

# **AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION REPORT & DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

## **A STEEL PORTAL FRAMED AGRICULTURAL BUILDING AT CHURCH FARM**

### **FULL PLANNING APPLICATION**

**Prepared on behalf of**

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Bettisfield  
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This report has been prepared by Rostons following instructions from C W & Y E Mellor who farm at Church Farm, Whitchurch and surrounding areas.

### **I.1. Qualifications and Experts Duty**

I, Holly Wybergh, am a fellow member of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and work for the firm Rostons Limited. I understand my duties in the preparation of this report and have complied with that duty.

The substance of the instruction I have received and the information I have been provided with are set out within this report and its appendices. I have been involved in the experience of farming and country matters all my life and have a degree in Rural Enterprise and Land Management from Harper Adams University College.

I act on behalf of both livestock and arable farmers as well as landowners throughout Cheshire and North Wales.

### **I.2. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to fully justify and detail the design and access of the proposed steel portal frame livestock building/parlour shed at Church Farm, Bettisfield, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 2LB.

### **I.3. Background / Farm Details**

Church Farm is owned and occupied by C W & Y E Mellor. They farm the 129 acres surrounding Church Farm in line with their dairy enterprise and have recently taken on a further 70 acres in 2020 due to the expansion of the business. Mr Mellor's Son is continuing to develop and push the business for expansion to ensure its sustainability for the future.

Currently, C W & Y E Mellor are milking 160 cows with an additional 100 followers, currently they are milked in a 8/16 swing over parlour which is located in one of the traditional buildings on the farm steading and is no longer fit for purpose.

At the holding, there is currently one large cubicle shed and a collection of other sheds which are all used in connection with the dairy enterprise and therefore, would not be suitable to be used for the new parlour.

### **I.4. Proposed Development**

It is proposed that a new shed 25ft x 80ft is erected within the curtilage of the existing facilities. This building will be used to put in place the new milking parlour and will be fit for modern agricultural use. The existing parlour dates back to the 1960's and as it is located in a traditional building it does not have the ventilation required of modern standards of farming. Therefore, Mr Mellor's Son and the

business feel it is appropriate to update these facilities to make milking a much quicker operation and provide better conditions for the cows.

A full justification of the need for this building is noted below.

## **2. AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION REPORT**

### **2.1. Moving the Parlour**

As discussed above, the existing 8/16 swing over parlour dates back to the 1960's and is located in a traditional farm building which is no longer fit for modern agricultural use. The proposal to put up a mono-pitch steel portal frame building will allow the farmer to re-locate and modify the parlour to a location which is more suited to today's guidance. The new parlour will be 16/32 cow swing over parlour. The parlour will then be converted into youngstock housing and loose boxes and therefore will remain functional and utilised by farming practises.

### **2.2. Expansion**

Mr Mellor's Son is keen to better the facilities which will allow him to expand and create a more profitable business at the holding. Moving the parlour will create more space on the holding which will allow him to increase stocking numbers. In 2020, Mr Mellor's Son has taken on 75 more acres to farm in conjunction with the holding and therefore, it is felt that updating the facilities and expanding in this way is the most suitable option for the business.

### **2.3. Modifying facilities / Animal Welfare**

Currently, the old parlour is not fit for modern agricultural use, as there is insufficient ventilation, the milking system within the parlour is dated and therefore, it takes longer for the cows to milk which means that they are stood up waiting in line to be milked for a longer period of time than is necessary. With the new parlour, both of these issues will be addressed with the ventilation being much better due to the construction of the shed and the parlour within it being updated, ensuring that milking time is reduced, ensuring that the cows do not have to wait on their feet for an unnecessary amount of time.

### **2.4. Quicker Milking**

It is not only from an animal welfare perspective that milking in a more timely manner is better but it will also be better for the staff who are working through milking's and make the business more efficient which should result in increased profitability and sustainability for the future.

### 3. THE POLICY CONTEXT

#### 3.1. Site Designation

The site falls within Wrexham Council and is governed by Welsh Planning Policy.

#### 3.2. Planning Policy Wales

- **Policy – People and Places: Achieving Well-being through placemaking**. *This ‘sense of place’ varies, from the rural countryside which provides an economic and environmental base for agriculture and tourism to thrive, to urban areas which are continually evolving and providing the focus for major social and economic development. The Generations and Environment Acts provides key guidance and supports developments which are social, environmentally and economically sustainable.*
- **Application of policy** – This application addresses all three of the elements which are at the heart of The Generations and Environment Acts:
  - **Environmentally** – the land is less productive land and already used as a temporary farmyard area. Furthermore, the existing supporting services to the shed and access to the site is to be utilised and therefore, this additional shed is a simple expansion of the business which will be very beneficial.
  - **Socially** – the shed is not in view of any neighbouring property and therefore, it is felt with will have no impact upon them.
  - **Economically** – the development will not only provide better welfare throughout milking for the staff and animals, but it will also reduce the time spent milking which will reduce costs, provide an opportunity for expansion and boost profits.
- **Policy – Productivity and Enterprising Places** – ‘a resilient Wales is supported by agriculture...’
- **Application of policy** – In order for agricultural practises, such as this to continue to support a resilient Wales they must continue to grow and expand we therefore urge the Local Planning Authority to support this application.

#### 3.3. Technical advice note (TAN) 6: planning for sustainable rural communities

- **Policy – Sustainable Agriculture** - *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, adapting to climate change and mitigating its impacts, while contributing to the vitality and prosperity of our rural communities. The planning system can play an important part in supporting the future sustainability of agriculture. The Guidance in TAN 6 also refers to:*
  - **Livestock Units** - *this refers to issues with factors affecting neighbours.*

- **Development involving agricultural land** – this details that the most productive and vertical agricultural land should not be built on.
- **Application of policy** – this application will boost the profitability of a farming family and will give the next generation the opportunity to better farming practises and continue to develop and expand the business.
  - **Livestock Units** – the proposed shed will not visually intrude on neighbours and as it is right in the heart of the existing farm building and utilising the same supporting facilities it will have no additional impact on other local properties.
  - **Development involving agricultural land** – the land in question is already occupied by calf hutches and used as a farmyard storage area therefore this land is less productive and not utilised for the purposes of productive agricultural land as it is more beneficial to farming practices to be used as calf hutches.

### 3.4. Wrexham Unitary Development Plan

- **Policy - GPI Development Control Policy** – All new development should: -
  - Be scale, design and layout appropriate for the development and the locality.
  - Take account of safety and security in the design and layout
  - Conserve energy and water resources.
  - Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access.
  - Ensure it has convenient access to public transport facilities.
  - Safeguard the environment
  - Secure public services
  - Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest
  - Ensure the development is not subject to environmental hazards, or cause any.
  - Safeguard everything that has a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.
  - Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.
- **Application of policy** – it is felt that the building is to be size and scale appropriate for a development of this nature. The building will be safe and secure for the purpose of hosting a milking parlour and no public access is required. The shed is utilising less productive agricultural land and is not obstructing any environmental features however, there are environmental features across the farm which are managed with care to benefit the fauna and flora. Agriculture forms part of Welsh heritage and the LPA are encouraged to support its growth and development to secure a sustainable future for the industry.
- **Policy – EC3 Environmental and Conservation – 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.

- **Application of policy** – this application seeks permission for a farm shed which will form part of the existing farmyard. The shed is essential and required for the future of farming operations at the holding as Mr Mellor's son wishes to move the parlour into the new shed and utilise the former parlour building as youngstock housing. The existing parlour is dated, and the existing building is no longer fit for modern agricultural use due to its dated design however, this building is appropriate for housing youngstock.

The location of the building has been assessed carefully and this is felt to be the most appropriate location as the land is already used as farm yard area, it is able to fit in with the existing layout of the site and it does not have a detrimental impact on any surrounding properties.

## **4. DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

The following statement will endeavour to present information with regards to the application for a steel portal frame livestock building at Church Farm.

### **4.1. Assessment**

This particular application as stated is for a steel portal frame, agricultural building.

#### **4.1.1. Physical Context**

The building is to be located 50ft from the existing cubicle shed and remain in line with it.

The site is currently used for agricultural activities and is part of the less productive area on the farm. As can be seen on the photos, there are calf hutches and pens on the site already.

The building will link into the existing services and facilities due to the close proximity of the new building to the existing farm steading.

#### **4.1.2. Social Context**

The development will have minimum effect on people in the locality due to its rural location.

#### **4.1.3. Economic Context**

Mr Mellor's Son is looking to invest considerably in the farm in the coming years to ensure it is fit for modern agricultural use and adheres to all the latest building and animal welfare regulations.

Bettering the farm to ensure it is sustainable for the future is a key priority of Mr Mellor's Son and he looks forward to working with the steading to improve the existing facilities in order to benefit the cows, his staff and the profitability of the business.

#### **4.1.4. Evaluation**

The decision has been taken to apply for full permission for the shed as it will be used for livestock and is within 400m of a residential dwelling therefore, permitted development rights could not be exercised.

Although it is within 400m of a residential dwelling, it is not believed that the building will have any impact on local residence as it is in keeping with the existing holding and is designed to blend into the countryside. Furthermore, any neighbouring properties within 400m are unable to directly see the new

development as there are ecological features such as a hedge or other buildings surrounding the proposed development.

## **4.2. Design and Access**

### **4.2.1. Proposed steel portal frame building**

The proposed building will be a mono pitch steel portal frame building extending to 7.62 m x 24.38 m with a total floor space of 185.78 m<sup>2</sup>. Please see the elevation and block drawings in the appendices for more information.

The building will be 12ft high on the lowest point of the mono pitch roof (the east elevation of the building) and will be 16ft high on the highest point of the mono pitch roof (the west elevation of the building).

### **4.2.2. Site situation**

The proposed building will be located to the east of the existing cubicle shed and north of the existing parlour and collecting yard for the cows. Please refer to the site plan in the appendices for more information.

### **4.2.3. Design**

The design of the proposed building has taken into account the construction of other agricultural buildings on the holding and on farms throughout the County.

East and West elevations of the shed will be constructed of 1m high concrete panels with Yorkshire boarding to the eaves. This is considered the best material and colour to blend into the surrounding countryside. The south elevation will have a large door to allow the cows to go in and out, to and from the collecting yard.

The roof will be made of grey box profile cladding, as it is understood the Council prefer grey roofing as it blends in the sky's most frequent colour, grey which causes least visual impact on the surroundings.

The floor in the shed will be concrete.

The proposed building will be in keeping with the existing modern buildings on the farm, as it will be of the same design and construction.

### **4.2.4. Access**

The existing farm yard access will be utilised.

#### **4.2.5. Scale**

The size and scale of the building is not considered to be over and above the needs for a farm of this size.

### **5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Rostons have been instructed to provide an assessment of the need for a mono pitch steel portal frame shed which will be used as a milking parlour.

The applicant is the owner occupier of the land and farm steading at Church Farm. This family run business is striving forward which has been driven by Mr Mellor's Son who wants to promote longevity and profitability for future generations.

National and Local Policy promotes business development in rural areas and supports agricultural development as long as its size and scale appropriate for the holding, which it is felt that this development is.

The design of the project is laid out in design and access statement which highlights how the project is in keeping with the existing holding and surrounding area.

It is clear that Mr Mellor's Son is seeking an opportunity to better his holding, not only to promote profitability but also to improve animal welfare and working conditions for his staff. The parlour will also promote expansion and development of the business and will allow milking times to be drastically reduced. We urge the Council to support this application and in doing so, they will support the growth and sustainability of a rural business.

## **6. Appendix**

- Farm Plan
- Site Plan
- Location Plan
- Elevation Drawings
- Letters of Support