

# Questions and Answers

## **Springs Farm**

21<sup>st</sup> April 2017

### **General**

*Who are the land owners and what is their connection to Floreat?*

*What are Springs Farm Equestrian Ltd and Springs Farm Services Ltd?*

*Why have you set up limited companies relating to the estate?*

Springs Farm is owned by the Otaibi family (a British family who also manage Floreat) and comprises over 307 acres and a considerable area of accommodation which requires extensive upkeep and therefore full-time staff. Several members of staff are also required to care for the horses, dogs and fulfil domestic duties, many of whom are employed from the local community. The management of the staff and equipment (from a health & safety, insurance, payroll and administration perspective) is far better organised through the structure provided a by Limited Company. This is common across estates throughout the UK and even with smaller farms. Floreat Real Estate Limited acts as advisors to the landowners in respect of the property and the management of these companies.

### **Proposals**

*What works are currently being undertaken across the estate?*

*What are your plans for the future of the estate?*

*What work are you undertaking relating to the existing farm track?*

Springs Farm is a private family residence and is being used for this purpose. The landowners have a passion for horses and intend to use their property for their hobby and as their primary residence. The property, under the previous owner, had been turned into a very secure compound which was overgrown and therefore required a considerable clean-up programme to remove razor-wire fences, security barriers, concrete pillars, over-grown and dying lleyandi etc., as well as fly-tipping and other general rubbish. As part of connecting Springs Farm and Westbury Farm back with their land, the farm track extending to the west has been re-established. It had become overgrown and was in poor repair. In order to create a farm track that would stand the test of time, the route was dug and re-laid and will be completed shortly.

### **Landscaping**

*Are all of the species being planted here native to the UK, or have any been imported?*

*Why have you thinned out/trimmed so many hedgerows?*

*Will you be able to keep all of this new planting alive and in good condition?*

*Can you explain the concept of a habitat corridor a bit more?*

*How often will you cut the meadows – will the fields look neatly trimmed or rougher?*

The planting design has mainly used UK native species; any exceptions are commonly used within the UK and are suitable for the soil and climate. The planting work has been undertaken by Nicholsons – a renowned landscape and forestry business based near Bicester – under the guidance of the landowner's landscape architects. The majority of the plants are UK grown (approx. 80%) and Nicholsons retains detailed records on their origin and importation, with full delivery notes and traceability for all trees on site. Nicholsons only uses high quality nurseries and also do their own checks. There are various restrictions on importing plants and some species (e.g. Oak) require notification of the relevant ministry. The Netherlands has rigorous checks through its passporting system. There is a comprehensive aftercare arrangement in place to ensure the success of any new plants.

The existing hedgerows were dominated by non-autochthonous trees which formed compact and high hedges that blocked air, light and access by birds to the lakes and prevented growth underneath and at ground level for other plants, creating a poor habitat. In addition the removal of concrete pillars which supported razor-wire fencing required removing vegetation which had grown through them. All this work occurred at the appropriate time of year.

Water lines act as a corridor and facilitate wildlife to move from one place to another if their conditions are good. The Sul Brook creates a connection (habitat corridor) with the Thames and the inner banks and the new plantations improve the scale and range of connections – in addition the cessation of intensive agricultural practice within the planted areas (spraying, mono-culture, ploughing) will allow the ecological potential of the land to be greatly improved.

The agricultural management of the land will be undertaken under the guidance of an agricultural contractor and the advice of ecologists. The aim for the meadows is to allow the natural improvement of their biodiversity, particularly along the Thames alongside normal agricultural management (grazing of sheep).

### ***Boundaries and access***

*When will you remove the remaining razor wire from the site boundaries?*

*Are there any plans for further roads or access points to the site? For example through the discussed railway tunnel*

There are no current plans to create a new access road and any such development would require extensive investigation and planning permission if it were to be put forward. Any developments requiring permission will undergo pre-application community engagement utilising the services of the client's communications

advisors. The razor wire has all been removed, although there is likely to still be some in the remaining lleyandi hedgerows.

### ***Flooding***

*Are you aware that most of the estate floods?*

*Are you prepared to support local flood defence initiatives in Purley and Pangbourne?*

*What works have you recently been undertaking to the streams/brooks/lakes crossing the estate?*

*Do the landowners have riparian responsibilities for maintenance of the banks of the Thames as it passes the site?*

The landowner has riparian responsibility for the watercourses through the land and is very aware of flooding. Enquiries have been made with the Environment Agency to provide advice on how to improve flood risk management and management of the banks. As part of this exercise, the landowner cleared a drainage channel through the site which is common practice for an agricultural holding. Fly-tipped rubbish and other items were removed for the watercourse, which will be allowed to regenerate under advice from the landowner's ecologist and any input from the relevant bodies.

### ***Surveys and assessments***

*What surveys have you undertaken for protected species on site?*

*Have you consulted the Environment Agency or Natural England on the work you are undertaking?*

*Have all necessary licenses or permits been obtained for the work being undertaken?*

The landowner has sought to speak with the Environment Agency to provide advice on managing the riparian responsibilities along the Thames and Sul Brook and information is being sent to them regarding the clearing of the drainage channel. This is part of normal farm management as a riparian owner. The landowner's flood risk engineers have also been in contact with the Environment Agency. No planning permission or development work has commenced on site so there are no development specific surveys, however an Extended Phase 1 desktop survey has been completed to assist in informing any future surveys. The landowner's specialists will be contacting Natural England to provide assistance in enacting the improvement opportunities identified within the ecological survey – e.g. to improve the ecological potential of the lakes.

### ***Horses***

*Why will these horses be here on site – is it for a commercial polo / equestrian use?*

*Will there be horse jumps / polo pitches created on the estate? Who will they be used by?*

The landowners have a passion for horses and intend to utilise their property to enjoy their hobby. It is a private use and in no way involves any commercial polo/equestrian use.

***Public Rights of Way***

*Are there any plans to remove, replace or divert the existing Public Right of Way which runs past the estate buildings and connects to Westbury Lane?*

If any such plans were to be put forward then it would have to go through the necessary regulatory process and pre-application community consultation. The permissive footpath is currently planned to remain accessible to the public.