

## ECOBAN FARM – SUSTAINABLE LOW IMPACT DEVELOPEMENT

### Introduction

This document aims to outline the definition Sustainability, Low Impact Development and its place in the UK's environmental and strategy and finally to clarify how Ecoban Farm projects intends to provide a mixed business/residential site where these objectives can be achieved.

### Definitions

Sustainable Development encompasses three main pillars of theory: environmental sustainability, social equality and sustained economic growth. The most favoured and applied definition is probably from Agenda 21 from the 1992 Rio Summit stating that sustainable development "meets present needs without compromising future needs". Sustainability as a concept has been central to many HM Government initiatives on both central and local level but there have been many challenges in implementing the policies and recommendations on grass root level, with resulted in 2008 The Homes and Communities Agency highlighting the problem of turning the policy into practice and therefore recommending new training opportunities for local governments to facilitate better understanding of sustainability issues.

The 2005 UK Sustainable Development Strategy puts sustainability in the core of planning and policy development to focus on: consumption and production, climate change, natural resource protection and sustainable communities. One the local level the same vision is expressed by Herefordshire County Council in the "Steps to Sustainability" leaflet and the work of The Bulmer Foundation ([www.bulmerfoundation.org.uk](http://www.bulmerfoundation.org.uk))

The term "Low Impact Development" (LID) has been coined by former editor of The Ecologist, Simon Fairlie in 1996, in order to describe:

"Development that, through its low negative environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality".

The broad definition tends to focus on rural land based livelihood development, as the basic needs for sufficiency such as food, water and power require access to land and control over its management. The overall aim for Low Impact Development is to have an overall positive environmental impact and it often sits side by side with the ethos of equality and human rights.

### Low Impact Developments' status in the UK Planning System

Although the concept of LID is still very new and many of its aspects are still under discussion, recent years have seen an increase of awareness and local government initiatives recognising its importance to securing UK's future environmental stability. The following councils have already published their planning policies that accommodate LID:

- Pembrokeshire ( Policy 52-pioneering planning policy focussed on Low Impact Development)
- South Somerset
- Milton Keynes

- Oxford City
- Torridge District Council

Also worth noting is the Welsh Assembly's "One Planet" document published in May 2009, which outlines "The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government" expresses firm support of low impact housing developments and innovative micro-agricultural projects that provide affordable access to land-based lifestyle (<https://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/publications/one-wales-one-planet/?lang=eng>)

There have also been many instances where LID's have successfully obtained planning permission. For the purposes of this document we have selected a few that could be used as case studies:

- LandMatters in Devon ([www.landmatters.org.uk](http://www.landmatters.org.uk))
- Ourganics in Dorset
- Tinker's Bubble in Somerset
- Steward Community Woodland in Devon ([www.stewardwood.org.uk](http://www.stewardwood.org.uk))
- That Roundhouse in Pembrokeshire ([www.thatroundhouse.info](http://www.thatroundhouse.info))
- BedZED in Surrey
- Sherwood Energy Village in Nottinghamshire

### **Sustainable Land Based Development Criteria – Ecoban Farm**

The best and most comprehensive list of the criteria that describe the main characteristics of a Low Impact development have been provided by Simon Fairlie, the founder of "Chapter 7" (organisation campaigning for inclusion of LID concept into the UK planning system, further details on [www.tlio.org.uk](http://www.tlio.org.uk)). We list them below with additional comments on how Ecoban Farm aims to fulfil them:

1. The project has a management plan which demonstrates how the site will contribute significantly into occupiers' livelihoods  
*Ecoban Farm will provide income to support a family of two adults (Marta Cherrill and Mott Ford and baby Kaiya – details in the "Ecoban Farm Business Plan" document)*
2. The project provides affordable access to land and/or housing to people in need  
*Ecoban Farm will provide a dwelling to the family who otherwise would have to depend on state funded accommodation*
3. The project provides public access to countryside, including temporary access such as open days and educational visits  
*One of the strands of the business proposals involves workshops that integrate countryside into its educational content. We will also provide a guided walk on the Ewyas Harold Common*
4. The project can demonstrate how it will be integrated into the local economy and community

*Ecoban Farm will directly interface with local businesses such as The Dog Inn B&B (where the work shop attendees will stay overnight), Primrose Farm and Skylark Organics.*

5. The project can demonstrate that no activities pursued on site shall cause nuisance to neighbours or the public

*The wood craft activities will be limited to the stables area in order to minimise any noise generated by the tools. All livestock is kept securely in their pens and the site is regularly cleaned in order to ensure that it adheres to high aesthetical, visual and environmental standards. Also the site is sheltered from view from all directions by dense tree and shrub canopy.*

6. The project has prepared a strategy for the minimisation of motor vehicle use.

*The very fact of residing on site means that we are not required to commute to and from it on a daily basis. We estimate that reduces our commuting needs by around 75%. The work shop attendees will be required to park in a secure location in the village and walk to the Farm (only a 15 min walk away)*

7. The development and any buildings associated with it are appropriately sited in relation to local landscape, natural resources and settlement pattern

*Our temporary dwelling (log cabin) has been erected on the exact foot print of the old barn, built to the same height, same materials (timber) and painted same colour. It is in keep with the remaining stable block (again same visual characteristics, same construction materials). There are a number of similar structures in the farms around the Common and the agricultural smallholding format we adopted is replicated with all the neighbouring residences.*

8. New buildings and dwellings are not visually intrusive (...) are constructed from materials of low embodied energy and low environmental impact (...)

*The log cabin is constructed out of timber which is a renewable material. The cabin is only visible from one place (the gate of the adjacent field) and is otherwise completely sheltered by the local vegetation.*

9. The project is reversible, insofar as new buildings can be easily dismantled and land easily restored to its former condition

*As mentioned in the business plan, the cabin has been erected on timber posts with no concrete being used. Its modular and simple construction ensures that it can be erected or dismantled in 48 hours, with no permanent change to the local landscape.*

10. The project plans to minimise the creation of waste and re-use and re-cycle as much as possible on site.

*Ecoban Farm operates a waste reduction principle and a waste sorting system (meaning that we reduce the need to packaging in our lives, we try to buy in bulk and re use where possible). All recyclable waste that we generate is sorted using designated containers (glass, metal and plastic) and taken to the local Civic Amenity site in Abregavenny.*

11. The project has a strategy for energy conservation and reduction, over time, of dependence on non-renewable energy sources to a practical minimum

*We have so far reduced our energy usage significantly by implementing the following: using a multifuel burner instead of gas or electricity powered system, using a manual washing machine instead of electrical one, swapping our light bulbs to energy saving ones, powering our electric fence from a solar panel. We intend to generate 50% of the energy consumed by our household from renewables (photovoltaic system) by 2011.*

12. The project aims over time for the autonomous provision of water, energy and sewage disposal and where it is not already connected to utilities, will make no demands upon the existing infrastructure  
*Ecoban Farm has got a connection to drinking water source (local well). We also operate a rain harvesting system whereby the water we capture is used for irrigation and for animal consumption. The grey water produced in our kitchen is cleaned using a three step filtration system which utilises bio-filtration and UV light (ensuring the 99, 9% of germs are killed) and re-used. We have also installed a composting dry toilet which turns human waste into a high-grade compost, thereby reducing our water consumption even further.*
13. Agricultural, forestry and similar land-based activities are carried out according to sustainable principles (...)  
*Please refer to the business plan for details.*
14. The project can show that affordability and sustainability are secured (...) by continuous ownership  
*Ecoban Farm is owned outright by one family.*
15. The project has strategies and programmes for the ecological management of the site  
*We support the local wildlife by providing bird food and bird shelter. We have retained all the trees on site (even to the point where it caused us significant challenges when constructing our dwelling). We plan to introduce a bee hive in 2010.*

### **Summary**

We hope that in this document we managed to provide sufficient evidence of our firm and genuine intentions to create a Low Impact Development in line with the policies and guidelines provided by various government and independent institutions specialising in these issues. We appreciate that our undertaking relies on very recent legislative proposals and requires an innovative outlook, but we hope that, by common understanding of the challenges climate change and its consequences place on us as individuals, we will be able to come to a satisfactory solution that will pave the way furthering the concepts of sustainability and place Herefordshire County Council and Ecoban Farm on the UK's Low Impact Development Map. We invite any additional questions and queries.