AGRICULTURAL JUSTIFICATION REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COW HOUSING WITH FACILITY FOR ROBOT MILKING

FOR

D MORTIMER & SONS
NORRINGTON GATE FARM
BROUGHTON GIFFORD
MELKSHAM
WILTSHIRE
SN12 8LW

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to explain the need and reasoning behind the proposed development to construct new cow housing with robot milking facilities, at Norrington Gate Farm. The report explains the animal welfare reasons for the development, the financial need for the development and the benefits to the long-term viability of the business, as well as benefits to other local businesses and trades.

1.2 This report will provide detailed reasoning for the selection of the site and the proposed positioning and orientation of the buildings on this site, with particular emphasis given to the benefits to the dairy herd health and welfare and the financial implications that are connected to these benefits.

1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings & documents:

- NorringtonFarm_PLAN_001 to 005.dwg
- Planning Statement in relation to the erection of high welfare cattle housing with robot milking facilities – JMI _Planning.

2.0 FARM BACKGROUND

2.1 Norrington Gate Farm, is farmed by the Ovens family The farm is a traditional family run dairy farm, with a herd of 200 Dairy Cows and 100 youngstock as well as 20 beef cattle. The existing farm buildings were constructed before 1980. Milking and cow housing facilities are becoming outdated and are in need of modernising, in order to provide modern up to date, high welfare dairy facilities and to ensure a successful farm business in the future.

2.2 D Mortimer and Sons farm approximately 300 acres of owned and rented land, Norrington Gate Farm makes up 150 acres of the owned land. Currently D Mortimer and Sons grow, wholecrop wheat, grass and forage maize.

2.3 D Mortimer and Sons have farmed in the Melksham area for almost 100 years. The next generation have recently joined the business, with the objective of managing a successful farming business for the future.

3.0 D MORTIMER & SONS FARM BUSINESS PLAN

3.1 In order to secure a strong business for the future, the farm business has identified the need to initially provide new high welfare cow housing, with the facility to install robotic milking facilities at a later date, sometime in the next 5 years. The new high welfare cow housing, will enable the housing to be designed to the most up to date modern dairy standards, allowing efficient daily routines. Initially the cows housed in the new cow housing will be milked in the existing milking parlour. The business plan in the medium to long term is to install robotic milking within the building. The new cow housing will be a significant investment for the farm, which will allow the farm to reach it's potential and provide a strong business for the partners in the business for the future.

3.2 The long-term aim of the business is to provide a good working environment for the staff and high levels of welfare for the dairy herd. Continued investment is

planned to ensure all aspects of agriculture is at the highest standard including environmental responsibilities and increasing compliance standards.

3.3. The farm business currently employs 3 people full time and 2 part time staff.

4.0 BACKGROUND TO SITE SELECTION

4.1 The existing site at Norrington Gate Farm has already been used for agricultural practices for many years, with an established Holstein dairy herd. The farm buildings are now largely outdated and in need of modernising for the milking herd. Building the new high welfare cow housing will provide housing that meets the up to date requirements for dairy cows. Some of the herd will continue to be housed in the existing buildings, but by providing the new high welfare facilities, this will allow some of the existing cow housing to be improved, with more space per cow in the bedded and feed areas, for the cows that will continue to be housed there. The existing housing will also be utilised for youngstock followers and some dry cows.

4.2 The site selection has been decided upon to enable the existing farm facilities to stay in operation. The site selection alongside the existing facilities will allow some of the dairy herd, plus youngstock and dry cows to be housed in the existing buildings and feed storage silage clamps to continue to be utilised for the dairy enterprise. The existing milking parlour will continue to be used for milking the herd, with the medium to long term plan to milk part of the herd in the new housing facility with robotic milking units. The position of the proposed building provides good access to the grazing fields.

4.3 The site selection utilises the existing levels on the site and will assist with the drainage of urine from the cow housing. This helps reduce emissions from the building and ensure efficient removal of slurry from the cow housing, with minimal power requirements, minimising the farms carbon footprint.

5.0 DESIGN OF THE HIGH WELFARE COW HOUSING AND ROBOTIC MILKING FACILITY

5.1 The layout will be based on the current High Welfare recommendations for housing milking cows. When selecting the proposed layout for the high welfare cow housing and robotic milking facility, careful consideration has been given to the design features to minimise the disease and injury risk and to optimise the health and welfare and technical performance of the dairy cattle.

5.2 The new high welfare cow housing and robotic milking facility will be built to the most up to date best practice standards, with advice sought from leading industry experts, and taking into account the most up to date research and recommendations from DEFRA.

5.3 The Dairy Cattle will be housed on purpose made comfortable latex foam mattresses, with spacious area per animal. The new high welfare cow housing and robotic milking facility will house approximately 106 dairy cows, with room to install 2 robotic milking units. Wide passages will be fitted, to allow the cattle free, unrestricted access, to move around the facility and access feed and water ad libitum

and provide spacious loafing area. The concrete passages will be imprinted with a groove to improve grip.

5.4 The new high welfare cow housing and robotic milking facility will have minimal visual impact, with the site being the obvious choice, as it fits neatly adjacent to the existing dairy unit and associated services and facilities.

5.5 The use of existing levels on the site has been considered during the design stage to ensure that the highest levels of animal health and welfare are achieved.

5.6 The design of the building has been carefully thought out. The building will be partially clad with timber space board on the gable ends, with open sides to ensure excellent ventilation. With the average wind speed on this site being above 1m/sec for 95% of the time, the wind provides sufficient generating force to provide the necessary air changes within the building with natural ventilation.

6.0 EFFICIENT WORKING PRACTICES

6.1 The proposed layout allows for efficient daily routines, with straight lines for tractors and feed wagons to follow and adequate turning spaces where required at the end of the buildings. This is essential to ensure an efficiently run dairy unit and future viability of the business.

7.0 IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESSES AND TRADES

7.1 The proposed development will provide a boost to the local economy, with local tradesmen and contractors benefiting from the construction works. Local businesses such as shops, restaurants, pubs and B&B's will benefit from the increased trade from contractors employed on the development and continued staff employed within the farm business.

8.0 CONCLUSION

There is a very strong sound business and animal welfare case to construct the new high welfare cow housing at Norrington Gate Farm, with facility for future robotic milking, to provide up to date modern cow housing and milking facilities. The development will ensure the long-term viability of the business in the future. The development would bring a welcome boost to the local economy.