

CHARTERED SURVEYORS & PLANNING CONSULTANTS

BURY ST EDMUNDS – EXETER – WOLVERHAMPTON – SCOTLAND

Additional Supporting Information

For

**AN APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A UNIT TO REAR
BROILER CHICKENS AT BLACK ROCK FARM, SESSWICK WAY,
CROSS LANES, WREXHAM**



Prepared for:-

K & N Elliott
Lenox Farm
Hale
Liverpool
L24 5RP

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Prepared by:-

Anthony Atkinson MRICS FRAV
Acorus Rural Property Services Ltd
Pendeford House
Pendeford Business Park
Wobaston Road
Wolverhampton
WV9 5AP

Tel: 01524 793900
Email: anthony.atkinson@acorus.co.uk

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the construction of two broiler chicken rearing buildings, each measuring 101.019m x 23.365m, with an eaves height of 2.714m and a ridge height of 5.681m. The buildings will be served by five feed bins. The application also relates to the erection of associated control rooms, feed weighing rooms and mess facilities for the catching team. The development also proposes the construction of an agricultural storage building and the temporary siting of 70m² mobile living accommodation for the applicants who will manage and operate the unit. Each of the two poultry buildings will house up to 40,000 chickens.

The application was submitted to Wrexham Council in June, the planning reference for the application is P/2016/0533.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This document has been prepared in addition to the existing planning application documentation to demonstrate the requirement for the on-site residential accommodation which forms part of the application.

The document has been prepared in light of the planning officer's letter of 4 November and makes specific reference to housing sections in TAN 6 (July 2010, i.e. paragraph 4.6 New Dwellings on new Enterprises).

PLANNING POLICY

Paragraph 4.6 of TAN 6 reads as follows:-

4.6 New dwellings on new enterprises

4.6.1 If it is considered that a new dwelling will be essential to support a new rural enterprise, it should satisfy the following criteria:

- a. clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the rural enterprise concerned (significant investment in new buildings and equipment is often a good indication of intentions);*
- b. clear evidence that the new enterprise needs to be established at the proposed location and that it cannot be accommodated at another suitable site where a dwelling is likely to be available;*
- c. clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;*
- d. there is a clearly established functional need and that need relates to a full-time worker, and does not relate to a part-time requirement;*
- e. the functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling or by converting an existing suitable building on the enterprise, or any other existing accommodation in the locality which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and*
- f. other normal planning requirements, for example siting and access, are satisfied.*

4.6.2 Where the case is not completely proven for a dwelling permission should, not be granted for it, but it may be appropriate for the planning authority to test the evidence by granting permission for temporary accommodation for a limited

period. Three years will normally be appropriate to ensure that the circumstances are fully assessed. If such a permission for temporary accommodation is granted, permission for a permanent dwelling should not subsequently be given unless the criteria in paragraphs 4.4.1 or 4.6.1 are met. The planning authority should make clear in planning conditions the period for which the temporary permission is granted and that the temporary dwelling will have to be removed when that period expires. It should also include an informative attached to the planning decision notice stating the requirements that will have to be met if a permanent permission is to be granted. It will be unsatisfactory to grant successive extensions to a temporary permission if that will result in a permission having a total duration of more than three years.

ASSESSMENT OF BROILER ENTERPRISE (CHICKEN PRODUCTION) IN RELATION TO TAN 6

For the planning application, mobile home accommodation (i.e. temporary accommodation) has been submitted because the broiler enterprise is a new enterprise and it is understood and accepted that a dwelling would not be granted prior to the poultry buildings being erected and the enterprise having been operational for a period of time (i.e. 2-3 years).

Evaluation of the Broiler Enterprise in Relation to Paragraph 4.6.1 of TAN 6

- a) Clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the rural enterprise concerned (significant investment in new buildings and equipment is often a good indication of intentions)*

The purchase price of the site, plus the fees for the odour modelling assessment and ecology consultants, application fees payable to Natural Resources Wales (environmental permit) and the LPA have exceeded £100,000. The expenditure for the buildings (as per the application submission), including feeding, watering and environmental control systems, will amount to more than £1 million. The renewable heating system for the broiler buildings will add a further £400,000.

The initial expenditure for the site, and the costs to be incurred for the development (planning permitting), provide clear evidence of a firm intention to develop the rural enterprise concerned.

In respect of funding arrangements for the enterprise, a national bank has considered the proposal and has agreed to make funds available to the applicants.

- b) The new enterprise needs to be established at the proposed location because there were no other sites where there is a dwelling available.*

No other sites as suitable as the subject site have been found by the applicants for the broiler enterprise. The merits of the site have already been documented in the supporting report submitted to the LPA (October 2016) with specific reference to Policy EC3 of the Wrexham UDP.

- c) Clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;*

The applicants have privately sourced funds in excess of £600,000 for the broiler enterprise. As noted above, the applicants have funding in place from a national bank for the balance of the investment required. The bank have agricultural experts and

therefore have confidence that the investment will provide a return for both the applicants and the bank.

The current edition of John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook (46th Edition, 2016) shows a gross margin of 20p per bird reared. The throughput of the broiler enterprise will be 616,000 birds per annum and so providing a gross margin of £123,000 per year. In addition, the Renewable Heat Incentive will produce £68,000 per annum for twenty years (i.e. Tier 1 ground source heat pumps @ 8.7p/kWh).

The above figures clearly demonstrate that the enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis.

- d) There is a clearly established functional need and that need relates to a full-time worker, and does not relate to a part-time requirement.*

In respect of the labour requirement for the broiler enterprise this will amount to in excess of 4 full time workers. The labour requirements for all types of agricultural enterprises are detailed in the John Nix Farm Management Pocketbook.

The functional need for on site accommodation in relation to the enterprise is considered to be a minimum of one full time worker. This is as a consequence of the scale and nature of the enterprise. The functional need requirements of the enterprise are as detailed in Appendix 1.

- e) The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling or by converting an existing suitable building on the enterprise, or any other existing accommodation in the locality, which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned.*

There is neither an existing dwelling nor a building suitable for conversion at the site. In order to meet the identified functional need of the enterprise on site residential accommodation is essential (i.e. off-site residential accommodation would not be acceptable).

- f) Other normal planning requirements, for example siting and access, are satisfied.*

The mobile home accommodation is well located to provide effective management of the broiler enterprise.

Residential accommodation at the site will reduce vehicle movements to and from the site.

CONCLUSIONS

The above assessment of the proposed broiler enterprise has clearly established that the enterprise meets the requirement of paragraph 4.6.1 of TAN 6, and hence there is justification and a requirement for temporary residential accommodation adjacent to the poultry buildings.

Thereafter, once the enterprise has been established, it will be a matter of the applicants submitting an application for a permanent dwelling – with reference to paragraphs 4.4.1 & 4.6.1 of TAN 6.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO TAN 6

The following are further comments in respect of the proposal relating to the policy advice of TAN 6.

At Paragraph 2.1.1 it states: The overall goal for the planning system is to support living and working rural communities in order that they are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

The proposed broiler enterprise will be socially and environmentally sustainable, within the covering letter sent by Natural Resources Wales with the Environmental Permit it says: "We are satisfied that you can carry out your activities in accordance with the enclosed permit, without harm to the environment or human health." It will be economically sustainable because it will be profitable (as per the financial information above) and it will contribute to the sustainability of the broiler industry in Wales which is on the point of requiring an extra 400,000 chickens per week.

At Paragraph 2.2.1 it states: A key question for the planning authority, when identifying sites in the development plan or determining planning applications, is whether the proposed development enhances or decreases sustainability of the community. In particular, planning authorities should support developments that would help to achieve a better balance between housing and employment, encouraging people to live and work in the same locality.

In terms of food miles (efficiency), the applicants and their advisers are unaware of any site in Wales which has the ability to produce a more efficient and sustainable output than the subject site – see previous supporting information (October 2016). The planning department has produced no justification for the assertion that the proposal constitutes 'an unsustainable form of new development in the open countryside' (LPA letter of 4 November).

At Paragraph 3.1.2 it states: The development plan should facilitate diversification of the rural economy by accommodating the needs of traditional rural enterprises and new enterprises, whilst minimising impacts on the local community and the environment.

The proposal is traditional agriculture, i.e. the rearing of chickens for food, but it is a new enterprise. The new enterprise is agricultural development on agricultural land. The proposal clearly meets this element of creating and maintaining sustainable rural economies. As previously noted the site has an Environmental Permit as issued by Natural Resources Wales.

The letter from the LPA (4 November) appears not to wish to see or encourage agricultural development, and most notably on the site in question. As stated above and in the previous report (October 2016) the site is ideal for the agricultural activity and is a sustainable location for the enterprise, i.e. close to a hatchery, feed mill and chicken processing plant. Given that the site is suitable for the agricultural enterprise it seems ludicrous that all other land areas should be considered and discounted as part of the assessment process. But for the record, in respect of this point, the applicants began their search for a suitable site for a broiler enterprise more than 5 years ago. Available sites West of the Pennines were considered - from north of Preston to south as far as Whitchurch. Suitability of the sites was assessed by the applicants and their professional advisers who are Planning Counsel and Chartered Surveyor/Agricultural Consultants. In each case all relevant aspects of suitability were considered, and included:

- a) Availability of the site and timescale until auction/sale;
- b) Likelihood of a successful application for an Environmental Permit;

- c) Availability of services (electricity/water);
- d) Highway access;
- e) Proximity of non-agricultural dwellings;
- f) Effects on the landscape.

With all the above considered the site in question was assessed to be the most suitable and consequently it has been acquired and the Environmental Permit secured by Natural Resources Wales. Given the above the applicants have certainly fully assessed the site in question and other possible sites.

ANTHONY W ATKINSON MRICS FAAV

Acorus Rural Property Services Ltd

November 2016

FUNCTIONAL NEED REQUIREMENTS OF THE BROILER ENTERPRISE

There is an essential need to live at the place of work in relation to this broiler enterprise for the following reasons:

The chickens are reared within closed houses and therefore they are solely reliant on the farm staff to regulate the environmental conditions to ensure their welfare.

Feeding, drinking and ventilation systems within the buildings require monitoring on a regular basis.

Other than the provision of food and water the most important management aspect with intensively managed poultry is the control of ventilation. Ventilation not only regulates the quality of the air that the birds breathe but it is also the principle factor in temperature regulation. At each stage of a bird's development there will be a certain thermal comfort zone. Within this broader zone there will be a temperature range of 1-2°C in which a bird makes best use of feed energy for growth.

There is a clear welfare element to maintaining appropriate temperatures with the building, which goes over and above any financial goals. If temperatures become too low birds tend to huddle together and potentially suffocate. If they are too high then heat stress can lead to significant distress and potentially death.

Whilst internal house temperatures are automatically monitored and alarms triggered if parameters breached, there still needs to be someone on site in close proximity to the buildings to take the appropriate remedial action.

As with any system that relies on mechanical equipment, failures are not uncommon and it is essential for someone to be onsite at all times to respond immediately.

As outlined, ventilation also acts as the primary control of fresh air and ammonia levels within a poultry house. Without sufficient ventilation, CO₂ levels from bird respiration may exceed safe levels. Likewise, adequate ventilation reduces humidity, keeps litter dry and in turn prevents ammonia build up before it can occur. If ammonia levels do rise then increased ventilation can help reduce these.

Failures in ventilation equipment are one of the biggest threats to livestock welfare within an intensive poultry unit. It is only with frequent stock inspection that problems can be avoided.

The frequent checking of the physical condition of stock not only meets best welfare practices but also helps to ensure optimum bird performance. Comb and wattle colour, muscle tone and level of activity can all be indicators of bird health. A move away from normal in anyone of these areas could indicate disease, overfeeding/underfeeding and incorrect ventilation/temperature. Without appropriate remedial action all these factors can impact on bird welfare.

Biosecurity is an important factor on any farm but it is especially important on a poultry unit. All movements on and off the farm have to be accurately recorded and it is important that disinfectant and disease control procedures are carefully observed. By limiting the number of staff that travel to and from the site, even by one, reduces the potential disease risk to the unit.

Responsibility for the welfare of the livestock is firmly on the 'keeper', i.e. 'the person responsible for or in charge of animals whether on a permanent or temporary basis.' It is an offence under the agriculture legislation to cause unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to any livestock.

The basic requirements for the welfare of livestock are a husbandry system appropriate to the health and, so far as practicable, the behavioural needs of the animals and a high standard of stockmanship. Stockmanship is a key factor; without competent, diligent stockmanship, the welfare of the animals cannot be catered for.

The aim of current welfare codes is to encourage all those who care for animals to follow the highest standards of husbandry. Without good stockmanship, animal welfare can never be properly protected.

A framework that was developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council is known as 'The Five Freedoms', which are:

1. Freedom from thirst and hunger – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;
2. Freedom from discomfort – by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting place;
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals' own kind;
5. Freedom from fear and distress – by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The stock-keeper has the most significant influence on the welfare of animals. Stock-keepers should be knowledgeable and competent in a wide range of animal health and welfare skills, which should include:

- handling skills;
- preventing and treating lameness;
- preventing and treating internal and external parasites;
- giving medicines by injection;
- providing appropriate care to sick and injured animals;
- care of the mother and her young; and
- management of animals to minimise aggression.

Badly managed and unhealthy animals will not thrive, and it is essential that the stock-keeper should watch for signs of distress, disease or aggression towards an animal by others in the group. To do this, it is important that stock-keepers have enough time to inspect the stock, check equipment and take action to deal with any problem.

Keepers should be able to anticipate problems or recognise them in their earliest stages and, in many cases, should be able to identify the cause and put matters right immediately.

With some livestock always consider the possibility that they may be affected by a notifiable disease. If the cause is not obvious, or if your immediate action is not effective, a veterinary surgeon or other expert should be called in immediately – failure to do so may cause unnecessary suffering.

As with all livestock holdings, in addition to complying with the appropriate welfare codes, there are other instances when emergencies can occur which demand an immediate response, and so all stock-keepers should be aware of the importance of regular inspections and be familiar with the normal behaviour patterns. It is also important that the overall security of the business and premises are maintained so that if intruders are on the site, their presence is detected and appropriate action taken.

Functional need in this instance is based on animal welfare, although consideration should also be given to site security and business efficiency. Without well cared for animals and a secure site against theft, damage etc, the proper functioning of the business is significantly affected.