



COPY

**REPORT OUTLINING  
THE AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION  
FOR THE BUILDING OF A HOUSE**

**AT**

**SQUIRREL COTTAGE, ROWRAH, FRIZINGTON, CUMBRIA, CA26 3XS**

**ON BEHALF OF**

**MR & MRS M WATSON  
SQUIRREL COTTAGE, ROWRAH, FRIZINGTON, CUMBRIA, CA26 3XS**

**7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by Mr Michael and Mrs Sarah Watson of Squirrel Cottage, Rowrah, Frizington, Cumbria, CA26 3XS.
- 1.2 The main purpose of this report is to provide details of the farming and additional enterprises and diversification plans for Mr and Mrs Watson.
- 1.3 This Report is to be used in conjunction with a planning application for the erection of a dwelling at Squirrel Cottage, Rowrah, Frizington, Cumbria.
- 1.4 The site at Squirrel Cottage is currently owned and occupied by Mr and Mrs Watson and they are currently residing in a static caravan.
- 1.5 This Report in regard to the evaluation of the farm business is carried out by Johanna Edwards who is a Rural Practice Chartered Surveyor and a Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

## 2.0 INSPECTION

- 2.1 An inspection of the property and enterprise was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
- 2.2 At the meeting, Mr and Mrs Watson outlined their reasons for wanting a dwelling to be built on the site at Squirrel Cottage.
- 2.3 Currently Mr and Mrs Watson own an area extending to approximately 2.23 acres where they currently reside in a static caravan. In addition to this area, they also own a further 10.2 acres of agricultural land on the opposite side of the minor public highway known as Chapel Row which runs from the junction of Pasture Road and the A5086 running northwards, re-joining the A5086 at Kelton Gate north of Rowrah. Currently there is a log cabin located on the site where Mr and Mrs Watson reside and this is used as holiday accommodation and this element of their business started trading in August 2022. Mr and Mrs Watson reported that they had already got a number of forward bookings for next year with the property let through the booking agents Cumbria Cottages.

Alongside the holiday let enterprise, Mr and Mrs Watson run alpaca walking experiences and these are extremely popular with the general public. In addition, they also offer 'do-it-yourself' livery for horse owners.

They are wishing to expand their enterprises and are looking to develop a cattery on the site to complement the existing holiday lodge, but also offer care for people's cats when they go away on holiday.

- 2.4 The holding is located in a very secluded position on the outskirts of Rowrah and due to the topography of the ground and the surrounding wooded areas, the actual site of the main farmyard, is not visible to the surrounding area.

- 2.5 A plan of the farm and its location is included within this Report in Appendix 1.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 Mr and Mrs Watson bought the area of land where the caravan, holiday Lodge and buildings are approximately 25 years ago along with some land adjacent to this. At the time, they were living in the village of Rowrah and undertaking foster care of difficult children within their home. They had the opportunity to purchase this land and took the opportunity to build a residential property called The Willows. The Willows provided a home for themselves together with the foster children they were looking after for the Council. They subsequently sold The Willows once they stopped fostering children and have subsequently lived in the static caravan on site which they obtained temporary planning consent for.

- 3.2 They purchased approximately 10.2 acres of land located on the opposite side of the Council highway to the farm building area.

Whilst they were occupying The Willows and subsequently they have developed the area of land and set up a small business which offers accompanied walks with alpacas together with an opportunity for people to come and meet and greet the alpacas. They also offer equine livery and currently they have three horses in livery which is offered as either a 'do-it-yourself' or part care by the Watsons.

- 3.3 In September 2020 Mr and Mrs Watson obtained planning consent for a timber holiday chalet which has subsequently been installed and has been up and running as a business since August 2022. A firm called Cumbria Cottages deal with the bookings of the holiday cottage. It has been confirmed there are considerable forward bookings for next year and it is estimated that on average the cabin turns over £1,500 per calendar month since it commenced trading.
- 3.4 Alongside the alpacas and horses, Mr and Mrs Watson also own two horses, three donkeys, an extensive range of poultry and four trail hounds of which two are used to breed puppies both for their own enjoyment and also to sell to other trail hound enthusiasts.

Mr Watson is registered disabled, but wishes to be self sufficient and not claim aid from the State, and therefore wishes to ensure he runs a successful business with his wife to support themselves.

#### **Livestock**

- 3.5 The livestock enterprise at Squirrel Cottage are both there for Mr and Mrs Watson's enjoyment and also on a commercial basis to assist with the running of their holiday accommodation business and alpaca trekking. It is essential with this number of livestock on the holding that there is somebody present at all times in case of injury or disease and also for security purposes given the close proximity of the main road which runs from Cockermouth to Cleator Moor.

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## Crops

- 3.6 The land extending to 10.2 acres is used both as grazing land for the horses and alpacas. In addition, it is also used to produce a haylage crop for feeding the livestock and this requires a labour input to undertake this. There are also several small paddocks around the farm yard.

## Tourism Enterprise

- 3.7 Mr and Mrs Watson installed a wooden log cabin which is let as a holiday cottage on site. This has been running since August 2022 with good occupancy and good forward bookings as shown by the booking pages on Cumbria Cottages website. In addition, Mr and Mrs Watson also manage and help clean the adjacent property known as Pussywillow Cottage which is in third party ownership but is also run as a holiday accommodation.
- 3.8 Mr and Mrs Watson run a business called Spring Meadow Alpaca Walks which offers people the opportunity to come and take the alpacas for a walk in the local countryside. It also gives them a meet and greet experience with not only the alpacas at the farm but also horses, donkeys, poultry etc. This business has been established for approximately two years and is gaining in popularity and brings in a significant income.
- 3.9 Mr and Mrs Watson currently employ somebody on a part-time basis who works approximately 20 hours per week dealing with the cleaning of both their holiday cottage and also the one that they manage together with working with the livestock and dealing with the alpaca walks. Their intention is to grow the business to a level whereby they will be able to employ somebody on a full-time basis.

## Maintenance

- 3.10 Many of the buildings on the property are of an aged condition and therefore there is currently considerable ongoing maintenance for all of them to ensure that they are up to the necessary welfare specifications for respective livestock and to ensure that they are wind and water tight at all times.

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## Security

- 3.11 The need for a dwelling on this location arises from a combination of both ensuring welfare for all of the animals present on the holding, but also for the security of the location. There is easy access from the main Cockermouth to Cleator Moor road to the property and not only is there the livestock security to deal with, but also those who keep their horses at the livery have their horses tack, rugs etc. stored in a secured building on site. It is therefore essential that there is someone present at all times to ensure the security.

## **Diversification**

- 3.12 In addition to the existing business being run on site, Mr and Mrs Watson are looking to develop the business further by setting up a cattery on site whereby they would take in people's cats whilst they were away and on holiday. They would also offer this service to their guests coming to stay both in their own log cabin holiday cottage but also the adjacent holiday cottage Pussywillow Cottage which they manage.
- 3.13 In order to proceed with this diversification enterprise, they would again need to be resident on site to offer the owners of the cats the reassurance that there was somebody there and 24/7 care was available for their pets.

## **Location**

- 3.14 The location of the site sits close to the village of Rowrah on a site of a former railway line. The site backs onto an area of land which is used for a mix of commercial uses including Ennerdale Brewery, Birkett Fencing and Timber Yard, a bus depot and also a sewerage pumping station. The site is not visible from the surrounding properties or public highway as it is screened by extensive areas of woodland.

## **4.0 PLANNING POLICY & THE NEED FOR A FURTHER DWELLING AT SQUIRREL COTTAGE, ROWRAH**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in February 2019, which has superseded previous NPPF's and Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the criteria which are applicable in the case at Squirrel Cottage. The NPPF maintains longstanding policy that new residential dwellings should be allowed in open countryside in only exceptional circumstances – one of which is where a rural business requires residential presence. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF sets out the following:

"Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) There is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside".
- 4.2 There is a clear functional need for a dwelling at Squirrel Cottage, Rowrah.
- 4.3 The location where Mr and Mrs Watson run their business from clearly demonstrates the need for a residential dwelling to be on site, both for animal welfare and also security purposes.
- 4.4 The site is located close to industrial land and within an area of residential properties given that there are residential properties located along Chapel Row which sits to the east of the main village of Rowrah.

- 4.5 Set out below is the standard labour requirement for the existing enterprise on the holding and this indicates the need for a 1.22 full-time workers on the holding based on a full-time worker working 48 weeks at 40 hours per week.
- 4.6 The labour requirement for the holding has been determined by taking figures and the relevant data from Annex 4 of the DEFRA Publication "Farm Classification in the United Kingdom" and details for the labour requirement for Squirrel Cottage, Rowrah are attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.7 The standard working year is taken to amount to 1920 hours per annum for the work at Squirrel Cottage and this figure excludes time attributable to work which is undertaken by any contractors together with excluding time spent on the following:
- Management of the farming business
  - Use of contractors
  - Conservation work
  - Holiday entitlement
  - Sickness
- 4.8 It is generally acknowledged that there are difficulties in standardising labour requirements for agriculture and these figures represent typical labour requirements under typical conditions over the full range of enterprises on the holding .
- 4.9 Due to the nature of the enterprises, it does necessitate there being the need for someone on the holding at all times and therefore there is a requirement for there to be accommodation for somebody to be present.
- 4.10 As well as animal welfare being of utmost importance, the security of the holding is also an issue given the holding's location close to the main road and out of sight of neighbouring properties. This would therefore make the holding an easy target for criminals which again, demonstrates the need for a dwelling on the holding to ensure there is somebody present at all times.
- 4.11 In short there is a clearly established functional need for a dwelling on the holding both in order to ensure the utmost animal welfare of the livestock, to maximise the diversification opportunities on the holding and also for security purposes.
- 4.12 The details of the proposed house and its siting are not a matter for the subject of this appraisal and will be dealt with in the planning statement that accompanies this application.
- 4.13 The issues relating to siting, access or impact on the countryside are beyond the scope of this assessment.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 It is felt that the business meets all the requirements for a dwelling to be situated at Squirrel Cottage.
- 5.2 There is an overriding need for the essential and proper functioning of the holding that there is a dwelling present.
- 5.3 This is justified by way of the following:
- It is essential that there is sufficient labour residing on the holding to provide the supervision of the business required to ensure that it meets current animal welfare legislation and health and safety law required by the Government and security for the site and it is not practical for the workforce to be living away from the holding.
  - Security of the holding is critical in terms of criminal behaviour and also bio-security.

Signed

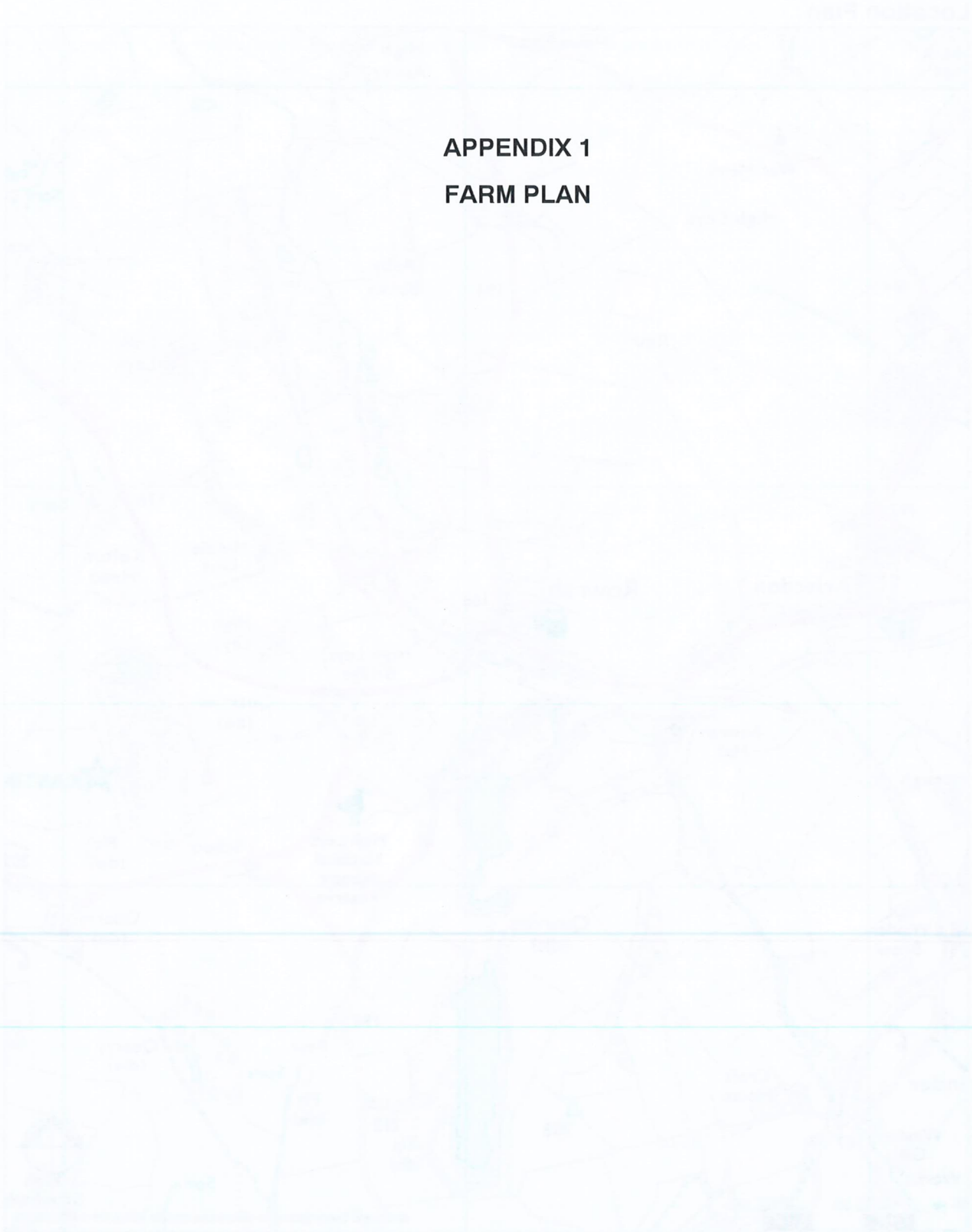
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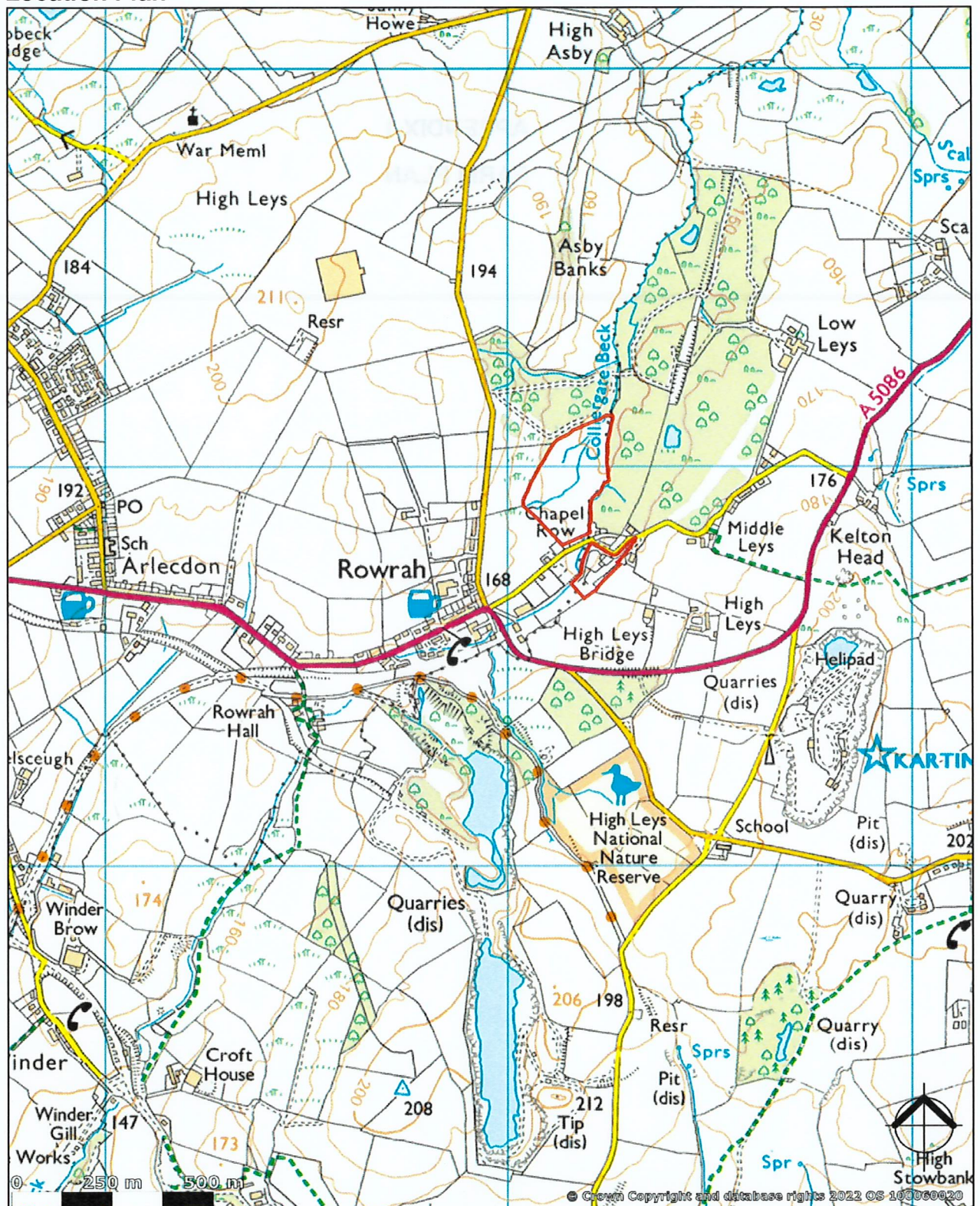
Date

7<sup>th</sup> December 2022

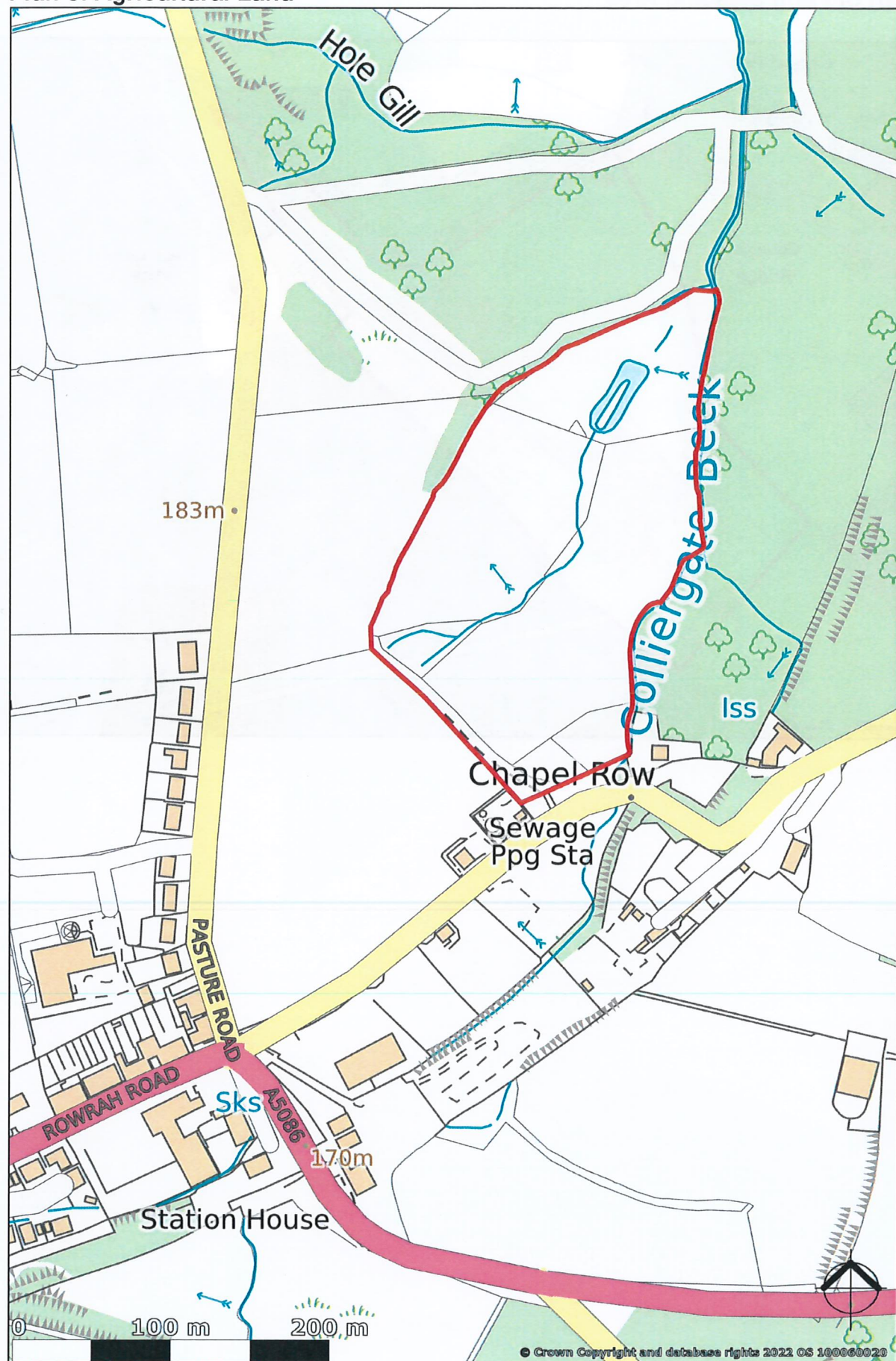
## APPENDIX 1

### FARM PLAN

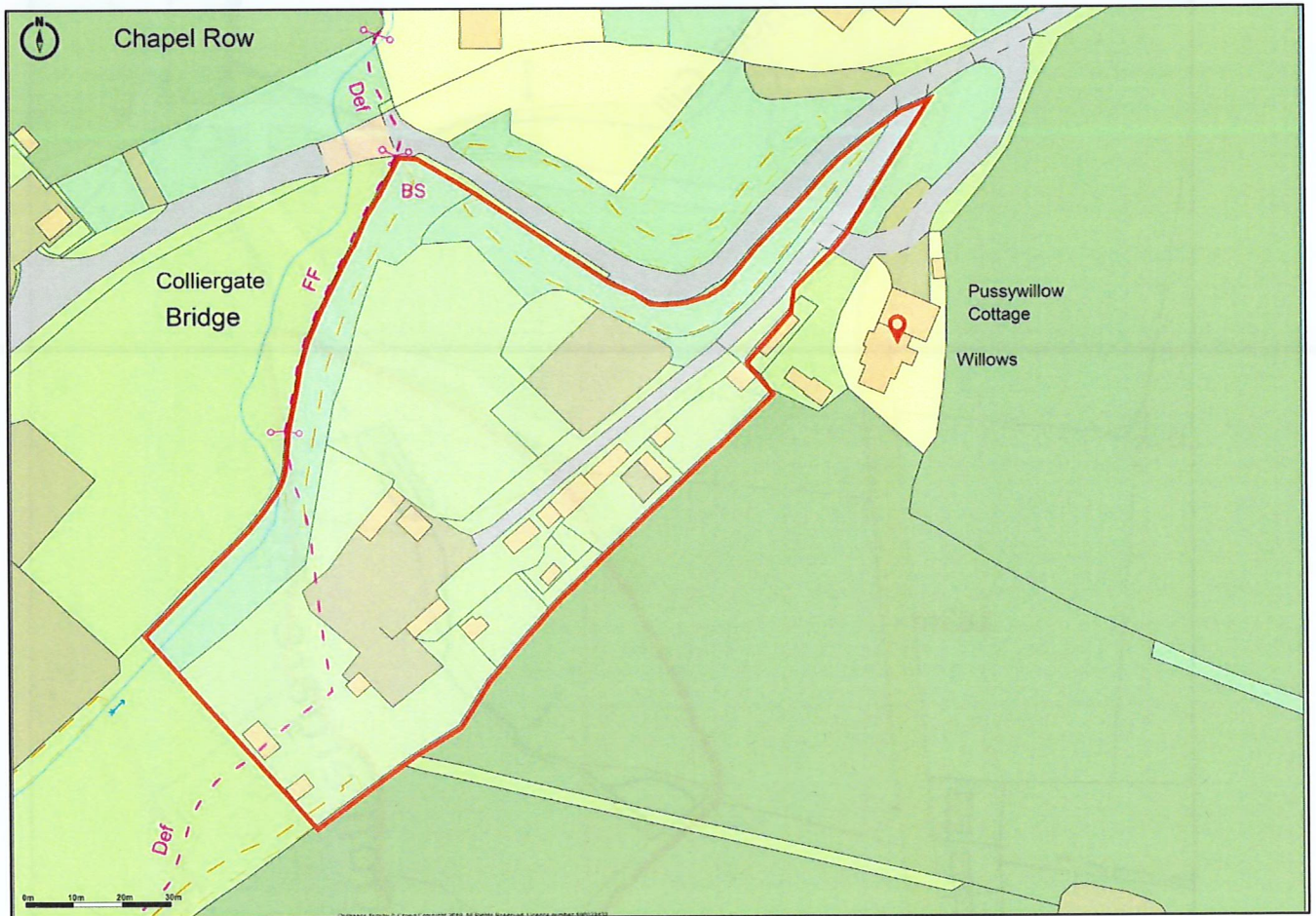


**Location Plan**

# Plan of Agricultural Land



## Plan of Farm Steading Area



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **LABOUR REQUIREMENTS**

| <b>Livestock</b>                       | <b>Nos</b>       | <b>Hours/Head/Annum</b>     | <b>Total Hours</b> | <b>Total Hours</b> |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Alpacas                                | 6                | 150                         | 900                |                    |
| Donkeys                                | 3                | 150                         | 450                |                    |
| Horses                                 | 5                | 150                         | 750                |                    |
| Poultry                                | 40               | 0.10                        | 4                  |                    |
|                                        |                  |                             |                    | <b>2104</b>        |
| <b>Cropping</b>                        | <b>Ha</b>        | <b>Hours/Ha / Annum</b>     | <b>Total Hours</b> | <b>Total Hours</b> |
| Grassland management                   | 4.65             | 4                           | 18.60              |                    |
| Farm maintenance                       | 4.65             | 10                          | 46.50              |                    |
|                                        |                  |                             |                    | 65.10              |
| <b>Buildings</b>                       | <b>Sq Meters</b> | <b>Hours / Sq m / Annum</b> | <b>Total Hours</b> | <b>Total Hours</b> |
| Building maintenance 100m <sup>2</sup> | 350              | 0.5                         | 175                | 175                |
|                                        |                  |                             |                    |                    |
| <b>TOTAL HOURS PER ANNUM</b>           |                  |                             |                    | <b>2344.10</b>     |

Figures taken from the Farm Classification in the United Kingdom data published by DEFRA