has been difficult in order to logistically visit them all.

Taking on the tenancy of the holding at Lees House Farm means that she is able to now provide a fully purpose built centre for visiting equines to come to her either for day treatments or longer term stays for more intense therapy. This has meant that the Applicant is now able to expand her business and take on more clients.

The 10 acres allocated to the equine business will be split into paddocks to allow for individual turnout. One of the existing buildings will be used to create stable and treatment space which will enable Zoe to offer a personal and tailor-made program with one to one communication with a registered Osteopath with over 20 years' experience as well as having other recommended professions on hand such as vets, farriers, equine dentists and saddle fitters. Zoe is also skilled in human practise and can therefore treat both horse and rider.

The location of the farm close to the A59 and M6 means that it is easily accessible for clients across the North West. It is noted that there are other centres offering rehabilitation for equines however none have registered Osteopath/physiotherapist/chiropractor such as the Applicant for ground work, hands on treatment or use of Equi-vibe plate, Low Level Laser Therapy ( LLLT) or Pulsed Electromagnetic Frequency (PEMF).

As well as existing clients, Zoe has a good relationship with many of the local vets and instructors/coaches which means that many of the referrals for treatment come from veterinary practices in the area. Advertising will be through websites, social media. Brochures and clinics. Although currently Zoe provides all of the labour, it is intended that some extra staff would be employed in due course as the business develops.

The facility at Lees House Farm will allow for three residential equine patients at any one time, most of whom will stay for one week at a time at a cost of £265 per week. Day treatments for visiting equines will be charged at £60 per session. More details can be found in the financial forecasts (Appendix 1).

## Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework in Paragraph 79, with regard to rural workers dwellings states that:

*“Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless 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”*

This can be best assessed is by looking back at the requirements of PPS7 Annex A and the Functional Test. The table below sets out the man hour calculation for the business for the first year:

a. Essential need

Enterprise	Number of livestock/acres	Number of Man Hours	Total Man Hours
Ewes	50	4	200
Lambs	75	2	150
Equine Rehabilitation Liveries	3	475	1,425
Farm land	140	2	280
Maintenance and Management		20%	411
Total Man Hours			2,446
<b>Equivalent Standard Man Days (SMD)</b>			<b>1.12</b>

As this is a unique business, the published information relating to man hours does not set out information on diverse rural business such as that of an equine osteopath. The hours shown as the set hours contained with the Agricultural Budgets and Costing guide for a livery stables. As previously explained, the business is much more specific and intense than a standard livery yard. The figures above therefore only provide an illustration of the work hours that the applicant will need to put in. Aside from the standard livery work of turning horses out, mucking out, feeding, bedding down, checking water, bringing in, grooming and rugging, specialist treatments and exercises will be carried out throughout their stay. The labour is currently provided solely by the Applicant.

The horses staying at Lees House Farm will be recuperating or recovering animals and therefore most susceptible to illness or problems. As part of offering physical rehabilitation, a first class livery service is also provided with care being over and above what would be considered a standard full livery package. Each horse will have its own specific needs met both medically and nutritionally to aid its recovering. The expertise on offer allows for a full treatment schedule to be intensively delivered over the stay of the animal rather than traditional sporadic visits thus delivering better results.

By nature of the treatment, it is often higher value equines that will be accommodated at the centre and therefore being on site is paramount to gaining customers.

The farming business particularly relies on careful monitoring of the stock not just at lambing time but all year round. It is also important to monitor the ewes' health closely, to ensure they do not become over or underweight and to be able to treat any that become sick. For example, twin-lamb disease is a common problem and has to be treated quickly to avoid long-term effects to the ewe and her lambs.

At lambing time, ewes often lamb at night and therefore need 24 hour attention. After a lamb is born, it is vital that it receives colostrum from the ewe straight away. This provides all of the essential nutrients and antibodies that the lambs need to fight infections such as pneumonia and joint ill. The navel is treated with iodine as soon as possible after birth to prevent infection. This quick and effective routine so soon after birth ensures a low mortality rate in both ewes and lambs. It is necessary for the Applicant to observe the lambs several times a day as young lambs are susceptible to a number of diseases, most commonly scour and watery mouth. Since the success of a livestock enterprise is dependent on the progeny the Applicant needs to be on site to minimise losses.

Outside of the lambing season, the sheep need regular treatments for parasites and worms as well as shearing, foot trimming and tailing. Lambs need to be vaccinated and also weighed regularly to ensure they are on the best diet.

Annually, a crop of hay or silage will be taken, providing around 400-500 bales. Some of these will be sold to provide income and some kept to feed the stock and horses over the winter months.

b. Alternative residential properties

The welfare of the equines and the cattle and sheep on the holding mean that it is impossible for the Applicant to continue living in Clitheroe, a 20 mile round trip from the farm. It is necessary for the Applicant to live on site. We have researched other properties for sale in the area on Rightmove and note that the nearest properties (within 2 miles of the farm) for sale are priced at £900,000 - £1.1 million. These properties are not only too far from the holding but are unaffordable to a rural worker. The area is well known for commanding high house prices which make purchase and rent out of the question for a rural worker.

c. Financial justification

The forecast profit and loss accounts attached at show that the business is both established and future expansion is planned on a sound financial basis.

Year One is based on 6 equine rehab liveries alongside the sheep showing a profit of £10,955. Year Two shows the equine business growth with 9 rehabilitation spaces and a profit of £12,100. Year Three shows further growth with a profit of £13,570.

**Location and siting of the proposed dwelling**

It is proposed that the dwelling will be located close to the existing buildings in the centre of the holding and accessed via an existing hardcore track. The location of the dwelling immediately adjacent to the buildings and the paddocks, means that the Applicant is within sight and sound of the stock at all times.

***February 2020***