

Agricultural Appraisal for Greenham Reach – Plot C
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Introduction

Mr. and Mrs. Guskov will be the lessees of Plot C at Greenham Reach, where they intend to establish a mixed smallholding combining a market garden, a seedling and agroforestry nursery, and a chicken hatchery.

I have been asked to provide an agricultural appraisal of the three proposed smallholdings at Greenham Reach, as a result of my academic studies and experience in sustainable agriculture. I have an MSc (Distinction) in Sustainable Agriculture from Wye College, University of London. Following my degree I worked for two years for Somerset Food Links, a local authority sponsored food initiative, as a research and development worker. I have also undertaken extensive research into how small farmers can sustain their own physical, mental and emotional energy while undertaking the challenging task of earning a livelihood from sustainable land management. The result of my research was a book, “Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use your time and energy to run a successful smallholding”, published by Green Books in 2008. I have worked as an agricultural consultant since 2002, producing agricultural appraisals and acting as an expert witness at several successful planning appeal public enquiries.

For fourteen years I have worked on a variety of organic market gardens and mixed farms, producing vegetables, apple juice and cheese for sale at farm shops and farmers' markets. I have also worked as a seasonal lambing assistant at three larger farms. In 2005 I took part in a two week permaculture design course, and since then have tried to integrate permaculture principles into my own market gardening activities. At present I run a small market

garden which supplies several shops and restaurants with a variety of seasonal organic vegetables. As a result, I am familiar with the current markets for such produce and the practical labour requirements of running a market garden.

In addition, for the purposes of this appraisal I have drawn upon the expert opinions of some people who are more knowledgeable than me about certain aspects of this business. The following people have contributed their knowledge of agroforestry and fruit crops:

Professor Martin Wolfe - Principle Scientific Advisor at The Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm, and owner/manager of Wakelyn's Agroforestry, Suffolk. Specialist knowledge of arable alley cropping in agroforestry systems, and nut production.

Ben Law - Chestnut coppice worker and forester, Author of "The Woodland Way". Specialist knowledge on squirrel control and mushroom production.

Dr. Paul Benham – Primrose Organic Centre, which includes a 0.5 acre forest garden producing commercial quantities of soft and top fruit.

Site History and Description

I visited Greenham Reach on 6th August 2011, during an open day for prospective lessees of the smallholdings. I was shown around the site by Ms. Wangler and Mr. Maxey, who explained where the boundaries for the three plots would lie, where the dwellings and barn will be located and the location of the WET water treatment system.

Plot C is the largest of the three, at 8.9 acres. The highest land is in the northern field, which also contains the unimproved grassland (a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat) on the steep slope down to the flood plain. A large portion of the land lies on the flood plain of the River Tone, where it undulates, leading to some areas being more low lying than others. The slope down to the floodplain in the south westerly part of plot C is sheltered by an overgrown hedge.

The whole site is Grade 3 agricultural land and the soil is a clay-loam, with a clay subsoil at 1-2ft depth, while the underlying bedrock is a fine grained sandstone. Some Juncus reeds were present in Plot C, but not in such abundance that they would indicate swampiness. Although of the three plots this is the least well suited to horticulture, I believe that the business proposed by Mr. and Mrs. Guskov is possible there, and has been designed to fit with the land's natural features and limitations, while protecting its existing biodiversity.

Description of Proposed Business

The proposed business for Plot C is comprised of the following elements:

- A market garden (1ha), plus two medium-size polytunnels
- Vegetable and herb nursery, to propagate seedlings for market garden and to sell to other growers.
- An agroforestry enterprise (1ha), to provide top and soft fruit, mushrooms on logs, herbs and perennial vegetables and provide firewood for space heating (dwelling, polytunnels, poultry brooder shed).
- Processed Food (jams, chutneys, pickles etc) made from surplus and non-marketable produce
- A poultry enterprise (300 birds on about 0.3 hectares) to supply pure breed point of lay hens for sale.

The range of enterprises has been chosen to spread financial risk, as well as spreading workload throughout the year in order to maximise yield and income from a relatively small area of land.

Relevant Planning Policy

This is an application for an agricultural workers dwelling. As such, the main national planning policy which relates to this proposal is contained in Planning and Policy Statement 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas”:

Para. 10 (p3) Isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted. Where the special justification for an isolated new house relates to the essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, planning authorities should follow the advice in Annex A of this PPS.

Annex A of PPS7 goes on to elaborate upon the circumstances under which an isolated dwelling in the countryside may be permissible, “to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work”. While it states that it will often be as convenient or more sustainable for such workers to live in nearby towns and villages, it acknowledges that “there will be some cases where the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work”. In order to detect attempts to abuse this policy, a series of tests have been devised to ensure that the proposed activities are genuine, are reasonably likely to materialise, are capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time, and require one or more of the people engaged in them to live nearby.

The policy for a temporary agricultural workers' dwelling associated with a new enterprise is as follows:

Para 12 (p3) – If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming activity, whether on a newly-created agricultural unit or an established one, it should normally, for the first three years, be provided by a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled, or other temporary accommodation. It should satisfy the following criteria:

- i) clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned (significant investment in new farm buildings is often a good indication of intentions);*
- ii) functional need (see para.4)*
- iii) clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;*
- iv) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and*
- v) other normal planning requirements, e.g. on siting and access are satisfied.*

Para 4 (p1) – A functional test is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:

- i) in case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice;*
- ii) to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example by frost damage or the failure of automatic systems.*

The Greenham Reach project as a whole has sustainable, land-based livelihoods as its core aim, and as such is supported by specific passages in Planning Policy Statement 1.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)

Para. (p2) “Sustainable development is the core principle underlying land use planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations”.

Para. 4 (p3) states the four aims for sustainable development set out in the Government's 1999 strategy:

- *social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;*
- *effective protection of the environment;*
- *the prudent use of natural resources; and*
- *the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.*

These aims should be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being, in ways that protect and enhance the physical environment and optimise resource and energy use.

Para. 19 (p8) Plan policies and planning decisions should be based on, “the potential impacts, positive as well as negative, on the environment of development proposals (whether direct, indirect, cumulative, long term or short term).

Para 22. (p9) Regional planning authorities and local authorities should promote resource and energy efficient buildings; community heating schemes; the use of combined heat and power, small-scale renewable and low carbon-schemes in developments; the sustainable use of water resources; and the use of sustainable drainage systems in the management of run-off.

Para 24 (p10) Planning authorities should ensure that sustainable development is treated in an integrated way in their development plans. In particular, they should carefully consider the inter-relationship between social inclusion, protecting and enhancing the environment, the prudent use of natural resources and economic development – for example, by recognising that economic development, if properly planned for, can have positive social and environmental benefits, rather than negative impacts, and that environmental protection and enhancement can in turn provide economic and social benefits.

Mid Devon Local Development Framework – Core Strategy 2026 (Adopted July 2006)

The application for an agricultural workers dwelling at Greenham Reach represents a proposal for development in the open countryside, which in general is discouraged by the Mid Devon Core Strategy in order to protect the landscape and reduce car use. However, in line with national policy, there are exceptions when the dwelling is for a person employed full-time in agriculture:

COR18 “Development outside the settlements defined by COR13 to COR17 will be strictly controlled, enhancing the character, appearance

and biodiversity of the countryside while promoting sustainable diversification of the rural economy. Detailed development control policies will permit agricultural and other appropriate rural uses, subject to appropriate criteria, as follows: a)housing essential to accommodate an agricultural or forestry worker and accommodation ancillary to a dwelling;

If the exception above is proven, there are a number of other elements within the Core Strategy that support this proposal specifically, due to its focus on a very high level of environmental stewardship combined with increasing access to affordable opportunities to farm. I have identified the following as policies and principles that are relevant to the Greenham Reach smallholdings:

Para 4.2 Community Strategy for Devon (2004) - "By 2015 we want Devon to be a county with safe, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a cherished environment". In order to achieve these aspirations, the plan sets out a number of goals, the first two of which are:

"... help tackle national and global environmental issues, make it easier to adopt greener lifestyles and working practices through the conservation of natural resources, recycling, traffic management, enhancing landscape and biodiversity, adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change". (p16)

"Ensure that economic prosperity is shared by all parts of the community, whilst also maximising the benefits of Devon's unique quality of life by encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting a skilled and adaptable workforce, raising productivity, building upon environmental assets and providing sustainable transport solutions". (p17)

Meeting Employment Needs (COR 4) "The employment needs of the community will be met through: c) measures to diversify the agricultural and rural economy in ways which protect countryside character. (p31)

Climate Change (COR 5) "Measures will be sought which minimise the impact of development on climate change and contribute towards national and regional targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, including.....c) all new development will be carbon neutral in development and use....." (p33)

In addition, the Mid Devon Local Plan, Adopted in 2006, contains the following policy relating to agricultural buildings in its economy section:

E14 Agricultural buildings will be permitted outside the Defined Settlement Limits provided that: 1) the primary purpose is to support farming activities related to the land holding or the immediate

agricultural community and the building is needed for that purpose; ii) the building is located so as not to cause harm to the living conditions of nearby residents and the character and appearance of the area.

Application of Planning Policy

I will begin by applying the national policy for “Agricultural, Forestry and Other Occupational Dwellings” (PPS7, Annex A) To avoid repetition, I will apply the tests outlined in PPS7, Annex A (Para.12) before addressing the remaining points outlined only in policy (Whatever the Mid-Devon Local Plan says).

- 1) *Clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned (significant investment in new farm buildings is often a good indication of intentions)*

I have only met Mr. and Mrs. Guskov once, but from that meeting and the experience and achievements they have written about in their application to ELC for the Greenham Reach smallholding, I have gained an impression of competence and commitment to land-based work. Both Mr. and Mrs. Guskov have a lifetime's experience of working on subsistence smallholdings, gained since their youth in Russia. Since 2007, they appear to have been working towards the goal of establishing their own land-based business, firstly by renting a 2 acre field in Scotland, where they managed an orchard and soft fruit bushes, grew vegetables and kept horses, and latterly in Somerset by establishing an allotment site in Langport while they waited to purchase a smallholding. Since moving to Langport in 2009, they have been actively involved in a number of land-based initiatives, including running two allotments and establishing a poultry flock.

Although their commercial production experience is very limited, I have been impressed by the quality of their business plan, and believe that their experience of running other businesses will help them with management and financial planning. The range of enterprises they plan is extensive and ambitious, and I expect that with time may become narrowed down to those which work best at Greenham Reach. However, I believe that they are fully capable of carrying out the proposed business and adapting it to ensure that it remains viable. I have no doubt that they are entirely genuine in their intention to earn a land-based livelihood.

- 2) *functional need*

Several elements of the proposed business lead me to conclude that there is a very strong functional need for Mr. and Mrs. Guskov to live on site in order to effectively manage their smallholding.

Seedling propagation – A significant part of the business plan relies on the successful production of seedlings, not only for the Guskovs' own market garden, but also to sell at local markets to private gardeners. The early season production of sensitive seedlings such as tomato, peppers, aubergines and cucumbers, is an intensive process requiring frequent attention. In January, when the seeds are sown they must be kept at a constant temperature of 18°C to ensure germination. Due to the off-grid nature of the electricity system proposed at Greenham Reach, it will be particularly important that someone is present at night to react immediately if the system fails, to ensure that seedlings are not lost. Most growers propagating their own seedlings operate an alarm system connected to their house, to alert them to a sudden drop in temperature during the night. By living on site they can respond immediately to the problem, thus avoiding significant losses. In addition, the seedlings will require regular watering, and it will be necessary to attend to polytunnel ventilation according to weather conditions. It will be particularly important that seedlings are raised successfully if they are being sold on to other local growers. It would be hard for those growers to find an alternative supplier of the right plant varieties at the scale they need at short notice, thus causing financial losses due to delays in cropping.

Polytunnel Crops – Crops such as tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers are usually planted out in April, to maximise the cropping season. At this stage they will not tolerate temperatures below 8°C and must therefore be protected against lower temperatures, including the occasional late frost. Furthermore, although plants such as lettuce can tolerate frost, it greatly reduces growth rates and increases the risk of fungal diseases. It may thus be necessary to heat the polytunnel occasionally during the spring. Heating will be provided by wood burning stoves, combined with a thermal mass system using water tanks to absorb heat during the day which is released at night. It is sometimes necessary to make a decision fairly late at night about whether or not to use heating, in order to conserve resources. In the case of tomatoes and cucumbers, which are sown in January, replacement of the plants would be a lengthy procedure resulting in financial losses since the start of the cropping season would be delayed by a month or two. Irrigation of polytunnel crops must be done early in the morning or late in the evening when it is cool to minimise evaporation and thereby conserve water. During the summer leafy crops, such as salads, are best harvested early in the morning before they wilt in the heat, to prolong shelf-life.

Finally, in the event of high winds it is sometimes necessary to cut the plastic on a polytunnel to save the frame from being bent. Such a decision can only be made by someone present on-site. Alternatively, a wind-break barrier made from bales, can sometimes protect the tunnel and save the plastic. The delay caused by having to travel to the site in the middle of a windy night to check for damage might mean that remedial action was taken too late.

Pest Protection of Outdoor Crops

Certain outdoor crops are vulnerable to attack from rabbits, deer, badgers and pigeons. Whilst it is possible to protect crops with fencing (wire or electric), such means are not always 100% reliable, and there is nothing like a regular human presence walking around at dusk or early in the morning to deter pests.

Chick-Incubation – Mr. and Mrs. Guskov plan to raise pure bred chicks and point of lay pullets, for which they have ascertained there is a strong demand. Egg incubation is a delicate process, requiring frequent monitoring of the temperature and humidity of the eggs, followed by the heating of the newly-hatched chicks. There is a risk that the chicks will overheat, as much as die of cold, if the heating system does not act as predicted. Due to the site being off-grid, the electricity to power the heat lamps will come from renewable energy sources, and the incubation will require more diligent monitoring than a mains system. The wood burning stove that will keep the chicks warm from three weeks old will also need regular refuelling. A back-up bio-diesel generator is also available if the renewable options fail. In total 340 chicks will be raised each year (divided into 3 batches), and this would be too large a number to keep in a domestic (probably rental) situation were Mr. and Mrs. Guskov unable to live on site.

Chicken Protection – The chickens require a least twice daily attention for letting out, feeding and watering, egg collection and putting in again at dusk. In the summer they will stay out until 9 or 10pm, meaning that were the family not resident on site it would be necessary for someone to return to the farm to shut up the chickens. It is during this dusk period that they are at greatest risk from fox attack, although I have heard of instances of foxes attacking chickens in broad-daylight. Due to the focus being on raising pure-bred point of lay pullets, the value of each bird and the investment which has gone into it, means that protection from foxes is a particular concern.

Other livestock - A small flock of sheep will be kept to manage the species rich grassland, while later in the development of the smallholding the Guskovs may keep dairy house cows. They indicate in their business plan that milking the sheep and the cows to make cheese are future possibilities they would like to explore, initially for subsistence. If time allows and there appears to be a market for sheep's milk and cheese this may be expanded into a commercial venture. Small-scale dairy production is an extremely labour-intensive activity, requiring twice daily hand milking and daily processing of the milk. At a subsistence level, the task of processing the milk into cheese will be simplified by having a domestic kitchen close at hand, whereas if dairy production becomes commercial it will require an EHO certified kitchen. Even without the need for regular milking, the sheep will need daily checking and an overnight presence at lambing time.

Security – While this alone is not a reason for on-site accommodation, for the business proposed I believe that security is a legitimate concern. I have come across many instances of animal theft or abuse when a site is not attended, as well as petty theft of equipment such as tractors, electric fence batteries and posts and metal for scrap.

While each of these individual reasons justifies an on-site dwelling for at least part of the year, the combination of all these tasks that makes a powerful case for there being a functional need for an agricultural workers dwelling. It is the multi-functional nature of the holding that makes it possible to generate the income forecast from the farm. Throughout long working days, and throughout the year, a flow of tasks require the attention of at least one person, usually two and sometimes the children as well. The stress of managing such a complex land-based business from afar would be unbearable, and the project would be forced to simplify dramatically, thus compromising its economic viability. I have studied cases where people have tried to run small-scale land-based businesses from a distance, and they rarely last for long. They are not sustainable in terms of “human energy”.

It is important to point out that the project as a whole relies on the integration of the life of the family with the farm. Permaculture and low-impact living both strive to locate human society as part of nature, rather than as a separate entity. This is done by creating systems which enable people to gain their basic needs directly from the land, rather than through a long chain of trade, as is common in modern, Western society. One of the main design tools used in permaculture is the concept of “zoning”, which places the home at the centre of a series of concentric rings. The zones of land closest to the home are those that need the most frequent attention (such as seedling propagation and chick-incubation), while those furthest from the home need least (e.g. the forest garden).

Finally, it would not be possible for the Mr. and Ms. Guskov to reduce their environmental impact to the degree that they propose, were they living off-site. They would have to commute twice daily to the farm by car and would not be able to benefit from the renewable energy available and the energy efficient design of their dwelling. In the section below, “Relevant Appeal Decisions”, I outline other cases in which residential planning permission has been granted on the grounds of permaculture demonstration purposes and the multiplicity of tasks that must be performed. I also outline cases which have acknowledged that the assessment of functional need on proposals for sustainable agriculture must draw on different assumptions and data than those prepared for conventional agriculture.

My conclusion is that there is a firm functional need for the Applicants to live at Greenham Reach in order to carry out the proposed activities. Were they prevented from living on-site I can see no way in which a business could be sustained that both cared for the land and managed to generate a livelihood for a family.

3) clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;

Mr. and Mrs. Guskovs' business plan is thorough and is cleverly designed to bring in a reasonable income from a relatively small area of land. The range of enterprises proposed is going to keep Mr. and Mrs. Guskov very busy, and it may be that with time they choose to simplify and specialise more on the most successful aspects of the business. However, I think that at this stage they are wise to spread their risk between more traditional activities such as market gardening and poultry raising, and the more innovative enterprise of agroforestry. Agroforestry is still in its early stages of development in the UK, but interest is growing as people look for novel ways to provide a wide range of local foods in a changing climate. I think that the focus on propagating fruit trees, shrubs and unusual plants to supply the Agroforestry Research Trust is a very good idea, and more financially astute than aiming to provide food alone.

I have studied the figures for each of the individual enterprises, the profit and loss forecast for the first five years, the cash flow and the competition analysis. The figures all seem realistic to me, and if anything the prices are very conservative. However, at a time when recession is causing people to be cautious with spending, it is wise not to expect too high a margin on organic produce. Furthermore, the fact that by year 5 a profit of nearly £10,000 above the £12,000 drawings for the family is anticipated, gives me confidence that there is a significant buffer should things not go according to plan. I therefore conclude that this business has been planned on a sound financial basis.

4) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and

There is no other accommodation in existence on site. An internet search of local estate agents revealed very little suitable accommodation for rent in the local area. There was one two bedroom cottage available for in Holcombe Rogus for £650 per month, while in nearby Sampford Peverell all properties for rent cost between £725 and £900 per month. In Wellington, which is five miles away, rental properties were cheaper, ranging from £395pcm for a one bedroom house to £595pcm for a three bedroom one. However, these were more urban properties, unsuitable for the muddy boots, dogs and seed trays involved in running a smallholding. Furthermore, living five miles away from the holding would result in a very high annual mileage as it would be necessary to drive to and from the holding at least once per day, and in many cases twice or three times in order to integrate early and late jobs on the smallholding with the domestic demands of running a household.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)

Para. 4 (p3) states the four aims for sustainable development set out in the Government's 1999 strategy:

- *social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;*
- *effective protection of the environment;*
- *the prudent use of natural resources; and*
- *the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.*

These aims should be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being, in ways that protect and enhance the physical environment and optimise resource and energy use.

I believe that the smallholdings at Greenham Reach address each of these aims the integrated way envisaged in this policy. It could be said that they will not promote high levels of economic growth. However, I would contend that they are addressing some the many problems resulting from the relentless pursuit of economic growth at the expense of the environment and society, and creating a more sustainable form of economic growth that is based on primary production.

Para. 19 (p8) Plan policies and planning decisions should be based on, "the potential impacts, positive as well as negative, on the environment of development proposals (whether direct, indirect, cumulative, long term or short term).

In my view the positive impacts of the proposed development considerably outweigh the negative ones, such as the visual impact of a development in the open countryside and the potential generation of traffic. In the immediate future, this trio of holdings will provide much needed opportunities for young people to enter the agricultural sector, providing valuable examples of sustainable rural enterprise. The emphasis on environmental protection, low carbon lifestyles and minimal fossil fuel use, means that the smallholders at Greenham Reach will be preparing for the long term future when fossil fuels will be more expensive and local food will be a necessity rather than a luxury. I believe that the skills and infrastructure that they will be developing from the day they start their enterprises will be highly valued in the future.

Para 22. (p9) Regional planning authorities and local authorities should promote resource and energy efficient buildings; community heating schemes; the use of combined heat and power, small-scale renewable

and low carbon-schemes in developments; the sustainable use of water resources; and the use of sustainable drainage systems in the management of run-off.

I understand that the proposed low impact dwellings will incorporate several of the energy efficient and renewable energy technologies listed above.

Mid Devon Core Strategy 2026

Para 4.2 Community Strategy for Devon (2004) - "By 2015 we want Devon to be a county with safe, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a cherished environment".

In my view, the proposed developments at Greenham Reach embody the ambitions set out in paragraph 4.2. The principle aim of the Ecological Land Co-operative (ELC) is to create affordable access to small-scale farming opportunities, to enable new entrants into agriculture to establish sustainable land-based enterprises. ELC requires the lessees of its smallholdings to adhere to strict environmental principles in their land management and lifestyles. As such, the smallholdings at Greenham Reach will simultaneously achieve health (by encouraging physically active employment combined with the production and consumption of fresh, organic food); inclusivity (by enabling a previously excluded sector of society access to agricultural livelihoods); a diverse economy (by allowing new agricultural enterprises providing foods and crafts to be directly sold to the public) and protection of a cherished environment (by requiring the very highest standards of environmental stewardship).

Meeting Employment Needs (COR 4) "The employment needs of the community will be met through: c) measures to diversify the agricultural and rural economy in ways which protect countryside character. (p31)

The proposed enterprise will add diversity to the agricultural sector by providing a number of innovative food and craft products to local people, whilst managing the land to conserve and enhance its biodiversity, protect its hedgerows and add orchard.

Climate Change (COR 5) "Measures will be sought which minimise the impact of development on climate change and contribute towards national and regional targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, including.....c) all new development will be carbon neutral in development and use....." (p33)

By producing food for local markets using organic methods Mr. and Mrs. Guskov will be reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Central to organic farming is the building of soil using organic matter (compost and manure), a

process which stores carbon and thus removes it from the atmosphere. Their produce is tailored to meet the food needs of local people and reduce their dependence on produce that has been imported, or transported great distances by road. The substantial agroforestry plantings that all three smallholdings plan will further contribute to carbon sequestration. Furthermore, by living in a well insulated, low impact house, run using renewable energy (solar electricity and wood fuel heating), the family will be further cutting their carbon emissions compared to the national average.

E14 Agricultural buildings will be permitted outside the Defined Settlement Limits provided that: i) the primary purpose is to support farming activities related to the land holding or the immediate agricultural community and the building is needed for that purpose; ii) the building is located so as not to cause harm to the living conditions of nearby residents and the character and appearance of the area.

The agricultural buildings associated with this proposal are all necessary to support the business concerned. I understand that great care will be taken to minimise the visual impact of all the structures, by locating them out of the view of nearby residents and planting hedges/belts of trees/orchards to screen any buildings that might be seen from further afield.

Relevant Appeal Decisions

It has been recognised in several recent planning appeal decisions, that the multiple needs of a small-scale but diverse holding constitute a legitimate functional need for an agricultural workers dwelling. These include:

- *Fivepenny Farm, a mixed organic farm on 43 acres in Wootton Fitzpaine, Dorset (1st April 2005 APP/F1230/C/04/1162420, 1159852 and 1162421)* – Inspector B.C.Wilkinson decided that “the diversity and character of this enterprise is bound to give rise not only to the occasional emergency, but also to a constant stream of smaller problems” and concluded, “on balance, that taking into account the nature of the enterprise, the early stage in its development, and the character and location of the appeal site, the only practicable and available solution to the needs I have identified is for both families to live on that site”. Fivepenny Farm was granted permanent permission on the same grounds of functional need in August 2009.
- *Green and Pleasant, an organic market garden at Upsydling, Dorset (APP/F1230/c/07/2055628 and 9)* - After listing the individual functional needs in his decision letter, Inspector C.A.Thompson concluded that, “although none of these matters individually would mean that workers are needed to be on hand day and night, taken together they make a compelling case for someone being required to live on or very near the

premises. This to my mind represents a clear need of the enterprise rather than that being just a measure to gratify the personal preferences of the individuals concerned. The functional test has been satisfied". Temporary permission was granted.

- *Trevalon Organic Vegetables, Liskeard, Cornwall (12th August 2008 APP/K0805/C/07/2058055 and 2058053)* – At this organic horticulture operation, Inspector Roger Priestly concluded that "taking all these factors into account, I consider it to be essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for someone to be readily available at most times". Temporary permission was granted.

The appeal decisions listed above include one mixed holding and two horticultural holdings. The case for multiple functional needs at Greenham Reach Plot C is, in my view, strengthened in comparison to the purely horticultural holdings, due to the needs of the poultry and grazing livestock within their enterprise mix.

A number of other recent planning decisions have recognised the need for appellants to live on site due to their sustainability objectives, resulting in powerful educational examples of permaculture in action:

- *Land Matters, Totnes, Devon (23rd August 2007, APP/K1128/C/06/2032148 and 2039820)* – Inspector Alan Woolnough recognised that the range of proposals in the planning application by this permaculture and educational community, "if fully realised could contribute substantially to the advancement of this important strand of environmental science, with the notable bi-product of refining sustainable agriculture practices applicable well outside the confines of agriculture. Of particular significance is the educational role that this undertaking aims to fulfil, with its scope to not only host school trips but also to assist more advanced research". He allowed the appeal for temporary permission, concluding that, "the advancement of permaculture and sustainable ways of living facilitated by this project have sufficient potential value to outweigh the limited harm to other interests of acknowledged importance". Temporary permission was granted.
- *Quicken Wood, Wealden District Council (APP/c1435/C/08/2076232)* – Inspector Alan Woolnough concluded that the couple, who "have an underlying objective of living in a sustainable and ultimately self-sufficient lifestyle requiring a holistic approach" would not be able to achieve their aims, "particularly in relation to recycling and utilisation of renewable energy", if they were living elsewhere in an ordinary dwelling. Temporary permission was granted.
- *Steward Community Woodland (1 June 2009, APP/J9497/C/08/2083419-28)* - The grounds upon which a second round of temporary permission were granted to this woodland permaculture community by Inspector Brian Cook were, "that the venture has evolved into one where the education resource provided

by what is, in effect, a demonstration project of permaculture principles being applied in practice is of significant wider benefit” and “having regard to the total reliance on renewable energy sources and reclaimed/reused materials I believe the development meets many of the national policy objectives concerning sustainable development”.

- *Ourganics Evolving Systems, Litton Cheney, Dorset* – Following a period of temporary permission, Ms. Pat Bowcock was given permanent permission at Committee (West Dorset District Council) in November 2009. This was on the grounds of the multiple functional needs of a mixed horticultural, poultry and educational site, and the need to be resident to fulfil the demonstration function of the permaculture project.
- *Pentiddy Woodland Project, Liskeard, Cornwall* – This permaculture smallholding and woodland crafts project was given permanent permission by Caradon District Council in November 2009, after four years of temporary permission. Although the project is land-based (both on and off-site), it is the need to live on site to demonstrate the application of permaculture principles in achieving a sustainable lifestyle that formed the grounds for granting permission.

Other Material Considerations

Attraction of new entrants into agriculture – The average age of farmers is consistently increasing, while fewer young people are entering the profession due to low remuneration combined with a perception of the work being hard and monotonous. This trend is a cause for concern, due to the uncertainty it brings about who will have the skills to manage the countryside in the future. It appears that organic farming is more attractive to younger people than conventional farming. A survey conducted by the University of Essex found that in 2003 the average age of organic farmers was 49, compared to 56 in the conventional sector (Maynard and Green 2004, p51). The lack of affordable opportunities to begin farming is, however, a major barrier to many new entrants. The three smallholdings at Greenham Reach have been created by the Ecological Land Co-operative to address exactly this issue, alongside the need to increase local food availability, using sustainable farming methods. Templates such as this are needed if we are to boost national food security and manage the landscape.

The Transition Movement - There is evidence that the age of cheap and plentiful oil is nearing its end. Global peak oil production is predicted to occur between now and 2015, after which the cost of oil will start to rise. It is important that as a society we plan for a future which is less dependent on fossil fuel energy, to prevent the potential economic instability that the increased cost of oil could cause. Already, through the “Transition Towns” movement many communities in the UK are already planning for this eventuality (Hopkins 2008). The smallholdings at Greenham Reach will contribute to this movement by providing a rich array of local food products

and a living model of sustainable agriculture which is actively reducing its reliance on fossil fuels.

Low Impact Policy – Other parts of the UK, mainly in Wales, are actively encouraging low impact development through planning policies aimed at projects like that proposed at Greenham Reach. Pembrokeshire National Park Authority's Policy 52 (Low Impact Development making a Positive Contribution) and the draft replacement for the Welsh Assembly Government's TAN6 (One Planet Development) are two such examples.

Conclusions

The smallholdings created by the Ecological Land Co-op are designed to provide new entrants into agriculture with affordable opportunities to produce local food using sustainable farming methods. Mr. and Mrs. Guskov have been chosen from a number of applicants on the strength of their business plan, and because they appear to have the skills and experience to carry out their intended business.

I believe that their business meets the tests in PPS7, Annex A for evidence of intention and ability, functional need and that the business is planned on a sound financial basis. The financial planning for this business is very thorough, and the very conservative income figures give me confidence that the profit could be considerably higher assuming no unforeseen events prevent the plan from being implemented.

Furthermore, I have greater confidence in the potential success of this business as part of a trio of low-impact smallholdings than I would if it were isolated. The long hours and hard work required to establish a business such as that proposed mean that to have both practical and moral support close at hand will be invaluable. The interactions which will occur between the three businesses, in terms of trading resources, tools and labour will enable each to work more efficiently, while the sharing of resources such as the barn, the solar array and the water treatment system reduces their individual consumption of resources. I am sure that as the holdings develop they will also develop efficient, co-ordinated distribution and transport systems that reduce the amount of traffic compared to three isolated smallholdings. Whilst researching for my book, "Surviving and Thriving on the Land" I visited and interviewed smallholders living in a wide range of different circumstances, and concluded that the ideal model is exactly that proposed by ELC. There are a handful of examples of such "clusters" of smallholdings already in operation, but I believe that as a society we would be making better progress towards sustainable development if more young people were offered opportunities such as those available at Greenham Reach.

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