

17/2002/003

B G & M M GREENWAY & SON

**ERECTION OF GENERAL PURPOSE CATTLE SHED AND SPECIALIST CALF REARING SHED ON LAND PART MANOR FARM SOUTH OF BREWERS FARM BUILDINGS, FITZHEAD.**

11110/28830

FULL PERMISSION

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**PROPOSAL**

This application should be considered in conjunction with the next item. The applicants farmed from a farm in the centre of Fitzhead for many years, but as their dairy unit grew it became impossible to continue farming large numbers of animals from buildings set amidst numerous houses. The dairy unit was therefore relocated to a much larger farm at Higher Vexford and the former buildings at Fitzhead were converted to dwellings in the late 1980's. Continued expansion over the last decade has now forced the applicants to review their farming policy. They now have about 250 milking cows in the herd. They have had problems of viral pneumonia in the youngstock and are running out of space on the farm. Accordingly they consider that the logical step if they are to be able to expand further is to locate the calf and youngstock unit at Fitzhead and keep Vexford dedicated to the milking herd. Indeed the applicant's agent contends that it would not be a feasible or sensible alternative to erect new buildings at Higher Vexford Farm and use Manor Farm just for arable fodder and off-lying grazing. The applicants farm 144 ha at Vexford and 57 ha at Fitzhead. The land at Fitzhead is currently used as a satellite unit, with all produce (silage, cereals and straw) returned to Higher Vexford Farm, and for summer grazing of dry cows and heifers. All the buildings are currently located at Lower Vexford. The farm dwelling is located next to the buildings. This application proposes the erection of:- (i) a calf rearing building, enabling all calves to be taken from the herd at seven days of age and reared in a minimal risk/disease free climate; and (ii) a building for older cattle so that Higher Vexford Farm can be run as an enlarged dairy unit with all followers kept separately at Manor Farm. The application the subject of the next application is for the erection of a dwelling within the proposed building complex for occupation by a stockman who would work full-time on the unit. The proposed calf rearing shed measures 9.15 m x 12.2 m and would house about 80 calves. The proposed beef rearing cattle shed measures 36.6 m x 13.7 m and would house up to 150 calves, yearlings and older heifers during the winter. Materials would be timber boarding to the walls and fibre cement sheeting for the roofs.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

PARISH COUNCIL understands the need for a new building in order to raise older dairy heifers or beef animals at Fitzhead and does not wish to oppose the application so long as any planning permission is granted subject to conditions of- (i) adequate provision is made for the disposal of surface water in such a way that it does not add to the already overloaded roadside drainage from Tommy Brewers to the village; (ii) adequate

provision is made for the safe disposal of effluent and dirty water from the livestock buildings; and (iii) the buildings are suitably screened and landscaped. However the Council is of the opinion that the applicant should be encouraged to erect the new calf shed on land at Vexford close to the dairy unit, surely the normal place for a calf house on a dairy farm B close to calving cows, the milk supply and the majority of the labour force (for the necessary supervision).

FIVE LETTERS OF OBJECTION report says that applicants could not develop Manor Farm because of the increase of the increase in flies near a residential area, yet will be close to dwellings with application proposal; applicants have already expanded at Vexford and there is room for the calf shed there; there will be constant noise with the arrival of newly separated and distressed calves; it is a bit cheeky that after selling a perfectly good farm with a range of buildings that were converted to housing out of the price range of local people that applicants should try to bring the farm back to the village and faced with having to establish a need to build a dwelling, put forward a planning application to build from scratch on a green site; traffic coming from Vexford would have to cross a blind bend - should use the existing concrete entrance opposite Manor Farm which is used now; will be more traffic visiting the farm than is implied in the report submitted with the planning application; plans do not show what facilities will be used for the storage of silage, straw and dung, both visually and as regards a health issue; there will have to be extensive drainage as the area floods in winter; future sale of the property should include all the land that makes up Manor Farm; the proposed calf rearing unit would be within breathing distance of the animals at Brewers Farm B this is a huge disease concern within the livestock industry; should be kept well away from cattle sheds already in place which have just undergone major work to provide clean air flow in an attempt to combat disease; foot and mouth disease showed the potential for extreme stock loss when animals were too close together; alternative sites on the farm are more suitable.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

Policy STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review states that development outside towns, rural centres and villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel. The proposed development will assist an existing farming business in the open countryside. Policy WD/SP/2 of the West Deane Local Plan states that outside the defined settlement limits, development will not be permitted unless it is for the purposes of agriculture or forestry or accords with a specific development plan policy or proposal. Policy WD/EC/33 states that proposals for new farm buildings should ensure that they do not harm the amenity or appearance of the area and that proposals will be assessed against a number of criteria related to siting and design, avoidance of noise and smell, access, materials, protection of watercourses and the operational needs of agriculture. It is considered that these criteria are met with the current proposal. Policy S8 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan states that outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape of the area and meets a number of criteria including that it is for the purposes of agriculture.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The applicant has responded to the points raised by the Parish Council and objectors:- they are more than happy to provide adequate drainage and safe disposal of slurry and to screen and landscape the buildings; however do not want to site the unit close to Vexford due to wanting to escape current pneumonia and other infection problems from older cattle and also due to reaching capacity in terms of grass available per cattle head and wish to utilise the acreage back at Fitzhead; have always used milk powder not fresh milk; the shed will be 300 ft away from objector's property and should provide no greater threat from flies than from the agricultural buildings already there; unlikely to be a problem from noise as the proposed buildings will be further away from dwellings than the existing cattle building; Manor Farm was sold due to slurry and effluent problems caused by close proximity to dwellings; barns were not sold out of the price range of local people; do not see a problem with the proposed access to the site which was recommended by the planning officer; will be little more traffic generation than at present; silage storage will be round bale storage and a small stack of straw; drainage problems will be dealt with; proposal is in order to remain in the farming industry.

Although the applicant submitted an agricultural appraisal in relation to the proposed dwelling, I sought a second opinion from the Centre for Rural Research at Exeter University. I also took the opportunity to obtain their views on the points raised on the proposed livestock buildings. The appraisal author considers that the site chosen for the buildings is the best. It is well located relative to the land area, adjacent to a public road, an adequate distance from the village of Fitzhead and will have minimum impact on the landscape. With regard to the latter point, proximity to the Brewers Farm buildings is advantageous. The minimum distance between either of the proposed new livestock buildings and the nearest building belonging to Brewers Farm is 27.5 m. A hedge and the Brewers Farm lane take up some of the intervening space and additional tree planting on the Manor farm side of the hedge is proposed. The appraisal author concludes that given that the prevailing wind is down the valley, communication and sharing of air between livestock in the two sets of buildings is likely to be slight. He is not aware of any heightened risk to calves or other cattle as a result of proximity of buildings on this scale and to this extent. The occurrence of foot and mouth and similar diseases is rather infrequent and infection of livestock on either farm would be likely to result in the culling of all cloven hoofed animals on both farms, regardless of the siting of buildings within the respective farm areas.

I concur with the above views and consider that in visual landscape terms , the proposed siting of the livestock buildings is appropriate and that they are reasonably necessary for the needs of the farm business.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of materials and landscaping. Note re disposal of effluent and dirty water.

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

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356461 MR J HAMER**

NOTES: