

YOUR REF: SP/020620/61

COMMITTEE PLANNING APPLICATION:

19/00514/FUL | Redevelopment of Brocksbushes Farm Shop & Tearoom including demolition of existing buildings and erection of new buildings to accommodate farm shop, tea shop, play barn and production kitchen uses, new car park and associated new planting. | Brocksbushes Tea Rooms Brocksbushes Farm Stocksfield Northumberland NE43 7UB

Speech by Harry Dickinson as Applicant

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on behalf of my mother Caroline Dickinson, and I as joint applicants.

Hopefully some of you are familiar with Brocksbushes, which has always been a working farm and in the 1980s began to diversify into the business it is today with Pick your Own soft fruit, a Farm Shop and Tea Room. It is very much a family business and over recent years I have become directly involved.

As well as our Farm Shop & Tea Room which has grown incrementally over the last four decades, we are perhaps best known for our pick your own strawberry fields which attract people from all over the region every summer, particularly young families. We currently employ 30 full time members of staff and use 280 suppliers from the local area and wider region. We very much see ourselves as part of the local community and our Tea Room is a regular meeting point for locals and people passing through Northumberland due its location at the intersection of the A68 and A69.

As a business we are constrained by our current timber buildings which have developed over time but have now reached their maximum capacity and are sadly not fit for any form of growth.

We have been engaging with Planning and Economic Development Officers about redevelopment over a number of years, with our first meeting held back in October 2014. There was then a pre-application enquiry and meetings, ahead of our detailed application, and then further meetings to discuss appropriate planning conditions should consent be granted.

We would like to thank your Officers for working with us to arrive at a proposal for the site that can be brought to this committee recommended for approval. Also, for their detailed committee report which comments that:

The proposed layout, scale and design of the development are considered to be appropriate for this rural location and reflect the countryside setting and character of Brocksbushes Farm.

As you will appreciate the cost of our application and all of the plans and technical documents are not insignificant for a business of our scale, but we wanted to provide detailed proposals to show our commitment to the quality of development and to ensure it could be supported.

Our proposal is for a once in a generation investment in creating a new and exciting destination for our county, with a Farm Shop, Tea Room and Play Barn, and continuing to uphold all the values that are the cornerstones of our business today.

The wider benefits arising from our proposal will include:

- The creation of 20 new jobs.
- A significant benefit to the construction sector with building our new premises.
- Supply chain benefits through increased goods sourced from existing and new local and regional suppliers.
- Attractive new buildings together with new planting to replace our existing buildings.

We are pleased that the application and its benefits are supported by both the council's internal Tourism & Visitor Economy manager as well as Northumberland Tourism as an external body.

Bywell Parish Council has supported this application together with 17 people who have written in support of the application.

There are no objections to the application from consultees.

As a result of COVID-19 there is increasing focus on our communities especially in rural areas, also on our local food supply chains, and on the need for economic recovery. We believe that our proposals will provide a new and exciting platform for local and regional suppliers, provide an improved destination where locals and visitors to the area can meet, as well as supporting economic recovery through construction, and job creation.

We welcome the acknowledgement in the committee report that our proposal:

'represents a major private sector initiative which will play a role in rebuilding & growing a strong local (rural) economy'

The proposal before you, which has been over five years in the making, means a huge amount to us as a family. We hope that this committee is in agreement with their Officers recommendation and resolves to grant permission. Thank you.

