

**PLANIT CONSULTING  
TOWN PLANNING & PROPERTY ADVISERS**

**ROCKWOOD FARM, ROCKWOOD ESTATE, WITLEY, SURREY**

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF FARM BUILDINGS TO FORM NEW BEEF  
REARING SUCKLER UNIT**

**AT  
ROCKWOOD FARM,  
HASLEMERE ROAD  
BROOK  
SURREY**

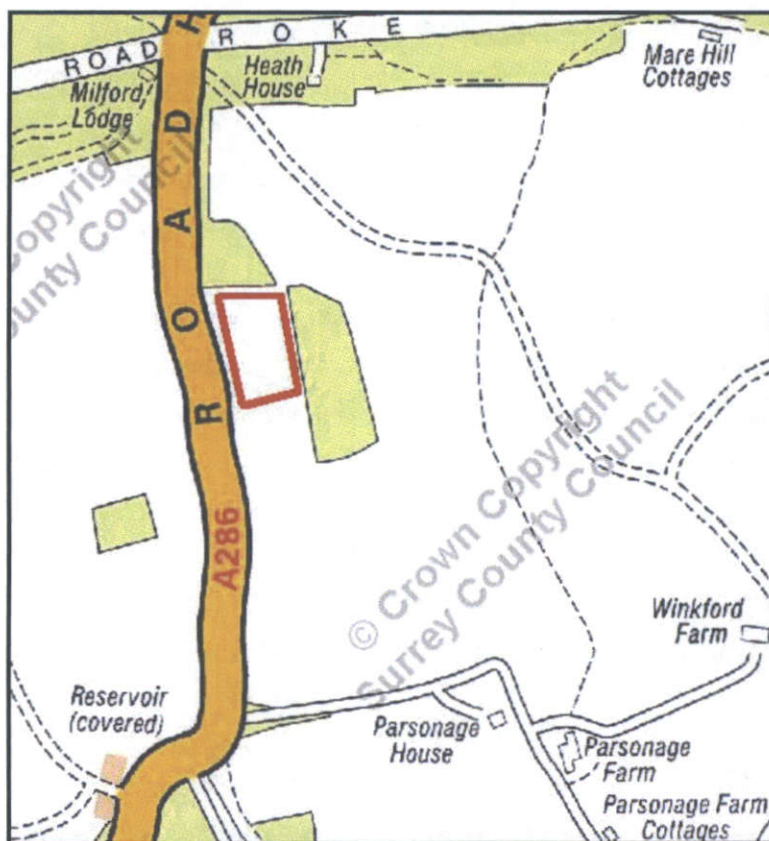
**AUGUST 2016**

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for the construction of agricultural buildings, structures and associated works in support of a new beef rearing suckler enterprise designed specifically for the production of beef cattle. The application is accompanied by an agricultural statement prepared by 'Prism Agriculture Ltd', which explains and provides a justification for the buildings required for the proposed 'beef rearing suckler herd enterprise'. A Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) by 'The Terra Firma Consultancy Ltd' also accompanies the application and has been produced to inform the detailed design and siting of the application and its associated buildings.
- 1.2 In summary, the land forming part of the Rockwood Estate has been farmed for many years, and more recently has been grazed by cattle owned by a tenant farmer. There are no farm buildings serving the land, as buildings which would original have served the land were sold off as they were unsuitable for modern farming use. It is on this basis that a series of new farm buildings are proposed, and which have been designed specifically to accommodate the beef rearing suckler herd enterprise.
- 1.3 This application is accompanied by a series of plans and drawings which illustrate the buildings proposed to be constructed, whilst this statement and accompanying reports provide an explanation and justification for the proposal.

## 2 THE PROPERTY

- 2.1 The Rockwood Estate lies to the north of the village of Brook and is accessed off the Haslemere Road. The farm land extends to 122 hectares, excluding farm tracks and woodland areas. There are currently no agricultural buildings attached to the land, and Parsonage Farm and Winkford Farm (as shown on the mapping extract below) are in separate ownership. The site of the proposed agricultural buildings, structures and associated works is shown on the map extract below:



*Location plan of proposed agricultural buildings (Source: Surrey County Council)*

- 2.2 As illustrated above, the application site lies in a position which will be enclosed by a woodland belt to the north and east. Tree planting screens the site from the adjacent Haslemere Road on the west side. A track leads to the site from the north, whilst there is also access across the fields from the south. It is considered the location is appropriate for the operation and development of the proposed sucker enterprise.



### **3 Background**

- 3.1 Originally the land formed part of the larger estate which included both Parsonage Farm and Winkford Farm. These included farm buildings, of various sizes and ages. Both of these properties, however, were sold off separately from the Rockwood Estate, and the buildings are now in residential use (Parsonage Farm) or permitted to be converted to residential use (Winkford Farm). As such there are presently no agricultural buildings to serve the retained land.
- 3.2 Parsonage Farm, which comprises a large timber barn and brick outbuildings was, prior to its conversion to a dwelling some 8 years ago, deemed not capable of agricultural use. The use of Winkford Farm as accommodation for a dairy herd ceased to be used as such over 10 years ago, and similarly the buildings were deemed not suitable for modern agricultural purposes.
- 3.3 In recent years some of the land, has been leased to a local farmer who had grazed cattle. This land was used purely for grazing in association with other land in the local area and there was no requirement for buildings to service the agricultural use of the land.
- 3.4 For many years the farm land has been down to a combination of grass and maize. The soil type is light sand and is prone to drought in the summer. Prior to this, the land was owned by Thames Water as a site for spreading sewage sludge.
- 3.5 Overall the Rockwood Estate has in recent years been neglected with poor fencing and thin unproductive pasture. The rental agreements which have been in place with the local farmers have been short-term and have provided little or no incentive for the farmers to consider any long-term land improvements or care. In recent months, since the change of ownership, however, there has been considerable investment in stock fencing and reseeded and the provision of water to the land. This is with the intention of more actively farming the land, which is the stimulus for this application for new farm buildings to service the pasture.

## 4 The Proposal

- 4.1 The application seeks planning permission for the construction of buildings, structures and associated works to accommodate the needs of a high welfare extensive based suckler enterprise. The unit has been designed to include 150 breeding cattle on the holding. This will not be an indoor intensively reared system. The proposed suckler herd will be grazed from May to November on the estate pasture, or for as long as the grass growth allows. Full details of the proposed operation are included within the Agricultural Consultant's report, as compiled by Prism Agriculture Ltd, which accompanies this application.
- 4.2 Of the total herd number of 150 breeding cattle, 113 will be Hereford Cattle which will spring calve outdoors. The Hereford Cattle will be sold at 8 months with their heifers kept as replacements. The balance of the cattle, 37, will be made up of late maturing Native Longhorn Cattle which will calve outdoors. The Longhorn cattle will be reared to finishers and supplied to restaurants in the applicant's hotel portfolio. In addition, the holding will support two Longhorn bulls and one Hereford bulls, which will be kept separate. These bulls will be replaced every two years.
- 4.3 The gross forage requirement of the proposed enterprise is 106ha, therefore with 15.9ha of maize and 106.1ha of grass silage clamped in silage pits at the holding, as well as baled and wrapped grass silage and hay. The estate has sufficient land to produce 122ha of forage.
- 4.4 The Applicant has a portfolio of hotels and restaurants in which he is keen to source a locally produced product from a fully traceable high animal welfare beef herd. This promotes a commercially sensible opportunity for the proposed farm.
- 4.5 The proposed farm buildings comprise two cattle buildings, isolation unit/ cattle handling facility, attached machinery storage building and bedding/fodder storage barn, two silage clamps and a temporary farmyard muck storage area, the latter allowing the muck to decompose prior to its spreading onto the maize growing land. Additionally, there will be underground run off tanks and effluent pits which will collect any run-off from this area. There are no slurry lagoons on the proposed holding.

- 4.6 The buildings are designed around the split straw bed system so that all the manure which is produced will be straw based and can be either spread straight away onto the sandy fields or stacked in temporary manure heaps ready for the next maize crop. Additionally, this straw manure which is produced by the cattle will help to boost organic matter in the soil and will provide the bulk of the nutrients needed to grow the maize crop.
- 4.7 On the basis of advice received from the Consultant Vet (Doctor Potter) engaged by the Applicants to advise on the cattle needs and welfare, we suggest that it is essential that an agricultural worker's dwelling exists on site to allow for round-the-clock supervision of the cattle. This aspect of the project will form the subject of a separate application.



## 5 Design Statement

### 5.1 Amount

5.2 This scheme proposes the construction of a series of agricultural buildings, structures and associated works to service a new extensive beef rearing suckler herd enterprise. The development will comprise two cattle buildings, isolation unit/ cattle handling facility, attached machinery/ feed store and bedding/fodder storage barn, a, two silage clamps and a temporary farmyard muck storage area.

5.3 There will be four principle buildings within the farm complex. The size of these buildings and the associated facilities are entirely consummate for their proposed use.

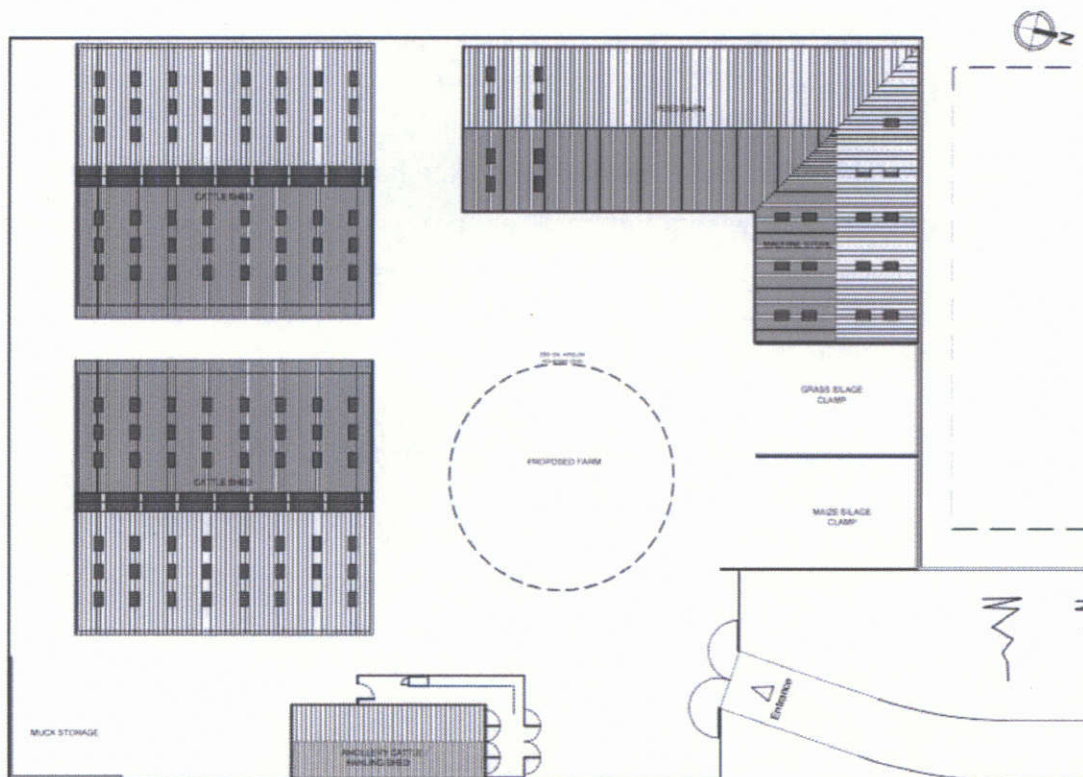
5.4 The details of the building sizes are as follows:-

- cattle sheds will be 36 m by 32 m and an overall height of 7.3 m
- The isolation unit/ancillary cattle/handling shed will be 23.9m x 9.0m in dimension and will be of an overall height of 5.8 m.
- The bedding/ fodder storage barn will be 28m x 19.7m and an overall height of 7.5m
- The machinery store/ feed store will be 36 x 20.0 m in dimension and of an overall height of 7.5 m.
- The maize and grass silage clamps will each be 13.7m x 20m

### 5.5 Layout

5.6 The proposed farm buildings will form a rectangular arrangement with the buildings and structures positioned to the edge of the yard, leaving a central internal area for vehicular and animal movements. The proposed location plan indicates the general siting of the buildings in relation to the adjacent public highway, Haslemere Road. (The approximate location is shown at paragraph 2.1 above.)

- 5.7 The two principal cattle sheds will be located on the south side of the yard and the bedding/fodder barn on the west, the machinery store and silage clamps will be sited to the north side and the ancillary cattle/handling shed is located to the east. The block plan extract below illustrates the proposed site layout.



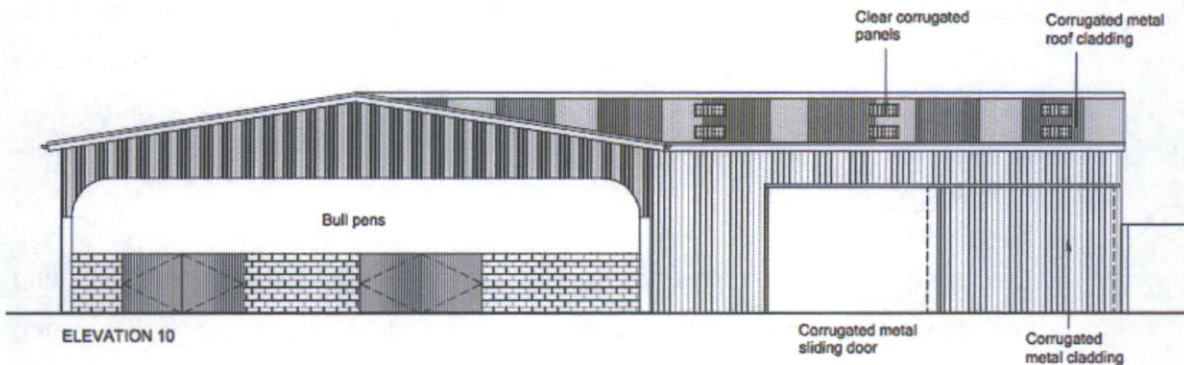
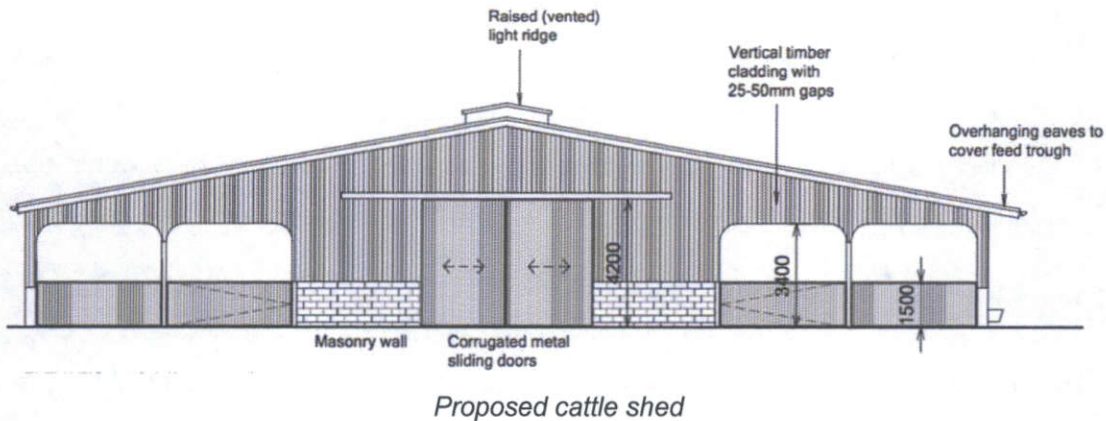
*Drawing extract of proposed yard layout*

## 5.8 Appearance

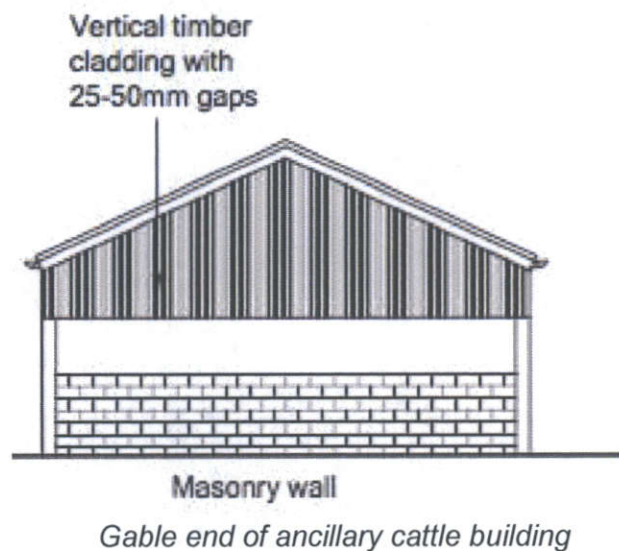
- 5.9 The farm buildings will be steel portal framed. The machinery and feed store building will be clad with profiled steel sheeting applied to the external walls.
- 5.10 The bedding/ fodder storage barn will be partly open, with vertical Yorkshire boarding. The cattle buildings will be designed with a 2m high concrete panel walls at the base and Yorkshire timber cladding applied to the upper external walls which will weather over time. The design of these buildings will provide appropriate ventilation to cattle.



5.11 The appearance of one of the proposed cattle sheds and of the machinery and fodder barns are depicted in the drawing extracts below:



5.12 The ancillary cattle handling building/ isolation building



5.13 The land upon which the new farm is proposed has been subject to infilling in the past, probably resulting from the previous ownership by Thames Water. Cut and fill is proposed within the site to provide level ground upon which to construct the farm buildings and structures. Cut and fill is a common and established practice undertaken when siting agricultural buildings in order to achieve a level surface; it also lowers the relative building heights within the landscape setting. The new farm yard will have earth banks to three sides.

5.14 **Materials**

5.15 The buildings will be constructed on a concrete base. Cattle barns will have part masonry walls at lower level and Yorkshire boarding over the machinery store will be clad in profiled metal sheeting, as will the roofs to all buildings. The complex of buildings and structures will have an agricultural appearance and be entirely appropriate for their intended use and countryside setting.

5.16 **Landscaping**

5.17 The site is already screened from wider views as a result of woodland planting on three sides around the proposed site (including tree and hedge planting along the Haslemere Road boundary (west side of site). This can be seen from the submitted mapping extract.

5.18 An LVIA has been produced in support of the application. The baseline findings from the LVIA have been used to inform the detail of this scheme, including the position of buildings, their heights as well as a landscaping scheme.

5.19 A landscaping scheme is proposed to the south of the proposed farm buildings along with an area to the north west, adjacent to the highway. The landscaping to the south would comprise the introduction of woodland and coppice planting which will effectively extend the existing woodland and provide screening in views from the south and south-west, without blocking any longer views of the wider landscape, seen over existing woodland from the south.

5.20 The proposed landscaping will provide additional effective screening to the site over time to supplement the existing screening provided by woodland planting

and trees to the north, west and east of the site. Ongoing woodland management of these areas is also proposed.

#### **5.21 Access Considerations**

5.22 The current access to the land is taken off the Haslemere Road, at a position close to the entrance to Rockwood House and Parsonage Farm. However, this is a dangerous junction and as such it is proposed that there will be a new track leading from Haslemere Road to the south of the site. The access will serve both the new farm and proposed agricultural dwelling (agricultural dwelling is subject to a separate application). Details of the access track and new access to the highway is provided within the submitted drawings. Vision Transport's detailed drawing of the proposed new junction with Haslemere Road shows that that there will be adequate visibility in both directions along the highway. This will provide a safe and suitable access for the traffic and vehicles associated with the proposed more intensive farming use of the land.



## 6 Planning Policy

### 6.1 National Policy Context

- 6.2 The General principles of the Planning System are dealt with in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, hereafter referred to as the NPPF. This document sets out the basis of the plan led system in ensuring sustainable development.
- 6.3 A key theme running through this adopted NPPF is the aforementioned presumption in favour of development, which includes Local Planning Authorities positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the area.
- 6.4 The site is located within Green Belt wherein the countryside is protected for its own sake. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings in the countryside are to be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt. One such exception is buildings for agriculture or forestry purposes. As the proposal is directly related to agricultural use the development is therefore, considered by the Government to be appropriate development in the Green belt.
- 6.5 Section 3 of the NPPF of the document is titled '*Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy*'. The document at this point states that local and neighbourhood plans should 'support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing building and well-designed new buildings'. This illustrates how the impetus is on the local planning authority to support businesses in rural areas. The submitted planning application proposes to reestablish a farming enterprise on the property through the development of the beef rearing unit, which is a form of rural business development entirely consistent with the aims of the NPPF, to encourage the development of rural businesses. In all these respects the proposal accords with the terms of National Policy on development in rural areas.

- 6.6 The site lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF being relevant. Paragraph 115 states that 'Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in ...Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas.' Paragraph 116 sets out that 'Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: i) The need for the development, including in terms of national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy, ii) the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside of the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and iii) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities and the extent to which that can be moderated.
- 6.7 Based on the submitted application site area, the proposal falls within the definition of major development. However, taking into account the size of the proposed complex of farm buildings only (the application), the proposal would not constitute major development. In any event, the following is relevant. The application scheme has been specifically considered in the context of the impact upon the Landscape and particularly the AONB and is considered to preserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. The application is supported by an LVIA, the baseline findings of which informed the detailed scheme. The proposal is for agricultural development which is entirely appropriate for this countryside setting. The proposal would re-introduce a viable agricultural enterprise onto the land, which has been absent for a number of years. The result being that the quality of the agricultural land and landscape itself has begun to suffer from a lack of proper management and maintenance. The application would have a positive impact upon the local economy and would provide enhancements to biodiversity and the landscape within which it sits.



6.8 **Waverley Borough Council – Local Plan 2002**

6.9 **Policy RD10 – Agricultural Development.** This policy states that permission will only be granted for agricultural, horticultural or forestry-related development provided that:

- *the proposal is related to and located on an existing unit, and is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, horticulture or forestry within that unit;*
- *it would not significantly detract from the character of the rural landscape;*
- *the location, scale, design, colour and materials are appropriate to the character and appearance of the surrounding area;*
- *the proposal would not give rise to significant noise and disturbance to the occupiers of nearby residential properties or otherwise adversely affect residential amenities, for example, by reason of dust, odour or effluent;*
- *the amount of traffic likely to be generated would not prejudice highway safety or cause significant harm to the environmental character of country roads; and*
- *satisfactory vehicular access can be achieved.*

6.10 The proposed farm unit, comprising a number of farm buildings, is a genuine proposal to re-instate that which previously existed on site. The land holding is substantial, amounting to 122ha of farmland, excluding woodlands and tracks but there are currently no farm buildings to serve the needs of the farm land. As discussed earlier in this statement, there has been considerable recent investment in stock fencing, reseeding and the provision of water to the land, with the sole aim of developing the farming use of the land.

6.11 In terms of the Policy criteria the application site forms part of an established agricultural unit. Furthermore, it has been explained why this unit requires new buildings to serve the farming requirements of the land. This is based on the fact that buildings which previously were used in association with the land (Parsonage Farm and Winkford Farm) no longer form part of the Estate in the Applicants ownership, but more importantly were not suitable for modern



agricultural purposes. In this respect it is considered a need exists for the proposal.

- 6.12 In terms of the other criteria which need to be met the buildings have been designed to be entirely appropriate for their proposed agricultural use (for a beef herd) and will not give rise to significant noise or disturbance to any neighbouring occupiers, all of whom are located a significant distance away.
- 6.13 In terms of impact on highway network, an existing access could be used however it is proposed to create a new track to allow use of a safer, and better located access directly onto the Haslemere Road to the south.
- 6.14 Given the above facts, it is considered this scheme in its entirety, aligns itself with the above principles such that the proposal is a legitimate form of agricultural development which is appropriate in the Green Belt.
- 6.15 Furthermore, the proposal will not introduce development which will detract from the nature of its surroundings. The use as a farming unit will not adversely affect the character and amenities of the area. The proposed buildings are appropriate in scale, design, colour and materials, are well screened from longer views from the surrounding countryside and accordingly there will be no harm on the surrounding rural area. Accordingly, it is considered the development will have no adverse impact on the openness of the Countryside.
- 6.16 Bearing these points in mind, it is the case that the proposed development is in keeping with National Policy guidance and adopted Development Plan policies. The proposal to construct buildings for an agricultural use will not be harmful to the Green Belt and will not affect the amenity of surrounding occupiers.

## **7 Summary and Conclusions**

- 7.1 This application proposes the construction of new farm buildings to create a beef rearing suckler herd farming unit. The proposed construction of farm buildings, structures and associated works will enhance the immediate rural surroundings of the site whilst having no detrimental impact on the wider countryside area.
- 7.2 The buildings are required to support the increased agricultural activities proposed for the land. The siting and design of the buildings are of a suitable standard to minimise impact on the countryside. Through the construction of an agricultural unit, the land will be brought back into more active farming use will be improved and, moreover, brought into sustainable, appropriate use, which will allow for long-term viability. Overall the nature and scale of the scheme is appropriate to the landscape and countryside setting.
- 7.3 We trust that from the enclosures and supporting statements that the Council will be able to agree with the merits of this application proposal and determine it under delegated powers.