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21 April 2021

Ms E Showan
Planning, Growth & Sustainability
Buckinghamshire Council
King George V House
King George V Road
Amersham
Buckinghamshire HP6 5AW

Dear Emma

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE PL/21/0130/FA – LAND AT MAGPIE LANE, COLESHILL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, HP7 0LU.

I am writing in respect of the above application and your instructions to provide an assessment of the proposed development.

I have seen the application documentation including the report prepared by Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC) dated January 2021.

I have undertaken an unaccompanied site visit on the 23 March so I have made my own observations and note the physical characteristics of the site.

The application is for the provision of a mobile home and new agricultural building.

The site itself extends to approximately 6 hectares (14.83 acres) and currently comprises grassland with areas of old soft fruit bushes. The site itself slopes up from Coleshill Lane to the South where there is an existing gated access. I note from the submission that a new access is proposed further along Coleshill Lane opposite Ongar Hill Cottage.

The background to the application is explained in Section 2 of the RAC report and in brief involves the development of a 250 doe free-range rabbit unit selling mainly meat and some by products into markets within surrounding counties including Greater London. The rabbits would be reared in outdoor hutches and have access to pens on a rotational basis.

It is stated that the enterprise will require a full-time worker and given the functional requirements including welfare and security, they will need to be resident on site.

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Necessity to Live On Site

Based on the submitted documents, particularly the RAC report, I am prepared to accept the need to live on site. Clearly, there would be potential welfare and security issues and given the levels of stocking, certainly by Year Three, I would also accept that it represents a full-time entity.

I might have been initially less convinced if this was just an isolated 'one off' unit but given the applicant has developed another at Granby over the past ten plus years I have more confidence that they have the requisite skills and marketing ability to develop/sustain the business at the Coleshill site.

There will clearly however be the need for significant investment in developing the business in the form of on-site operations such as fencing, provision of external runs and hutches, provision of agricultural building and new access track and likely services.

I would recommend a suitable condition therefore that the mobile home is only permitted on completion of these preliminary works prior to stocking.

Degree of Confidence regarding Viability

The financial basis is discussed in Section 4, Paragraph 4.22, of the RAC report. This refers to the viability of the Granby site and although I have not seen actual accounts, these support a net profit of approximately £30,000 per annum based on a similar size unit. Additionally, reference is made to figures in John Rix Farm Management handbook, which is widely recognised as being sound general analysis.

The Applicant's financial accounts does, in my opinion, also adequately cover other items such as return on capital expenditure, a notional rent and an amortised cost of any dwelling.

There also needs to be sufficient funds to cover an agricultural wage, even if this is taken at the lower end of the wage spectrum.

Again, given the Applicant has established markets/outlets together with the ability to generate new ones (closer to London), I am reasonably satisfied in principle of the viability/sustainability based on an approximately average £30,000 net profit. Obviously, the business concept will need time to develop but in my view, I consider the proposal realistic, although ultimately this can of course be re-assessed after any three year period.

Please contact me should you need to discuss the proposal further.

Yours sincerely



Roland Thomas MRICS
Rural Planning Consultant