

Planning Statement

**Provision of replacement milking parlour at
Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee, Wrexham**

20th October 2023

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

Contents

1. Knolton Farm
2. The Proposal
3. The Application Site
4. Planning Policy
5. Sustainability
6. Drainage
7. Highways
8. Ecology
9. Residential Amenity
10. Summary

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

1. Knolton Farm

1.1 Knolton Farm is a dairy unit with a milking herd of 270 cows on some 250 acres of grazing land.

1.2 It is located on Oswestry Road approximately two miles from Overton on Dee and comprises the farmhouse and a series of traditional brick outbuildings together with some more modern sheeted portal framed stock sheds.

1.3 This is a rural location with only scattered housing but the Knolton Farmhouse Cheese Factory stands alongside the farm, operating in a number of tall modern buildings.



The cheese factory which stands alongside the farm contains substantial modern buildings. It is in separate ownership and is not commercially linked to the applicant.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The herd produces very high quality milk for the major supermarkets but the dairy and the milking equipment are old and inefficient and milking has to take place over three sessions every day. Each session can last up to four and a half hours which is bad for the health of the cows because they have to stand on concrete for long periods of time and it is very demanding for staff.



Standing on concrete for hours at a time is bad for the cattle and their feet have to be treated by specialists at regular intervals.

Due to the size of the herd and the extent of the problem the footman visits the farm every two weeks.



The welfare of the cattle is of paramount importance and although treatment is carried out to the very highest standards prevention is better than cure.

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

2.2 To address the problems the applicant wishes to replace the milking parlour with a modern rotary milking system which will significantly improve the welfare of the cows by reducing each milking session to one and a half hours, improve the working conditions for staff and make the unit more sustainable by reducing power consumption, reducing the use of clean water and improving waste management.

There is no capacity to increase the size of the herd and there are no plans to do so.



The existing milking equipment is very old and it works slowly so the cows have to stand on concrete for several hours each day. This damages their feet and it is imperative that new milking equipment is installed.

2.3 Whilst the number of cows will remain unchanged the amount of waste will reduce because the cattle will be standing in the parlour for less than half the time they do at present.

2.4 The new equipment will be housed in a purpose built shed measuring 55m long by 19m wide and 5.5m high at the eaves. It will have concrete panel walls to 3m with dark green cladding above and on the roof.

2.5 The parlour will be washed down using water harvested from the roof of the shed and stored in a new storage tank sited behind the shed.

3. The Application Site

3.1 The new parlour will be built alongside existing portal framed stock sheds on the south side of the farm, between the sheds and the road.

3.2 The site presently contains a number of redundant moveable calf pens which will be put into storage or sold.

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee



The new parlour will be built alongside existing tall portal framed cattle buildings, on the site of some moveable calf pens

3.3 There is a tall deciduous hedge on the road side which will act as a screen.



The tall deciduous hedge running alongside the road will screen the new building.

The hedge is regarded as a valuable wildlife corridor and is sensitively managed.

3.4 There are no immediate neighbours to be affected by the proposals

4. Planning Policy

4.1 The development will satisfy both national and local planning policy.

4.2 Planning Policy Wales is clear in its support for agriculture stating....."Planning authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are designed to meet the needs of changing farming practices or are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or welfare legislation"

4.3 Future Wales- The National Plan 2040 states....."Agriculture has shaped our landscapes and supported our rural and market towns for generations. We must continue to value and protect our agricultural land and ensure it can feed and support us"

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

4.4 TAN 6 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities states.....” The Welsh Assembly Government’s objective is a sustainable and profitable future for farming families and businesses through the production and processing of farm products while safeguarding the environment, animal health and welfare...while contributing to the vitality and prosperity of rural communities. The planning system can play an important part in supporting the future sustainability of agriculture”

4.5 Wrexham Unitary Development Plan states - Policy EC3 (Agricultural Buildings) ...”The construction of new agricultural buildings will be permitted unless the development is materially detrimental in terms of its impact on the environment or surrounding landscape. The development should form part of an existing farm complex and take advantage of topography and other landscape features for screening. Isolated buildings will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where there is an essential agricultural need and no reasonable alternative location for the development”

5. Sustainability

5.1 The development will be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable:-

- The new dairy equipment will replace equipment that is inefficient in terms of the power and water needed to operate it. The new machinery will be digitally controlled and more efficient and the old machinery will be recycled.
- The new equipment will enable milking to be completed in less than half the time it takes at present.
- The shorter milking time will bring welfare benefits for the cows and better working conditions for staff.
- Rainwater will be harvested. The opportunity will be taken to improve the surface water and manure management from the dairy.
- Less electricity will be used
- Installation of the new milking parlour and all the attendant work will be carried by local people as far as this is possible.

6. Drainage

6.1 Drainage from the site has been the subject of detailed discussions with the council’s drainage officer and a SUDs (SAB) application has been

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

prepared in the light of the advice received. This will be submitted under separate cover.

6.2 The surface (roof) water drainage from all the existing buildings will remain unchanged with water going into the existing system of soakaways.

6.3 Water from the roof of the new building will be harvested in a new 37,000 litre tank and used to wash down the floor of the parlour before being collected and pumped into the farm slurry store. The slurry store is modern and can hold a minimum of one million gallons (4546090 litres).

6.4 The capacity of the new water storage tank has been calculated on the basis of 680mm annual rainfall, a daily water usage of circa 7,500 litres and an additional 40% storage capacity for a 1 in a 100 year storm.

6.5 When the harvested water runs low it will be supplemented with clean water.



Wash down water and slurry from the milking parlour is currently pumped into the existing slurry store. This will continue when the new parlour is brought into use. The store is modern and is working perfectly

6.6 The existing parlour is currently washed down with clean water which is pumped into the farm slurry container. The new system will be more sustainable and cheaper to run. Milking will in future be quicker and less manure will be produced and the amount of wash water feeding into the slurry tank will on most days be reduced.

6.7 All the water harvesting and storage equipment will be installed in accordance with the SABS approval.

7. Highways

7.1 The proposed development will have no adverse impact on highway safety.

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

7.2 There will be no change in the number or nature of vehicles visiting the farm although the number of visits by the vet and the foot man will be noticeably reduced in the medium term.

7.3 Staff will continue to park in the farm yard and the milk collection lorry will use an existing access into the yard which offers room to turn around and park with good visibility in all directions.

8. Ecology

8.1 No buildings are being demolished or altered as part of the project and no habitat is being destroyed.

8.2 No protected species will be harmed or affected in any way.

8.3 The existing roadside hedge is a valuable wildlife corridor and will act as a visual screen.

9. Residential Amenity

9.1 The farm is located in open countryside with no nearby dwellings to be affected by the development.

10. Summary

10.1 In summary:

- This is a full application for the erection of a replacement milking parlour. The existing milking equipment is old and slow and cattle have to stand on concrete for several hours each day waiting to be milked.
- Standing on concrete for such extended periods of time causes damage to the cattle's feet and they regularly have to be treated by specialists.
- The new parlour will greatly reduce the time spent milking and the welfare of the cattle will be significantly improved.
- **There is no capacity to increase the size of the herd and there are no plans to do so.**
- Shorter milking times will also benefit staff and improve the sustainability of the business by reducing power consumption and potentially reducing the amount of water needed for washing down.

Replacement Milking Parlour at Knolton Farm, Overton on Dee

- Water from the roof of the parlour will be harvested and used to wash down, replacing the clean water that is used at present. Clean water will only be used when necessary, to supplement the harvested rainwater.
- Wash down water and slurry will continue to be pumped into the farm slurry store as at present. The store is new and is working very well.
- The proposals satisfy national and local planning policy.
- Installing the new parlour will significantly improve the sustainability of the business and thereby secure long term employment for the staff.
- The new parlour will have no impact on the amenity of surrounding dwellings or businesses.
- No habitat or protected species will be harmed by the proposed development.
- There will be no impact on highway safety.
- No pollution will be created and no flooding will arise either within the site or further afield.
- The new parlour will stand alongside tall stock sheds and close to the modern buildings at the nearby cheese factory. It will be screened by a tall hedge and will have no impact in the landscape.