



READING AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANTS

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Your Ref: DC/26/0149
Our Ref: 11044-hd2

6 June 2026

For the attention of Hannah Darley

Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Dear Ms Darley,

Site: Oakwood Farm, Storrington Road, Thakeham, West Sussex RH20 3QT.
Application: DC/26/0149
Proposal: Erection of a chalet style (self-build) dwelling.

Thank you for your instruction dated 24 February 2026 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) provide additional comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this desk-top response I have had regard to the additional Business Information (undated) prepared by the Applicant.

I have not visited the site nor had any contact with the applicant in preparing this response.

Background

1. The applicants, Mr and Mrs Vaughan-Spencer, own 7.68 hectares (19 acres) of grassland which is currently used for grazing by mixed livestock and poultry. The Farming Statement details that the applicants purchased the land in 2015 and have it registered as an organic smallholding with the Soil Association.
2. The CPH number, Soil Association Certificate number and APHA registration number have been provided in the Additional Business Information document.
3. The updated information details that in the last 12 month period the applicants reared 2 steers for beef, 3 pigs for pork and bred their flock of 12 ewes. It is detailed that they have increased the breeding ewe flock to 18 ewes.
4. In addition, the applicants are now selling eggs from a vending machine in a kiosk at the farm gate.
5. Beef, Pork and Lamb produced on the holding is also sold on Saturdays from the kiosk. It is detailed that much of this meat has sold out or will do shortly and the applicants intend to increase their supply to meet the demand.



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6. It is detailed that the applicants have secured the use of an additional 3.5 hectares for grazing and a further 5 hectares for hay conservation. It is understood that these fields fall under the applicants' Soil Association certification and are organic.
7. The livestock housing on site currently provides accommodation for overwinter housing of two steers and is then used for lambing.
8. The applicants currently stay on site overnight in a van during the lambing period.
9. The Business Plan details that the applicants intend to further increase the size of the sheep flock along with purchasing milking goats and set up a creamery in the barn on site and increase the number of beehives on site producing honey for sale. In addition, it details that if the applicants were living on site they would introduce a turkey rearing enterprise.

Appraisal

10. The primary test set out in the NPPF and Local Plan Policy 20 is an assessment as to whether it is essential for a rural worker to live at, or near, their place of work. In this case, the applicants operate an organic mixed livestock and poultry enterprise comprising 114 hens, 18 breeding ewes plus progeny of 13 ewes (number of lambs unknown), 2 steers and 3 pigs reared for meat.
11. In the case of the applicants' poultry and livestock enterprises at the application site, the essential needs could arise from:
 - the general welfare and care of all livestock on the farm;
 - the management of free-range egg producing poultry and housing accommodation;
 - the general welfare and management of breeding stock where assistance may be required at birthing;
 - the general care and attention of the new born animal ensuring they have received adequate colostrum, again assistance may be required;
 - the regular inspection of livestock whether housed or at grass for signs of disease or distress and to rectify the problem promptly;
 - the provision of security for animals from theft or malicious attack; and
 - dealing promptly with unforeseen emergencies.
12. The labour requirements for the applicants' mixed livestock enterprise can be calculated using Standard Work Days (SWD) data from the Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book (May 2026). For each full-time worker, the SWD equivalent is 275 days.
13. Based on the livestock numbers proposed within the Business Plan the labour requirements for the applicants' mixed livestock enterprise can be calculated as follows:

	SWDs	Current Size	Total SMDs	Year 3 Size	Total SMDs
Poultry	0.021	114	2.39	unknown	0
Breeding Ewes	0.5	13	7.5	unknown	0
Rearing and Finishing Pigs	0.14	3	0.42	unknown	0
Store Cattle	1.75	2	3.5	unknown	0
Sub Total			13.81		0

15% management and maintenance			2.07		0
Total			15.88		0
Full-time workers @ 275 SWDs			0.05		0

14. Based on the additional information provided by the applicants and the limited information regarding the total number of livestock on site by the end of the three year business plan (2028) it is still not possible for RAC to conclude on the essential need for a full-time rural worker to live on site to ensure that the management and welfare of the poultry and livestock on site is not compromised.
15. With regard to the current very small poultry and livestock enterprises on site and the applicants staying on site overnight for a short period during lambing season is an appropriate provision.

Financial Sustainability

16. The NPPF deals with the concept of sustainable development at a strategic rather than an individual enterprise level. In terms of economic development, it is concerned with contributing to and building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.
17. In this context RAC considers any assessment of economic sustainability as the ability of the business/enterprise to utilise its resources which allows it to function properly; it has to have the ability and necessary funds available to stay in business.
18. RAC considers that in order for any business to demonstrate viability, it should be generating profits sufficient to cover all costs, provide a return on the capital invested, realistically reward any unpaid labour (usually at least equivalent to the national minimum wage); and provide for the build cost of the proposed dwelling.
19. The Business Plan contains figures for the years trading for the years April 2022 to March 2025 along with projections for the three year period of 2026 to 2028.
20. From the additional information submitted it is unknown how the applicants intend to increase sales income. No details of livestock numbers increasing over the three year period have been provided, or details of the expected gross margins for each poultry and livestock enterprise.
21. RAC also notes that the projections would not be able to afford the costs associated with a full-time worker on minimum wage and no provisions have been made for wages/salaries or drawings in the projected accounts.
22. RAC understands that the applicants intend to finance the build costs through the sale of their home.
23. RAC considers that the business has not been planned on a sound financial basis.

Other Dwellings

24. It is understood that the applicants currently live off site and the Council have confirmed that the application site is a 9 minute drive away. RAC would consider such a timeline as being able to react promptly to any emergency on the holding.

Conclusion

25. The applicants propose the erection of a self-build dwelling.
26. The proposed dwelling would be occupied by the applicants who provide the daily management, supervision and care for all poultry and livestock on site.
27. RAC considers there is not a justified essential need for a full-time worker to reside on site to meet the needs of the poultry and livestock.
28. RAC considers that the business has not been planned on a sound financial basis.
29. RAC is not aware of any other residential dwellings in the immediate locality that are suitable and available.
30. RAC considers that the proposal for the self-build siting of a rural worker's dwelling at the application site is not compliant with national and local planning policy, in particular Local Plan Policy 20.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Wojniak