

COMMITTEE DATE: 21st July 2022**APPLICATION NO: RR/2022/219/P****ADDRESS: Glebelands, Potmans Lane, Catsfield****PROPOSAL: Change of use (part retrospective) and extension of existing agricultural building to a live/work residential unit.**Amendments

The planning agent has submitted a revised business plan together with a list and photographs of plant species that are grown on the site.

The business plan explains the following:

- Beginning initially as a hobby by the applicants the small holding at Glebelands incorporates the keeping of livestock which enables the production of wool to be manufactured into yarn for knitted garments. To ensure that the process remains organic and inherently sustainable the yarn is dyed using plants grown within the holding.
- The applicants have set up the business model at the holding and now require residential accommodation on site to ensure the maintenance and growth of the business.
- Livestock on site consists of 10 Alpacas - Huacaya, black, silver grey and rose grey coloured. • 6 Angora goats (rare breed) - white pedigree of South African origin, producing Mohair. • 2 breeding sows (Gloucester Old Spot, rare breed) • 3 Pygmy goats (2 females and 1 male for breeding) • 3 Steinbacher geese (2 females and 1 male for breeding, very rare breed) • 12 Ancona chickens (rare breed).
- Shearing is carried out in spring.
- At this time seeds are sown to grow plants for natural dyeing. A list of plants grown for dyeing is provided at Appendix 3 along with images of the holding.
- Fibre is processed by washing and drying, once dry it is carded and spun by hand on a spinning wheel. Following this the dyeing process begins, the plants are harvested and dried, then used to dye the spun yarn (various methods are used).
- The small holding also incorporates fruit and vegetables for sale - Organically grown vegetables irrigated with harvested rainwater - Heritage potatoes, runner beans, broad beans, beetroots, chillies (many different varieties), tomatoes (many different varieties and colours), herbs of many varieties, French beans, lettuces, cucumbers, gherkins, courgettes, squash and pumpkins etc.
- A proposed average of 70-90 kilogrammes alpaca and mohair fibre, hand spun, hand dyed with natural plant dyes, selling nationally at £25 per 100 grammes - £20,000 gross, £14,000 net. • Fruit and veg - would achieve £1,500 - £2,000 • Plants - after applying for licence - would achieve £2,500 - £3,000 • Income from Caravan site £15,000 net per season.
- Total - £33,000 after deducting overheads.
- Wages - £25,000, leaving approx. £8,000 profit in first year to reinvest in smallholding.
- No employees are proposed for the first 2 years. In this case the reality is that the applicants will work harder to achieve their goals and if further employment at the unit is required then local labour will be sought.

- The applicants will also be starting breeding programme for alpacas and angora goats and by 3rd or 4th year expect to achieve upwards of a 30% increase in livestock at the holding.
- Expected forecast - gross income to increase by 8 - 10% per year over 3 year period.
- In addition, the applicants run a licensed caravan and camping site in the northeastern field. The applicants have found that the numbers of bookings have increased year on year, to the extent that in 2019 season (pre Covid) they were almost fully booked for the season.
- Obviously now there is a massive resurgence towards staycations. The applicants expect to build on their earlier success and continue to make improvements on site, post Covid. However, notwithstanding that there have been numerous attempted break ins at the site an on-site presence is also required to allow access and egress from the site and to ensure that customers' needs are met. However, this will only be possible if the applicants are able to continue to reside on-site.
- The need for a dwelling on site is evident. The current enterprise involves animal husbandry, management of plants, vegetables direct from the site along with the manufacturing process.
- The unsocial hours required of this small farming business do demand a dwelling at the centre of the operation for a key worker. Rather than seek to erect a new structure the applicants are keen to utilise the space they already have and so a modest one-bedroom dwelling attached to the business is considered appropriate for this level of operation.

Appraisal

The amended business plan predicts a greater level of income compared to the originally submitted business plan. It explained that in the first year an income of £33,000 after overheads would be generated. This is £8000 more than originally predicted. Nevertheless, £15,000 of this would still be from the caravan site which is not a land based industry where there would be a functional need for a dwelling.

Given the very limited size of the landholding there are concerns over whether the predicted income from agricultural related activities is achievable. The issues raised in the planning Committee report remain. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the existing agricultural enterprise has a functional requirement for an agricultural worker to live on site nor that the agricultural business is or could be financially sound. As such, the proposal represents the creation of an unjustified permanent dwelling in the countryside, which is in an unsustainable location.

RECOMMENDATION: AS REPORT