

**AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY ASSESSMENTS  
OF THREE SITES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOUTH WEST  
HERTFORDSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**SITE S(a)  
LAND EAST OF A405, (NORTH ORBITAL)/NORTH OF A412  
MILL END, RICKMANSWORTH**

**SITE S(b)  
FROGHALL FARM AND ADJOINING LAND, MAPLE CROSS**

**SITE S(c)  
LAND TO THE NORTH OF LITTLE GREEN LANE, CROXLEY GREEN**

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Site Location Plans
- Appendix 2 – Agricultural Holdings – Brief Details
- Appendix 3 – Viability and Costings Rationale
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 PJSA Ltd is instructed by Hertfordshire County Council and Vincent & Goring Ltd, Planning Consultants to assess the agricultural viability of three sites for the possible development of a South West Hertfordshire Secondary School. We have endeavoured to ensure reliability and consistency, by making reference to the Agro Business Consultants (ABC) costings book, edition No. 72, dated May 2011.
- 1.2 We have considered some of the individual circumstances of the farming practices, regimes and tenure, but have principally concerned ourselves with the productivity of each parcel of land, as a parcel of land, in its own right.
- 1.3 The present-day status of viability for the farms that may be affected by the proposal have been calculated and an assessment made as to how the proposal may affect each holding. A brief meeting with each of the farmers or owners has been undertaken to establish the physical characteristics of those farms, their general levels of viability, and how the proposal would affect farm operations, in terms of profitability, boundaries, access and severance.

# 2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 We refer to the Vincent & Goring Technical Studies Briefing Note, which deals with four separate parcels of land that have been considered as possible sites.
- 2.2 Of these sites, three are the subject of farm viability assessments. The three sites assessed in this report are:

**Table 1.0 – Site References & Locations**

<b>Site Reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>
<b>S(a)</b>	Land East A405/north of A412, Mill End, Rickmansworth	19.64
<b>S(b)</b>	Land (four parcels) at Froghall Farm and adjoining land, Maple Cross	27.63
<b>S(c)</b>	Land to the North of Little Green Lane, Croxley Green	17.48

- 2.3 The ABC Costings book, edition No. 72, dated May 2011, has been referred to in respect of gross margins and fixed costs for enterprises and farm holdings. Farm land viability calculations are shown in Appendix 3, together with an explanation on the limitations of published financial figures.
- 2.4 Two of the farmers of the sites (S(a) & S(c)), have been approached and these individuals have been willing to give information concerning their farming practices, in order to assist with this report. The owner of Site S(b) Parcel A has been approached and provided information on the access, ownership and use of the land.
- 2.5 Inspections have been made of all the sites.

- 2.6 We have not dealt with any planning policies, government guidance notes or statements, local or regional development framework documents or County policies unless specifically referred to in this report.
- 2.7 The assessment made is in terms of the financial viability of the land, the potential loss of agricultural income and production, and the possible effects of the loss of the land to each existing farm holding.
- 2.8 In order to assess the effect of loss to agriculture and the holding, the criteria set out in Table 2.0 below have been used.

**Table 2.0 - Criteria for Assessing the Significance of the proposal on Farm Viability**

	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
<b>1</b>	Large Adverse	The proposed scheme would directly lead to a significant loss in viability of the holding & or enterprise
<b>2</b>	Moderate Adverse	The proposed scheme would directly lead to a moderate loss in viability of the holding & or enterprise
<b>3</b>	Slight Adverse	The proposed scheme would directly lead to a minor loss in viability of the holding & or enterprise
<b>4</b>	Neutral	The proposed scheme would have no effect on the viability of the holding & or enterprise
<b>5</b>	Beneficial	The proposed scheme would result in a beneficial change to the farming operation and its viability & or enterprise

### **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITES**

#### **3.1 Site S(a) Land East of A405/north of A412 Description (see Appendix 1 for site plan)**

- 3.1.1 This site is 19.64 ha (48.53 acres) and is currently used for arable farming.
- 3.1.2 There are no buildings on the land.
- 3.1.3 The land is flat from east to west, with a gentle slope rising from south to north.
- 3.1.4 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is Grade 2.
- 3.1.5 The land has been identified as within the Central River Valleys Landscape Area in the adopted Local Plan Proposals Map.
- 3.1.6 There is a small area in the south part of the site which is identified as a local wildlife site under policy N2 of the Local Plan.
- 3.1.7 Some of the trees and hedges on the boundaries could potentially have ecological value.

3.1.8 There is bridleway along the north-eastern boundary of the land.

3.2 **Site S(b) Froghall Farm, Maple Cross Description (see Appendix 1 for site plan)**

3.2.1 This site is split in to 4 parcels:

- Parcel A: 6.03 ha (14.9 acres)
- Parcel B: 9.60 ha (23.72 acres)
- Parcel C: 3.42 ha (8.45 acres)
- Parcel D (woodland): 5.02 ha (12.4 acres)

Total site area: 24.07 ha (59.47 acres)

3.2.2 The County Council considers that only Parcel A would be a potential location for school buildings as it is adjacent to the existing urban area of Rickmansworth. Parcel B would be required for school playing fields.

3.2.3 This report assesses only Parcel A of Site S(b). Parcel A is the only parcel which can currently be utilised for agricultural purposes.

3.2.4 Parcel A has a single ownership and the landowner lets the land to a local farmer for cattle grazing.

3.2.5 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is Grade 3.

3.2.6 A wildlife site lies immediately south of the site and there will be ecological implications for the development of any land that is not regular arable agricultural use and areas of woodland and scrub.

3.2.7 It is understood that there are no public rights of way across this land.

3.3 **Site S(c) Land North of Little Green Lane, Croxley Green Description (see Appendix 1 for site plan)**

3.3.1 This site is 17.48 ha (43.19 acres) and is currently used for arable farming.

3.3.2 There are no buildings on the land.

3.3.3 There is a plateau in the centre of the land which falls away to the east.

3.3.4 There are no identified ecological values, other than the hedgerows.

3.3.5 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is Grade 2.

3.3.6 It is understood that there are no public rights of way across this land.

## 4 DESCRIPTION OF HOLDINGS

- 4.1 Table 3.0 summarises the enterprise within the agricultural holding, the principal use of the land, and an assessment of whether the unit constitutes a viable agricultural business. Descriptions of each of these agricultural holdings are presented in Appendix 2.

**Table 3.0 - Viability of Present Occupiers: Land Holding Size and Main Enterprise.**

Site	Approximate Holding Size (ha)	Main Enterprise(s)/ Land use	Presently viable as a Agricultural business?
S(a)	202.34	Dairy, Arable	Yes
S(b)	8.09	Rough Stock grazing	Doubtful
S(c)	141.64	Arable	Yes

## 5 ASSESSMENT OF AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY OF THE SITES AND THE EFFECT ON THE AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

- 5.1 The impact of the Scheme on each farm holding is assessed primarily on the long-term effect arising from the loss of land from the holding. The impact on farm holdings can have the effect of rendering the farming business incapable of fulfilling its present functions, which is the principal criterion for assessing the significance of the effect.
- 5.2 Overall, it has been determined that no farm holdings would be rendered unviable by the loss of the sites, albeit the profitability of the farms affected would be reduced. Table 4.0 sets out the impact of the proposal on the agricultural holdings affected.

**Table 4.0 – Land Holdings Affected**

Site	Total Area Farmed on holding (Approximately)	Presently Financially Viable	Total Area Lost (Ha)	Percentage of holding lost from proposed development	Impact on Viable Holdings
S(a)	202.34	Yes	19.64	9.71% (20% of arable enterprise)	Moderate Adverse (2)
S(b)	8.09	Marginal	6.03	74.54%	Neutral (4)
S(c)	141.64	Yes	17.48	12.34%	Slight Adverse (3)

### 5.3 **Site S(a)**

- 5.3.1 The farm holding would lose 19.64ha of the land farmed (9.71%) but almost 20% of the land utilised for the arable enterprise, should development proceed at this site.
- 5.3.1 The land lost is rented and is not utilised for grazing the dairy cows, therefore the dairy enterprise would not be materially affected and the existing enterprise should be capable of continued production.
- 5.3.2 The loss of 20% of the arable land will significantly affect the arable enterprise of the farm holding.
- 5.3.1 Overall the permanent effect of the Scheme would be **Moderate Adverse**, with the long term viability of the farm not being threatened, but changes would be required in terms of day-to-day management of the unit, especially to the arable enterprise.

### 5.4 **Site S(b)**

- 5.4.1 The land lost is almost 75% of the total landholding. The land affected is rented to a local farmer under a short term livestock grazing agreement (outside the security provisions of the Agricultural Holdings Acts & Agricultural Tenancies Act). Such land cannot be assumed to be available to agriculture in successive years as there is no security of tenure and thus the tenant farmer cannot rely upon its availability in future years.
- 5.4.2 The landholding is currently assessed as a non-viable agricultural unit (under their current form of management and use).
- 5.4.3 The proposed scheme would have a **Neutral** effect on the financial or functional viability of the landholding/occupiers enterprise.

### 5.5 **Site S(c)**

- 5.5.1 The loss will be almost 12.5% of the holding, which is farmed exclusively for the growing of cereals and grass on rotation.
- 5.5.2 The proposed scheme would lead to a **Slight Adverse** loss in viability of the holding & the arable enterprise.

## 6 **CONCLUSION**

### 6.1 **Site S(a)**

- 6.1.1 The loss of this site will affect the existing farm enterprise to the extent of losing approximately 10% of the agricultural production of the farm. The arable enterprise will be reduced by 20%. The loss will be significant to the income of the arable enterprise with no immediate reduction in Fixed Costs.
- 6.1.2 The land forms part of a block of rented land, which is approximately 40 hectares in total, of which 19.64 hectares will be taken out of agricultural production.

6.1.3 The removal of this site from the holding will have a detrimental effect on the farm, but it is our assessment that this would not undermine the farm to the extent of putting the existing enterprises in any imminent danger of collapse, due to lack of cash flow or turnover.

6.1.4 The payment of Statutory Compensation payable by the Landlord upon termination of the agricultural tenancy will not be significant in relation to the loss of future income to the tenant farmer.

## 6.2 **Site S(b)**

6.2.1 This site extends to 24.07 hectares and forms four separate parcels.

6.2.2 The loss of Parcels A & B of this site will not directly affect any farm enterprise.

6.2.3 The land is not farmed in an efficient manner and is not secure in terms of its availability to the grazier.

6.2.4 Statutory Compensation upon termination of the licence is unlikely to apply and any payments are unlikely to be significant in relation to the loss of future income to the tenant farmer.

## 6.3 **Site S(c)**

6.3.1 The loss of this site will affect the existing farm enterprise to the extent of losing approximately 10% of the cereal production of the farm. The arable enterprise, being the sole enterprise, would be reduced by 10% - the same as for the holding as a whole. The loss will reduce the income of the arable enterprise with no immediate reduction in Fixed Costs.

6.3.2 The land forms part of a block of rented land, which is approximately 35 hectares in total, of which 17.48 hectares will be taken out of agricultural production.

6.3.3 The removal of this site from the holding will have a detrimental effect on the farm, but it is our assessment that this would not undermine the farm to the extent of putting the existing enterprises in any imminent danger of collapse, due to lack of cash flow or turnover.

6.3.4 The payment of Statutory Compensation payable by the Landlord upon termination of the agricultural tenancy will not be significant in relation to the loss of future income to the tenant farmer.