

48/16/0046

QUICK & SONS

**Erection of agricultural building for the housing of livestock at Quantock Farm, West Monkton, Taunton**

Location: QUANTOCK FARM, QUANTOCK LANE, WEST MONKTON,  
TAUNTON, TA2 8LR

Grid Reference: 325759.129928

Full Planning Permission

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## **Recommendation**

**Recommended decision: Conditional Approval**

### **Recommended Conditions (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:

Proposed New Steel Framed Cubicle Building for Dairy Cows dated 7th July 2016

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

3. 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 ENV3.

4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, full details of the means of disposal of surface water shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed details shall be implemented prior to the building being brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained as such.

Reason: To ensure that there is no increase in off-site flood risk.

#### Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and has negotiated amendments to the application to enable the grant of planning permission.

## Proposal

The application is for the erection of cubicle housing for dairy cows in a large agricultural building. The materials will be concrete panel and Yorkshire boarding sides, profile fibre cement sheets for the roof. This new building, measuring 35 metres by 30 metres, will be sited to the east of a new agricultural building. A new bund to the north and east will be landscaped.

The agent states that at present there are 300 milking cows within the new building which was constructed in 2012/13. There are a further 200 currently kept within older buildings. The existing and proposed new building will house about 550 cows in total. There will be a further 70 "fresh calvers" and "dry" cows who will be housed in other buildings, meaning a total of 620 cows on the farm. The milk collection will remain the same (daily) as the tanker has a 50% reserve capacity. Purchased feed will be delivered every 4 to 5 days. All slurry will be scraped into a recently constructed purpose built slurry store. A new roof above this slurry store will be built this spring and this will increase its holding capacity. Furthermore, an adjoining farmer has agreed to the spreading of slurry on 250 acres without the need for tractors and tankers to drive towards West Monkton.

## Site Description

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.

## Relevant Planning 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.

The erection of an agricultural cubicle building was granted planning permission by Committee in December 2011 (48/11/0039). A second phase was subsequently granted planning permission by Committee in 2012 (48/12/0007). Both of these buildings have been constructed.

Permission was granted in September 2013 for the installation of an underground slurry pit (48/13/0047).

The erection of an umbrella roof over the below ground slurry stores was permitted in June 2016 (48/16/0027).

## **Consultation Responses**

*WEST MONKTON PARISH COUNCIL* - West Monkton Parish Council has no comment to make about the building as it is the same or very similar to existing structures at the same location.

However, the Parish Council has grave concerns about the environmental impact of this proposal, which were not addressed by the Design and Access statement provided.

### **Impact of traffic**

The Parish Council knows about the strong feeling amongst the neighbouring community about existing traffic flows and the driving habits of those driving the very large vehicles along the narrow country lanes in this location. It is perfectly reasonable to make the assumption that an increase in milk production would result in an increase in traffic flows as there would be increased need for deliveries, slurry management, cattle food supplies, veterinary visits etc. So although, as stated, the traffic volume might not be affected, the frequency of traffic movements is likely to increase. It is recommended that information about current traffic movements and projected traffic movements is provided i.e. a proper traffic assessment should be submitted before further consideration is given to this application. In view of the narrow lanes running through the local settlement of houses by which the farm is accessed, and the size of vehicles used in this industry - lorries, tractors, trailers, harvesting equipment etc it is considered that Highway safety is a material planning consideration.

### **Impact of slurry**

Increased cow numbers will increase the need for proper management of slurry and effluent, which was not explained in the application.

### **Surface water**

The run off from a building of the size proposed would be a significant addition to the volume of surface water and the Parish Council suggests that evidence is needed to support the statement in the application that the surface water could be disposed of by sloping land to the existing watercourse. It is a material planning

consideration to ensure the watercourse and other physical infrastructures such as road side ditches have sufficient spare capacity to carry water away without causing temporary flooding over roads or sluicing over fields causing contamination to the watercourse.

Neighbours are affected by smells from the farm, and fear the nuisance will increase if cow numbers increase. The impact of this farm on the local community is significant and there is strong feeling that further expansion of this successful business will further impact on the neighbours.

*ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - NOISE & POLLUTION* - No comment.

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP* - No observations.

*LANDSCAPE* - This is a large structure but will be located within the existing collection of farm buildings. It will be screened so there will be minimal landscape impact.

*SOUTH WEST HERITAGE, LAURA BOYT* - No comment.

*ENVIRONMENT AGENCY* - We are happy with your onsite arrangements for slurry capacity. This is helped by the good practice of recently roofing the silage clamp, and the intended roofing of the larger slurry store early next year.

We looked in the 3 streams below Quantock Farm and were happy that no pollution was present.

There were 2 areas of bank side cattle poaching which can, result in a deduction of RPA payments. Please can you let me know that this is no longer the case. (*Officer note: the applicant has confirmed that the cattle have been moved from these areas*)

We are happy with the available land bank and spreading risk maps.

Fuel oil stored on site is bunded, and pesticides are not stored on site.

Overall there were many examples of good agricultural practice and improved practice for protecting the water course. Some of these are; improved buffer strips, wild flower establishment on buffer strips which also increase the effectiveness of water penetration, rough ploughing along a slope gradient with a deep furrow before the buffer strip, the establishment of winter cover crops preventing bare soil being exposed to rainfall, and ponds along the water course before leaving the farm which can help to further improve water quality.

## **Representations Received**

Thirty objection letters have been received from a total of 16 households. Most of the objectors raise significant concerns about the traffic impact of the development, with heavy farm traffic speeding on narrow roads, spilling muck and destroying verges. Another concern is over whether there is adequate slurry storage with the potential pollution of waterways. A number of objectors are insisting that the applicant should provide farm accounts and livestock movement records in order to justify the proposal. Finally, one objector queries whether screening opinions under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations should have been carried out when the previous applications were determined.

## **Planning Policy Context**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

CP8 - Environment,  
DM2 - Development in the countryside,  
ENV3 - Special Landscape Features,  
SB1 - Settlement boundaries,

## **Determining issues and considerations**

The proposal is for the erection of an agricultural building. The objections from local residents strongly reiterate issues that were raised in 2011 and 2012 when the earlier applications were considered by Committee. In the main, they relate to the use of the building and its impact on 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 a planning issue. Local residents are concerned that an increase in the proposed numbers of milking cows will have an impact on traffic generation to the site. 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. With regard to mud and debris on the roads, the state of the roads is the responsibility of County Highway Authority. In any event, large agricultural vehicles are a common feature within rural areas and it is to be expected.

Many objectors have comments upon the manner in which such vehicles are driven. This 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, but again this is to be expected in rural areas. The County Highway Authority Officer has considered the application and concluded that the proposal is acceptable.

With regard to noise from farm vehicles and smells emanating from the farm, such consequences are usual within rural areas.

Turning to objections over the storage of slurry, a new purpose built below ground slurry tank has been built recently. In addition, an umbrella canopy will be installed over the tank to prevent it becoming filled with rain water. This has significantly increased the capacity for slurry storage on the site. In addition, there are separate environmental regulations governing the storage of slurry and the safeguarding of watercourses from pollution.

One resident has once again questioned whether the the Local Planning Authority has a policy on intensive farming. The Council does not have such a policy. This proposal should be assessed against national and local planning policy, which encourages farmers and farm diversification as part of the rural economy. It is not considered appropriate or necessary to request detailed financial information from the applicant. Finally, a screening opinion has been carried out which concludes that the development does not require an environmental impact assessment.

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 cannot be controlled by the planning system as it would be considered unreasonable and would not be enforceable. 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.

**Contact Officer: Ms A Penn**