

Conclusion

The Master Plan will preserve historic buildings, enhance the character of this part of the Green Belt and provide useful commercial accommodation in a sustainable location. It is supported by Horton Parish Council and was approved last year by the Royal Borough subject to a legal agreement which it is hoped will be concluded shortly. Until the Master Plan works are completed and generating their own income, the farm business requires continued support to remain viable. That support has been provided by diversification proposals, and two of the applications before you request further temporary consents for existing businesses.

Another application represents a long-term solution for the major diversified activity on the farm, and places storage of vehicles and plant and ancillary office accommodation within an existing building, thereby preserving the openness of the Green Belt.

83% of local people who visited the Public Consultation Exhibition in Horton in 2002 supported the need for a temporary use of existing buildings for income generation prior to the implementation of the Master Plan. Only 12% objected, with 5% undecided.

An independent consultant's survey has shown that currently of 194 vehicle movements a day, 82 relate to farm traffic. This is less traffic than when Berkyn Manor Farm had pigs, cattle and 100 acres under intensive market gardening production.

The Government recognises that "Diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises" and asks local planning authorities to "give favourable consideration to proposals for diversification in the Green Belt where the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it" and to "encourage the re-use or replacement of existing buildings where feasible" (Planning Policy Statement 7, paragraphs 30 and 31).

The current applications are therefore critical to the continued viability of this urban fringe farming enterprise and the funding of the detailed design and implementation of the Master Plan.

Your continued support is requested.