By Email For the Attention Of:
Wiltshire Council Planning Team

Your ref:
Our ref: NFU/Support/XC22H
Email: South.west@nfu.org.uk
Direct line: 01392 440700
Date: 14.02.2022

To Whom it may concern,

Development of Agricultural Dwelling at All Oaks Farm, Heddington, Calne, SN11 0PF

The National Farmers Union represents over 46,000 farmers and growers across England and Wales, some 800 of whom farm here in Wiltshire. Our knowledge and expertise in British agricultural policy and practice spans our 114-year history, and we are passionate about our industry's future. We write to express our support for the construction of an on-farm dwelling on behalf of our members Mr & Mrs Cowlard as they develop their fledgling agricultural business at All Oaks Farm, at Heddington, Calne. We understand this development has been challenged by the Council and therefore our members may be required to submit a planning application – we also write in support of any such application.

As Wiltshire Council are aware, the farming community continues to face formidable challenges with uncertainty following the UKs exit from the European Union, increasing regulation, volatile markets, and fluctuating farming returns. In response to these challenges, farmers have had to consider the resources available to them and look at new ways of developing their businesses so that they can grow and remain competitive. This often includes the need to create accommodation to enable farmers to live on the premises to ensure livestock are well looked after and their welfare is maximised.

Our members are developing a new farming enterprise based on high animal health and welfare principals, which will deliver high quality products to the local marketplace. Having identified an opportunity to enter the industry they purchased land at Heddington in 2021 and have since been developing their business as part of their 5-year start-up strategy. Crucial to the business will be the development of a residential log cabin which will enable Mr and Mrs Cowlard, and their family to reside on site. This will ensure they are able to maintain the health and welfare of their poultry breeding flock all year round and especially during hatching periods, which can require round-the-clock attendance.

We support Mr & Mrs Cowlard's application for the following reasons:

- To run an effective business, as well as protecting animal welfare, it is often necessary to work late and unsociable hours, therefore a dwelling on site is extremely important. Our member has completed a thorough investigation of suitable and affordable alternative accommodation in the local area and has found it non-existent. Constructing quality accommodation on site is the only available solution to support the needs of this fledgling agricultural business.
- We are mindful that the Council are currently developing a Climate Strategy which will seek to reduce the number of vehicle journeys and therefore emissions from county travel over time. Constructing farm accommodation on site will support the Councils aims to reduce emissions from vehicles by removing *at least* 2 x journeys per day x 365 days per year, which would be required to check livestock, should our members have to travel to site from

elsewhere. We understand at present our members travel 72 miles per day in order to check stock twice daily, and significantly more at busier times in their farming calendar.

- Rural crime remains a significant issue in Wiltshire and hare coursing is commonplace in the Calne area. Coursers form part of organised criminal gangs and regularly destroy fences, target farm buildings and small/ large agricultural equipment in pursuit of criminal activity, for example. Enabling our members to reside on site will offer a strong deterrent to these gangs but will also ensure crimes are reported, fencing is repaired to prevent livestock escaping and any injured animals are quickly treated.

The NFU feel that the success of this farming business will not only support Mr & Mrs Cowlard but will also benefit the wider rural economy through the number of businesses they will supply to and purchase from. In the forward to the Government white paper *'Local Growth: realising every place's potential'* the Government makes clear that the first priority *"is to return the nation's economy to health".* This includes creating *"the conditions that will help business and gets the economy growing"* and this includes the rural economy.

Para 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) states that: Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the circumstances listed within the Framework are applicable. Our member has a clear need for a permanent dwelling and the development is in line with NPPF, and the location of the dwelling meets the operational needs of the farm. Our member meets the NPPF policy as the following applies:

a) *There is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.*

The NFU supports this application because of the benefits it will have on the farming business. In addition, it will help to sustain rural jobs and diversify the local economy. Crucially this project will help to deliver viable and profitable farming for the future of our industry which is essential both to the economy and iconic landscape of Wiltshire County.

Yours sincerely,

Andi Witcombe, NFU Wiltshire County Adviser