Agricultural Justification for the erection of a livestock building at

Goodleys Hill Farm, Lacock, Wiltshire on behalf of B & MJ Richards, Court Farm, Gastard.

Introduction:

This report was written by Max D Sealy of the Farm Consultancy Group on instruction by Paul, Catherine and Chris Richards, partners in B & M J Richards in support of the application for prior notification of the erection of a livestock building at Goodleys Hill Farm.

Background

The partnership is based at Court Farm, Gastard and also at Common Farm, Broughton Gifford. Court Farm is the centre of the business and now accommodates over 400 cows, having been built up from 150 cows over the last 15 years.

The business is run by Paul and Catherine together with their eldest son Chris, who is in the partnership. Their middle son Simon runs a diversified business and their youngest is employed away from the farm. Chris is married with a young family and lives at Common Farm.

The business has 5 full-time employees and farms 200 hectares across a mixture of owned as well as rented land.

In common with other farms in the area, the business has periodically been shut down with Bovine TB. To mitigate this and maintain margins and output across the business the practice has moved on from selling surplus calves to rearing all calves for beef either fattening or store cattle.

Additionally, to insure against TB losses, the farm now rears surplus dairy heifers which have been used to replace cows within the herd when lost with TB and to improve the genetic merit of the herd and to give surplus dairy stock, which is an alternative income source for the farm. This is particularly important for the herd at Court Farm which has a long history of being a closed herd since the original two dairy herds were merged in the late 1990's.

The farm grows mixed grass and forage crops across the farmed area which spreads from Broughton Gifford through to Gastard and some rented land in and around Shaw and neighbouring areas.

Goodleys Hill Farm is 12 Ha and was purchased in 2018 by Paul and Catherine as it is near their core holding of Court Farm which is only 40 Hectares. It was an important acquisition and an opportunity to grow their business and provide a future for the next generation.

The proposal:

The partners wish to erect a livestock building at Goodleys Hill Farm to accommodate young stock as the dairy herd continues to grow and therefore the number of beef cattle and diary youngstock is growing alongside this. Currently there are 1000 head of cattle on the farm.

The buildings at Court Farm have reached maximum capacity. Some of the existing diary buildings are being used for rearing beef cattle. In the past cattle have been moved to Common Farm, Broughton Gifford but with the biosecurity requirements of needing to isolate groups of cattle this cannot be accommodated with the existing facilities.

The herd is closed and has a high herd health status with no Johnnes disease or BVD or IBR and is vaccinated against leptospirosis.

The farm is under TB movement restriction and thus has 30-40 claves being born each month with no market outlet for these calves, hence they are being retained and the existing buildings are becoming full.

The aim of the building at Goodleys Hill Farm is to provide an isolation facility to which youngstock could be moved from Court Farm, at weaning or from Common Farm as older stock. From Goodleys they would either move to Court to calve in to the herd or be sold depending on the requirements of the farm and the TB situation at the time.

The building is designed to maximise ventilation and give the required amount of feed and bedding space as set out in farm assurance standards and be easy to manage on a one-person system. It is split down the middle and fed on the outside as this enables greatest access to fresh air. It also means that two or four groups of cattle can be accommodated in the sheds by a simple dividing wall. Thus, for example beef and dairy cattle could be accommodated in the same building but without coming into contact and therefore both groups can benefit from the isolation unit and biosecurity at Goodleys Hill.

There are no other alternative sites on Court Farm where this building could be erected. As, a short road trip away from Court Farm it is easily managed for adult stock but not at this stage for young and vulnerable stock. Forage and bedding can easily be transported to the site. The isolated cattle could be managed and housed according to farm welfare and assurance requirements.

The facility will include internal handling to allow cattle to be vaccinated, wormed and TB tested which regularly takes place on a 60-day interval.

The building will be totally covered, including the scrape passageways so there will be no liquid slurry. All farmyard manure will be taken away and spread on arable land thus contributing to the fertility of the rotation.

Planning

The building was to be built in accordance with the prior notification requirements as it is more than 400 metres from a house not an agricultural dwelling and more than 25 metres from the road and is less than 1000 square metres in size and the building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit.

Consent aws granted under 20/05080/APD.

However due to a genuine error construction commenced on the wrong site as the architect at the time had submitted the wrong drawings, after a decision was taken to move the building location. This incorrect construction became subject to enforcement proceedings and it was agreed that a new application would be made on the correct site.

Conclusion

This is a profitable business with a robust business plan.

This is an important part of the succession planning for the partnership as it enables the partners to continue to expand the farm business as well as growing opportunities for the present and future generations.