

F E R G U S O N
P L A N N I N G



Mr Euan Calvert
Development Management
Scottish Borders Council

09 July 2020

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Euan,

Please accept the apologies of the Applicants and ourselves for the passage of time since the most recent correspondence in early March. This delay owes primarily to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and while regrettable has been unavoidable.

However the Applicants are now in receipt of a specific business case to support the Application, which has been prepared by Chartered Accountants Rennie Welch LLP in accordance with the methodology you set out in your email of 3rd March.

We have also viewed the response of the Forward Planning team to your consultation objecting to the application proposal.

We are aware that the determination of whether an economic justification exists is the remit of the Economic Development team; not Forward Planning, but feel that much of the criticism contained within the objection is unjustified and would be grateful if you had regard to the following.

Templehall Farm is a fledgling enterprise, reflected by the heard of cattle pasturing within the holding. The extent of the heard on the holding also reflects seasonal conditions and the lack of operational justification for enlarging a heard to maintain over winter months. Instead, cattle contained within the agricultural unit of Templehall Farm have been wintered at Graden (as submitted photos demonstrate) where there is an overnight presence on-site. These animals can be returned to Templehall as soon as overnight welfare provision can be secured.

The Applicant intends to enlarge the land within the holding once a secure base has been established. However, an overnight on-site presence is required for animal welfare as well as the forthright management of the enterprise, in order to augment the heard and achieve commercial viability.

This proposal has a dual purpose and collectively provides the clear business

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justification for a dwelling on the plot in question and beyond this one that fits logically next to existing houses. It is in a different location than the previous application and thus require to considered within the current context and taking due regard of the overarching business plan, which was originally submitted.

Although not the only operational justification for the dwelling, the land and building at Templehall Farm is also frequently used by Walker Groundworks for short term storage of equipment and materials during busy periods. The operational requirement for the space is pressing as Walker Groundworks have expanded substantially in the previous few years and continue to do so. The firm's original depot at Graden – which remains the hub of the business – was only able to establish as a successfully trading business due to the dwelling on-site from where commercial administration was conducted and overnight security was provided for. That depot is at capacity and there is the need for a second as fully explained within the business and planning statements.

The specific business case submitted herewith to support the proposal demonstrates a projected surplus of £5,940 before labour for Year 1. This labour provision is currently provided by the family on a part time basis and provision for notional labour costs of £6,000 have been made. Therefore the enterprise is profitable before labour and the Applicants and their family are always likely to be the labour providers throughout the year. These arrangements are normal for small rural businesses, especially agriculture.

Should on-site labour be secured, profit before labour costs are projected to grow from £5,940 in Year 1 to £31,225 in Year 3. This projected growth is dependent upon a house to provide for on-site management and without it the growth forecasted is significantly stunted. It is material to note that a member of the Applicants' family living on-site would deliver the overnight welfare provision that an employee (particularly one living nearby in Morebattle village) could not. Therefore, the proposed dwelling is essential to establishing the new agricultural enterprise in the short-medium term.

The viability of Templehall Farm is strong via the operational and groundwork businesses that exist. The continuation of both business requires the appropriate security by way of a residential presence. The operations provide ample funding and justification for the existing building on-site and the proposed dwelling, as demonstrated in the Business Summary prepared by Rennie Welch LLP. There has been no financial or other evidence provided by Forward Planning to justify their current stance and we kindly require that they reconsider.

As mentioned we consider the economic department to be the appropriate department to comment on the need and viability of the business and we await that response in the near future.

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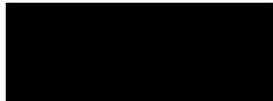


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Should you wish to discuss in any greater detail please do not hesitate to contact Tim Fergusson, Director or Ruairaidh Thompson.

Yours Sincerely



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