

Planning, Design & Access Statement

Long Meadow Farm, Edneys Hill

Wokingham

RG41 4DS

Full Application for Proposed
Partial Change of Use of Land
From Agricultural To
Secure Recreational Area For
Dog Owners & Dog Carers
Including Erection of Associated
Fencing, Sheds and Gates

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared to support a planning application which is submitted by Mr. & Mrs. S.R. Beech.

The application relates to a change of use from an agricultural field, to a secure recreational area for use by dog owners and dog carers.

- 1.1 Following the demise of the Pig Industry, Mr & Mrs Beech are looking at ways to diversify and provide alternative income streams for the farm as they near retirement.

There is a strong need and demand in the local area, for creating a secure area for dogs that for various reasons cannot be let off the lead in a public environment, as well as for their owners and carers.

- 1.2 The applicant has prepared the necessary health and safety policy for the operation of the site for the proposed use.

The proposed use would enable dog owners and carers of dogs to spend anxiety free time with their dogs in a secure open space.

The proposal would also offer a quiet and safe place for the disabled, elderly and those with learning difficulties to enjoy time with their dogs in a secure environment.

It is aimed particularly at those dogs that are sensitive and perhaps cannot be let off the lead in a public environment, or dogs who require some training by owners in a restricted environment.

- 1.5 These facilities are becoming increasingly popular throughout the UK. Information on dog walking facilities available to the public can be found on web sites such as www.dogwalkingfields.com. as well as face book links. There are numerous sites within a 10-mile radius of the application site, each one offering a secure and unique environment.
- 1.6 Investigations suggest that the use of the site for the specified purpose, does not fall within any one specific use class and it is therefore considered that it is a 'sui generis' use.

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposal is for the change of use of part of a field, from agriculture and livestock grazing, to the use as a safe and secure recreational area for dog walking. The enclosed field area would measure 1 ha, and would be enclosed by a 2.1m high Dog proof fencing on pressure treated wooden posts.

2.2 The proposed use would be accessed through an existing five bar gate from the farmhouse driveway. There are adequate parking spaces on the farmhouse driveway.
To access the secure enclosures, users will park in the farmyard and walk their dogs to the enclosures and enter through a security gate. Alternatively, users can arrive for pre-booked sessions on foot, with dogs on leads.

2.3 The field would be sub divided to allow two sessions to run concurrently.

The use of the facility will operate on an hourly booking system.
Bookings will be made via phone or via a web site.

2.4 The facility would be available Monday – Saturday, From 7am until dusk during the Summer months, with the latest booking at 8pm.
During the Winter months opening hours would be from 8am - 4.30pm.

3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

3.1 Long Meadow Farm is situated in the middle of Edneys Hill.
It lies on the southern side of the road.
Edneys Hill is a double-width road with no footpath or street lighting.
It is regularly used by dog walkers, cyclists and horses.

3.2 Access to the site can be made from a number of directions.
From either end of Edneys Hill or on foot from the three public footpaths which converge on the farm boundary.

3.3 There are a number of Residential, agricultural and business properties along Edneys Hill.

3.3.1 The site is screened from the road by a mature native boundary hedge

4 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant policies of the Adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies taken as a whole.
- 4.3 The application site lies within the Wokingham Borough. The relevant Development Plan Documents are Adopted Core Strategy (January 2010) and the Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (February 2014).
- 4.4 Other documents relevant to the proposal are the Councils Landscape Character Assessment (March 2024), and the Supplementary Planning Document: Borough Design Guide (June 2012).
- 4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (Revised July 2018) sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these should be applied. There is specific guidance with regards to supporting the rural economy.
- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the Local Development Plan. **The Managing Development Local Delivery Plan CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough, will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.**

CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

- 4.6 **Policy CP1 Sustainable Development** grants development that maintains and enhances the overall sustainability of the area through minimizing the impact on the environment.
Development must not adversely affect the quality of life for all users.
Criteria includes, minimizing pollutants, including noise, recycling of water and waste, avoiding best and most versatile agricultural land, providing attractive, functional, accessible, safe secure and adaptable schemes.
- 4.7 **Policy CP2 Inclusive Communities** ensuring development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities, and planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of all sections of the population, whether it be the elderly and their continued wellbeing, children, young people and families and people with special needs, including those with physical, sensory or learning disabilities.
- 4.8 **Policy CP3 General Principles of Development** seeks to ensure a high standard of design that lists a comprehensive set of criteria including; that is appropriate in scale and form without detriment to neighbouring land users, provide a functional, accessible, safe and secure scheme, has no detrimental impact upon ecological, landscape, or water courses.
- 4.9 **Policy CP6 Managing Travel Demand** planning permission will be granted where appropriate car parking is provided, does not cause highway safety issues or traffic related environmental problems and which minimises distance people need to travel.
- 4.10 **Policy CP7 Biodiversity** The importance of the sites for nature conservation will dictate the degree of protection given and appropriate mitigation measures will be agreed where the development is considered acceptable.
- 4.11 **Policy CP9 Scale and Location of Development Proposals** regard will be given to the cumulative impact of all proposals during the plan period with regard to these limits.
The aim is to achieve balanced communities and sustainable development.

4.12 Policy CP11 Proposals Outside Development Limits (including countryside).

This policy seeks to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment.

Proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted **except where it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises, or where it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the countryside.**

MANAGING DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY PLAN

4.13 Policy CC01 Presumption in Favor of Sustainable Development.

Planning applications that accord with policies in the Development Plan will be approved without delay.

Where there are no policies to the application, or policies that are out of date, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations dictate otherwise.

If adverse impacts of development would demonstrably outweigh the benefits, and secondly, specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

4.14 Policy CC07 Parking Development will only be approved where parking standards can be met and where adequate off-street parking can be provided.

4.16 Policy TB21 Landscape Character

Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Councils' Landscape and Character Assessment, and any proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

4.17 Policy TB23 Biodiversity and Development, understanding the importance of ecological habitats and providing opportunities to improve areas of nature conservation value.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (2018)

4.18 The revised NPPF adopted in July 2018, supports creating a prosperous economy, and encouraging the diversification of Agricultural land and Rural Business.

At paragraph 8 it states:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas.**
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.**
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments, which respect the character of the countryside.**

5. CONSIDERATION

PRINCIPLE

5.1 The proposed development, where planning applications have been requested by Local Planning Authorities, would be considered a sui generis use.

Within Wokingham Borough's Development Policy Documents, there are no specific policies that include the principle.

Policy TB21 states that proposals should *'retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape'*

Policies CP1 and CP3 seek to maintain high quality environments and ensure that development is appropriate in scale and form and not detrimental to other users, or the character and quality of the landscape.

5.2 Policy CP11 seeks to maintain the quality of the environment. Proposals outside the Development Limits will not normally be permitted, except where:

'it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes to and promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the countryside.'

5.3 The proposed use, by its very nature and location is a 'non-urban use', the site is in a countryside location. The intention is to provide a safe environment, a large open space, but enclosed and secure, away from the hustle and bustle of urban living, roads and other dogs.

5.4 The proposed use would provide a quiet, informal recreational use. The use does not result in any cumulative increase that results in a significant increase in the level of use in the of the countryside in this locality. The controlled use of the land that permits a maximum number of dogs at one time ensures that the nature and use of the countryside is protected. The secure field where the use would operate is screened from the road.

The only public views into the site would be from the public footpath to the west of the site boundary.

There is no physical change to the landscape character.

This is set out further below.

5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that decisions should enable leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. This proposed use is an informal recreation use, providing a secure dog walking environment in a rural location.

Paragraph 84 requires that development is '*sensitive to its surroundings*', and '*does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads*'.

This proposal would case neither, it is a low intensity use, which by its very location benefits from being in a rural location.

5.6 The NPPF seeks opportunities to make locations more sustainable. This use is sustainable, as it is in close proximity to a number of settlements in the local catchment area. The users would be on the roads anyway, seeking out and driving to suitable locations for their dog walking needs. This proposed use would provide a much-needed facility. It should also be noted that a few users would arrive on foot via the public footpath network, walking their dogs on leads to the field.

- 5.7** The importance that these facilities could offer to certain sections of the population cannot be underestimated. Policy CP2 seeks to ensure that their needs are met by permitting development. The dog walking field would provide an excellent location for those who are disabled, elderly or have injuries and require a quiet, private location to relax and exercise their dogs.
- 5.8** It is considered that the proposal would not conflict with the policies set out above and the principle of the proposal is acceptable.
- 5.9** The erection of fences within the existing boundaries of the fields, constitutes development and thus requires planning permission.
Permission is available under Article 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, the proposal being in accordance with Schedule 2 (Part 2) (Class A) of the order.
- 5.10** The proposed siting of two mobile sheds connected with the provision of dog walking facilities, does not amount to operational development as they would not be fixed to the ground and would therefore would not amount to a material change of use.
The mobile sheds are required in connection with the use of the site for the provision of dog walking services for shelter from adverse weather conditions. The shed would be re-purposed from an existing redundant pig rearing sheds which are already on site.
The mobile shed would be on timber skids and not attached to the ground.
The mobile shed would be removed from the site if the use of the site for dog walking was to cease, and the use of the land returned to agriculture.
- 5.11** The applicant would seek to obtain a **Day Care for Dogs License** from the Local Authority Wokingham Borough Council.
This comes under **The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018.**

VISUAL IMPACT ON THE COUNTRYSIDE

- 5.12** The proposed use of the site for the secure dog walking field will require the erection of stock proof fencing, within the perimeter of the field.
- The appearance of this type of fencing; wooden posts and wire fencing is totally in keeping with the character of the rural landscape, indeed the neighboring property to the east is already enclosed by such a fence on our boundary.
- Little if any of the fencing would be seen from the outside due to the sloping ground and the enclosed nature of the field.

IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

- 5.13** Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted where there is detriment to amenities of neighbouring land users. It is appropriate to consider amenities of neighbouring properties and land that also use Edneys Hill, given the location of the proposed use and the rural character of Edneys Hill.
- 5.14** In the Introduction and Proposals sections of this report, it has been set out how the business would operate.
- Users of the facility will be required to pre-book online or by phone.
- It will not be possible to just arrive and use the field. In this way there is very strict control over the frequency and intensity of use of the site.
- 5.15** Bookings will be for a one hour slot with a maximum of six dogs at any one time. The expectation is that one or two dogs will arrive in one vehicle. Therefore it follows that there would be no expectation of more than two cars arriving and departing every hour.
- The hourly booking system would not therefore generate a significant increase in the level of activity in this rural location.**
- 5.16** With regards to any possible concerns around noise disturbance, the noise from one or two dogs barking in the countryside would not be unusual.

It is very likely that such noise would generate from casual dog walkers using the rural lane and footpaths in the locality already.

- 5.17** With regards to the disposal of dog waste, there would be facilities within the site, but all users would be encouraged to collect and dispose their dogs waste and take it home for disposal in the appropriate manner.
This will ensure that the field is clean for subsequent users.

HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

- 5.18** The dog walking area would operate on a pre-booking system.
Therefore the number and frequency of vehicle movements would be limited and controlled. As set out previously, booking would be on an hourly basis, and would involve two people with perhaps 4 dogs.
We would set a maximum limit of six dogs at any one time but this would be infrequent.
- 5.19** There is an existing gated access to the field from the driveway and parking areas of the Farmhouse.
Within the site there is ample space for parking and turning of visitors cars, therefore there will be no conflict with other users of the lane.
- 5.20** The submitted block plan, indicates the current and proposed layout, with the parking and turning area clearly identified.
Furthermore the low intensity nature of the proposed use would not generate a significant number of trips to and from the site and **therefore will not result in undue pressure on local infrastructure or highway safety issues.**
There would be no expectation of multiple numbers of vehicles entering or leaving the site at any one time.
The traffic generation of the proposed use, is expected to be less than what might be generated by the site, during its former agricultural use.

FLOOD RISK

The site is located in Flood Risk Zone 1. (Less than 0.1% risk of flooding).

There is no risk of flooding on the site due to its location on the side of a hill.

There are no additional concerns regarding flooding, nor would the provision of dog walking facilities exacerbate any flooding elsewhere in the locality.

ECOLOGY

5.21 A comprehensive Ecological Assessment has been submitted with this application. The report concludes that as no works other than fencing are proposed on the site, there is no impact on the habitat.

There will be no excessive noise created by the proposed use of the site for dog walking.

No new lighting is proposed.

The site already benefits from numerous bird nesting boxes.

6.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SIMILAR APPLICATIONS WITHIN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

App. No. 241425	Land South of Swallowfield Rd	Approved
App. No. 232804	High Barn Church Lane Finchampstead	Approved
App. No. 183140	Kingsbridge Farm Lambs Lane	Approved
App. No. 240059	59A Nine Mile Ride Finchampstead	Approved

7. CONCLUSION

- 6.1** This planning application is submitted by Mr. S.R. & Mrs. R.A. Beech who are the freehold owners of Long Meadow Farm.
The application is in accordance with the policies of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan.
- 6.2** The proposal accords with the policies set out in The National Planning Policy Framework, which support leisure developments, which respect the character of the countryside, and do not have an unacceptable impact upon local roads.
- 6.3** The proposed use would not have a detrimental impact upon the visual character of the countryside and does not impact on the amenities of any neighboring properties or residents.
- 6.4** The proposed use is considered to be low intensity in terms of the Frequency and number of users that are permitted under the hourly booking slot system.
- It does not have an increased impact within the countryside that would warrant the proposal being considered as unacceptable.
- 6.5** **Accordingly, we respectfully request that this application be approved.**