

THE COUNTY FARMS ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND RESTRUCTURING

Report of the Head of Business Strategy and Support

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation(s):

1. That 1.78 acres or thereabouts of land comprising part OS 1600 at Lower Parks Farm, Crediton be declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate so that it can be sold on the open market.
2. That subject to the tenant of the 46.02 acres of landing forming part Middle Winsham Farm, Braunton surrendering his tenancy of the holding at 25 March 2017, consideration of amalgamating the 77.30 acres and the 46.02 acres or thereabouts of bare land forming part Middle Winsham Farm with the principle holding (Middle Winsham) for a term of years to be agreed, be deferred pending the submission by the tenant of Middle Winsham Farm of a Business Plan (supported by cashflows and budgets) for the land involved and the tenant being interviewed by the committee at its next meeting on 22 February 2017. This resolution supersedes resolution FE/100(a) (ii) and (iii) of 19 February 2016.

1.0 Part Lower Parks Farm, Crediton

1.1 The Crediton Estate comprises:

Lower Parks Farm	28.54 hectares (70.56 acres)
Part Parks Farm	27.97 hectares (69.11 acres)
Total	56.51 hectares (139.67 acres)

- 1.2 Lower Parks Farm is being occupied and managed as a residential equipped starter farm until such times as the potential strategic or commercial development value of some or all of the land can be secured or permanently discounted.
- 1.3 The land at Parks Farm is being occupied and managed in the meantime as bare land available to tenants of the Estate located in close proximity thereto.
- 1.4 Part of the land forming part Lower Parks Farm has been allocated for housing by the District Council in its emerging local plan and the District Council has specifically asked that its development be brought forward early to help with their 5 year housing land supply requirements.
- 1.5 The area of land currently identified for residential development comprises 1.78 acres or thereabouts of OS 1600.

1.6 The tenant of Lower Parks Farm has been approached and has agreed terms for the release of the land from his tenancy so that it can be sold at the earliest possible opportunity.

2.0 Part Middle Winsham, Braunton

2.1 The land holdings at Braunton currently comprises:

(i)	Middle Winsham (house, buildings & land)	- 30.34 Ha (74.98 acres)
(ii)	Part Middle Winsham (bare land)	- 9.88 Ha (24.42 acres)
(iii)	Part Middle Winsham (bare land)	- 18.62 Ha (46.02 acres)
(iv)	Part Middle Winsham (bare land)	- 31.28 Ha (77.30 acres)
(v)	Total	- 90.13 Ha (222.72 acres)

2.3 Holding (i) is the principal holding currently occupied and farmed by a new entrant since 29 September 2013 on a seven and a half year Farm Business Tenancy terminating 25 March 2021.

2.4 Holding (ii) is part of the 103 acres of Higher Winsham Farm bare land acquired on 1 April 2014. It was amalgamated with the main holding on a separate Farm Business Tenancy co-terminating on 25 March 2021.

2.5 Holding (iii) is occupied by the former tenant of Middle Winsham Farm, now living and farming nearby on his own land. The agreement for that tenant to retain occupation of the bare land beyond 29 September 2013 until 25 March 2018 was approved by the committee at its meeting of 7 February 2013, under minute reference FE/169(a)(iii), as a phased or transitional progression move beyond the estate into the private sector.

2.6 Subject to contract terms have already been agreed with the new entrant tenant of the main Middle Winsham Farm holding for the eventual amalgamation of holding (iii) at 25 March 2018 under separate tenancy co-terminating with his main lease at 25 March 2021.

2.7 Holding (iv) was part of the Higher Winsham Farm acquisition and was let to a local County Farms Estate tenant as an interim custodian of the land on a fixed term Farm Business Tenancy until 25 March 2016.

2.8 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 19 February 2016, in relation to holdings (iii) and (iv), members resolved under minute ref FE/100(a):

(i) That a further and final fixed term Farm Business Tenancy of the 77.30 acres or thereabouts of bare land at Middle Winsham Farm, Braunton be granted to the tenant of Chapel Farm, Marwood for a term of 12 months commencing 25 March 2016 and expiring 25 March 2017, subject to terms being agreed.

(ii) That consideration of amalgamating the 77.30 acres or thereabouts of bare land forming part Middle Winsham Farm with the principal holding (Middle Winsham) for a term of four years from 25 March 2017 to 25 March 2021, subject to terms being agreed, be deferred pending the submission by the tenant of Middle Winsham Farm of a Business Plan

(supported by cashflows and budgets) for the land involved and the tenant being interviewed by the Committee

(iii) That the 46.02 acres or thereabouts of bare land forming part Middle Winsham Farm be amalgamated with the principal holding (Middle Winsham) for a term of three years from 25 March 2018 to 25 March 2021, subject to terms being agreed.

- 2.9 The tenant of the main holding has not yet submitted his business plan as required by the second limb of the previous committee resolution.
- 2.10 In the meantime, the tenant of holding (iii) has indicated he would like to give up his tenancy of the 46.02 acres or thereabouts of land 12 months early ie at 25 March 2017 instead of 25 March 2018.
- 2.11 The tenant of the main holding has recently indicated that he would like to take on both the 77.30 acres and the 46.02 acres of land as soon as 25 March 2017.
- 2.12 The tenant of the main holding has indicated that if he does take on both blocks of ground at 25 March 2017, he would like to be treated as a progression tenant and be offered a longer term tenancy of the enlarged holding so that he has the security and confidence to invest and expand his business, and convert the holding to Organic Status.
- 2.13 The tenant of the main holding has also asked that the committee reconsider the rental value of the enlarged and combined holding which was fixed by an interview panel committee and accepted and agreed by the tenant in 2013 when the tenancy of the main holding was advertised to let on the open market.

3.0 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Alternative options have been considered and discounted as they are believed to either be contrary to current Estate policy and/or not in the best financial interests of the Estate.

4.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

- 4.1 The views and opinions of the Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the Estate Tenants Association will be presented by the two co-opted members to the committee.
- 4.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations for or against the proposal have been received
- 4.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.

5.0 Considerations

- 5.1 The Author is not aware of any financial, sustainability, carbon impact, equality, legal, risk management or public health issues arising from this report

6.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The Author has prepared this report in accordance with the findings of the County Farms Estate Strategic Review (April 2010)

Rob Parkhouse, Head of Business Strategy and Support

Electoral Divisions:

Crediton Rural
Braunton Rural

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

None

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