

QUICK & SONS

**ERECTION OF AGRICULTURAL CUBICLE BUILDING AT QUANTOCK FARM,
WEST MONKTON AS AMENDED BY INFORMATION FROM THE APPLICANT.**

Grid Reference: 325723.129925

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable, would not harm visual nor residential amenity or have any detrimental impact on the Listed Building. Therefore, the scheme accords with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements), S2 (Design), and PPS5. In terms of the use of the building and traffic generation, the residents' concerns are noted, however the proposal is for recognised agricultural purposes in a rural area and as such is in accordance with PPS4 and PPS7.

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A1) Unreferenced Plans (drawn by C A Gribble, dated 12/9/2011)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3.
 - (i) Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - (ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

- (iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

- 4. An earth mound shall be constructed and maintained in the location shown on the submitted plan to a height of not less than 2 metres in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be provided within three months of the commencement of any part of the development.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the erection of cubicle housing for dairy cows in an agricultural building measuring 36.6m by 24.7m with a height of approx 9m to ridge and 5m to eaves. The materials will be concrete panel and Yorkshire boarding sides, profile fibre cement sheets for the roof. The floor area of this proposal is 914sqm. The application is for the first part of a two part structure and the plans indicate a bund to the north and east of both phases, which will be landscaped.

The agent in his design and access statement, states “the application arises from the perceived need to increase the milking heard by nearly two hundred cows, on this 140 ha farm.....there will be no impact upon traffic volume on the public roads”.

The applicant stated at the time of the site visit that this comment was not entirely correct, and a lesser number was intended. For clarification, the applicant has stated that the “new building would be used for existing stock which are mostly homebred especially for winter housing and also an increase in 150 milking cow numbers over the next 24 months. We will no longer be rearing our bull calves from birth to 24 months thus reducing the beef stock to equalise numbers in dairy stock.” He states that enough forage is grown on the farm’s land to accommodate the increase in numbers. The milk collection will remain the same, (every other day), the concentrate lorry will deliver an additional four times a month. The highest levels of traffic would be on a handful of days on certain months of the year, ie grass silage season, wheat harvest and maize harvest, other farmers would use the same route to harvest their crops.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site, Quantock Farm, is to the north west of the village of West Monkton, and is accessed via rural lanes. The Application site is in a field on the eastern side of an existing complex of agricultural buildings, and it would be partial sunken into the ground, as the ground rises to the north of the field. There is a significant treed boundary to the north and north east of the field. The land is open to the south, and it is some distance (around 600m) to nearest dwellings in this direction. A public footpath passes through part of the farm and the main vehicular access to the farm. The site is in Open Countryside, within the Quantocks Landscape Character Area, outside the West Monkton Conservation Area (1.1km to the nearest point) and outside the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (1.4km to nearest point). There is a County Archaeological site to the east of the application site.

History

There have been a series of applications and permissions for agricultural buildings, covered stock yards, works to the Listed Building, and change of use and conversion of barns to holiday units and an extension to the time limit of the previous permission and Listed Building Consent.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - Firstly the Highway Authority would like to state that the application was consulted on the 24th October 2011 to which no observations were made on the application, as sufficient evidence was included within the application.

It has come to my attention from the Local Planning Authority that the application has been subject of debate with regards to highway related issues. The application seeks to erect a cubicle building to provide accommodation for livestock.

The site is located along Quantock Lane a designated unclassified section of highway to which the National Speed Limit applies past the site. However, given the narrow nature of Quantock Lane, it is likely that vehicle speed will be significantly reduced.

Having made a site visit on the 7th November 2011, in light of the concerns put forward, I also have studied additional information submitted by the applicant and agent. It is evident that the livestock on site will increase as well some vehicle movements to and from the site, however the Highway Authority believes this to be a minimal impact on the surrounding highway network.

Having received information from the agent acting on behalf of the applicant, the site currently has 350 milking cows, with a proposed increase to 500 over a 24 month period, an increase of 150 cows. It is assumed that the 350 cows calve each year.

The agent has stated that the traffic movement in connection with the proposal

will be as follows:-

Transport Impact

- 1 Milk tanker every other day – Arrival times are late evening 9:00/10:00PM.
- 1 Lorry delivery of Blends (Weekly).
- 1 Lorry delivery of Soya Hulls (Monthly).
- Staffing Levels on site will remain the same as existing.

Given that the site is an established agricultural development where you would anticipate seeing growth and expansion in livestock, associated vehicle movements will always increase. It is also noted that the nature of the surrounding lanes are predominantly narrow. Given the current proposal, and in light of the submitted information this increase is deemed a minimal impact on the highway network and therefore it would be unreasonable for the Highway Authority to raise an objection. However, I would point out any future increase at this site, may increase the overall traffic movements to a level that becomes unacceptable to the existing highway network.

WEST MONKTON PARISH COUNCIL - no comments about the proposed buildings; extreme concern expressed by members of the public attending the PC meeting on the environmental impact the proposals will have. the concerns were; silage (and where the maize would be grown), slurry disposal, smell and traffic volume. There are already traffic issues between some local residents and large agricultural vehicles going to and from the farm. The Design and Access statement was considered by the PC to be completely inadequate.

LANDSCAPE LEAD - subject to suitable landscaping the proposals are acceptable.

QUANTOCK HILLS AONB - With regards the above planning application, the AONB Service recognises that the application site is beyond the AONB boundary but we ask that due consideration be given to the details of the application to ensure that development at this site will not be detrimental to the character and quality of this nationally protected landscape (including views to and from the protected landscape).

Representations

13 letters of objection -

animal related

- 200 extra cows is a 50 % increase in capacity ;
- the agent's comments about perceived need to increase the herd shows a lack of detail;
- the proposal is for factory farming with no grazing;

traffic related

- impact from additional vehicle movements;
- a significant number of extremely large tractors with large trailers of fodder, often with three in succession use the lane;
- there are few passing places in the lane, so smaller vehicles have to back for considerable distances;
- the existing vehicles accessing Quantock Farm are driving excessively fast along the narrow lanes and around the bends;
- there is bound to be additional traffic with feed, to collect milk and to dispose of the slurry;
- there is already a significant amount of mud from the large vehicles, which is left on the lanes and never cleaned up;
- TDBC leaflets suggest people walk on the lanes, but these are full of mud and vehicles travelling too fast on the lanes;
- the business operates on a no-grazing principle and there will be an increase in traffic due to the increase in the herd;
- the applicant should explain why the increase in numbers of cattle does not result in an impact on local traffic volumes;
- the narrow road running through the village is lined with domestic dwellings;
- contractors have no consideration to other drivers;
- the existing 400 cow situation has already created a highway problem, which results in articulated lorries from all directions, but mostly through the Conservation Area from the A38;
- this traffic on narrow roads is contrary to the West Deane Local Plan;
- surprised that the Transport Development Group has no comments;
- the Transport Development Group should be monitoring the situation since the previous application;
- farm vehicles travel too fast especially when harvesting and silaging and these vehicles do use the lanes after midnight causing noise nuisance;
- there should be speed, weight and size restrictions on the farm vehicles;
- this is a Conservation Area and vehicles should be restricted;
- if the farming methods were more sustainable, then less traffic would come through the village
- the Council should approach farm machinery manufacturers to point out the rural roads are narrow and verges are being destroyed;

amenity issues

- noise from farm vehicles
- mess from hay and straw left on roads;
- smells from farm slurry;
- smells from slurry spreading;

other issues

- there should be notices in the village about the proposal;
- concern over reliability of information given;
- what is the policy of TDBC on intensive farming;
- the site is in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- there has been no pre-application discussion with local people;
- objections to a previous application are still relevant;
- an Environmental Impact Assessment should be sought;
- permission previously sought and obtained for holiday units with more associated

traffic;

- various matters unrelated to the current application, which relate to the way applications are determined, and how the Core Strategy has been dealt with in local meetings.

COMMENTS ON REVISED APPLICATION;

6 letters of objection including 2 from the same address

- previous comments still apply;
- there is still no clear explanation of the proposal;
- the latest submissions raise more questions than provide answers;
- the answers are vague and there are concerns about increased adverse impact on the village;
- the applicant has not consulted the village, belittles concerns expressed;
- not convinced that cattle numbers will not increase;
- there is no explanation in respect with to slurry management;
- concern about the apparent familiarity between the applicant and planning officer (this relates to an email address; the planning officer has met the applicant once on site);
- suggest that a comprehensive explanation of the whole proposal including a proper environmental impact assessment, is provided;
- any further development at Quantock Farm is inappropriate;
- photographs of nearby roads showing some mud on roads,
- no justification as to why another building is required;
- the numbers of animals proposed are unclear;
- if all the food is being grown on the farm, why are farm vehicles being driven through the village;
- if the building goes ahead, will the council monitor the stock level;
- the applicants do not have regard to the problems and anxiety created and there is no sign of any steps to correct the already unacceptable problems;
- the Local Planning Authority should explain its policy in regard to intensive farming, excessive animal numbers and slurry/effluent which could detrimentally impact on water courses and the land;
- the Local Planning Authority should have the accounts for the last three years and the budgets for the next three years;
- there should be a declaration confirming the accuracy of all the submissions;
- the application should be vetted by experts from Canning or Bicton College;
- the information provided does not give a complete picture of the proposal;
- the certificates have been incorrectly signed as the section – none of the land to which the application relates is, or is part of, an agricultural holding has been signed, how can this be the case;
- the farmer should expand the business by acquiring other units, not be farming intensively;
- exact statement on acreage of land in each crop, yields and how each ton is used, numbers of cows for each year, numbers of calves born and how used, numbers of and movements of all cattle, amount and disposal of slurry; full details of all feed, bedding, milk and all other movements made by vehicles, should be supplied to the LA and assessed by an expert from College of Agriculture;
- perhaps a weight restriction or one way system should be introduced on the rural lanes;
- there should be a restriction on dung spreading within a limited distance of West Monkton;

- is it possible to limit noise from heavy vehicles?

PLANNING POLICIES

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,
PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth,
PPS 5 - PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment,
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas,
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,
S7 - TDBCLP - Outside Settlement,
EN12 - TDBCLP - Landscape Character Areas,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal is for the erection of an agricultural building; the objections from residents mainly relate to the use of the building and implications in relation to traffic generation.

The proposed site of the building is to the east of other agricultural buildings, and will not be visible from any nearby properties. The building would be seen in association with the other buildings and adjacent covered slurry heaps. There is a wooded area to the north/north east and the plans indicate a bund to the north and east which will be landscaped. The site is a distance from any residential properties and it is not considered that there will be any detriment from the building itself or its use to any residents. There is no impact on the Listed Building or its setting as the proposed site is away from the farmhouse and there are several other intervening buildings

The numbers of cows or other animals on a farm is not normally a planning issue, as the matter of exact numbers is not controlled by the Local Planning Authority. In this case the proposed numbers of milking cows has caused an issue to be raised in respect to traffic generation.

Vehicular access to the farm is via the local roads, and the route through West Monkton village appears to be that most used by the farmer and for his deliveries (both to and from the farm). It is not considered appropriate or enforceable that the Local Planning Authority could insist or condition that a particular or an alternative route should be used. The state of the roads is the responsibility of County Highway Authority, however mud/straw on rural roads is commonplace, and may not be cleared up to the expectation of some local residents. Large agricultural vehicles travelling through rural areas and in the vicinity of farms is to be expected, and is experienced throughout the Borough and country. Officers have experienced the situation of facing these large agricultural vehicles on similar narrow lanes, but have concluded that this is the way of agricultural businesses.

Many objectors have comments upon the manner in which such vehicles are driven, this however cannot be controlled by the Local Planning Authority. Whilst such driving appears to be causing an issue with residents in West Monkton, driving to any destination may result in similar behaviour. Large agricultural vehicles may cause noise and nuisance to local residents, however this is the case all over the Deane, and could be considered as being similar to delivery vehicles/builders' merchants' lorries and similar in villages or urban area. The fact that West Monkton

is a Conservation Area, does not mean that traffic of a particular sort can be prevented from using its roads. The County Highway Authority Officer has considered the application details and all the comments raised by residents and has concluded that the proposal is acceptable. There is no proposal from the Highway Authority to introduce any weight, width or other restriction on the roads. It is not considered that the current proposal can be used to restrict the comings and goings to and from this farm.

With regard to noise from farm vehicles and smells emanating from the farm, such consequences are usual, and most farms with animals do have unpleasant smells, such is the situation in many rural areas. Noise from farm vehicles is also commonplace.

In respect to other issues, the site notice was placed close to the highway, the Parish Council notified, and the weekly list notification published in the Gazette; the Local Planning Authority does not place site notices in the nearby villages. The site is outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but in any event agricultural buildings are usually acceptable within/adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings. Whilst applicants/agents are encouraged to have pre-application discussions with local residents, this is not obligatory. The Local Planning Authority does not have a policy on intensive farming, and is unlikely to have one. Current National Planning Guidance is to encourage farmers and farm diversification as part of the rural economy. There are regulations in respect to whether an environmental impact assessment is required, the current proposal does not fall within those guidelines.

In respect to the amount of information submitted and the accuracy of that information, the agent and applicant gave different figures for the eventual number of cattle to be housed. As stated above the actual numbers cannot be controlled by the Local Planning Authority and it is the visual and other impacts which need to be assessed. The information supplied gives a broad concept of the proposal, it is not considered necessary to seek the detailed assessment that some objectors are seeking. Such details would not be sought from other applicants in respect to other commercial proposals.

In conclusion, the proposal is for an agricultural building in a location which is considered in visual terms to be appropriate. The numbers of animals housed is not and cannot be controlled by the planning system as it would be considered unreasonable and would not be enforceable, the impact of additional traffic is an issue which can be considered, but the County Highway Authority does not consider that there would be any detrimental impact as a result of this proposal. The Local Planning Authority could not control the vehicular comings and goings in and around the village. The proposal is agriculturally related and is considered to be acceptable.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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