

PLANNING STATEMENT

**SITING OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS MOBILE HOME AT
THE POULTRY UNIT, OAKLEY ROAD, WIX**

APPLICANT: A H BROWN FARMS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by A H Brown Farms of Dairy House Farm, Great Holland, Frinton on Sea, CO13 0EX.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an objective appraisal of the poultry farming business to be operated by A H Brown Farms at Oakley Road, Wix, in connection with a planning application for the siting of a temporary agricultural workers dwelling on the poultry unit to provide managers accommodation.
- 1.3 This report has been prepared having regard to Policy HG17 of the Tendring Local Plan, and Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework which outlines the planning policy criteria for accommodation for agricultural workers.
- 1.4 This report has been prepared by Ian Pick. Ian Pick is a specialist agricultural and rural planning consultant. He holds a Bachelor of Science with Honours Degree in Rural Enterprise and Land Management from Harper Adams Agricultural College, and is a Professional Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, being qualified in the Rural Practice Division of the Institution.
- 1.5 Ian Pick has 23 years experience specialising in agricultural and rural planning, whilst employed by MAFF, ADAS, Acorus and most recently, Ian Pick Associates Limited.

2. AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The applicants, A H Brown Farms, have been granted planning permission for to erect a poultry farm (20/00194/FUL) and a biomass boiler house (20/01498/FUL) on land north west of Red House Farm, Oakley Road, Wix.

The development of the poultry farm and biomass boiler house is to be undertaken during the spring and summer of 2021, with an anticipated completion timescale of October 2021.

- 2.2 The farm will operate as an intensive broiler unit, rearing chicks from day old through to finished table weight.
- 2.3 The proposed poultry buildings on the site will be purpose built broiler rearing units, constructed of steel frames, with the external cladding being profile sheeting. The buildings will be fitted with feeders, drinkers, biomass and heating and fan assisted ventilation systems. Each poultry building includes a control room which houses a computer system to controls the environmental systems operated in the buildings.
- 2.4 The control room includes a specialist computer system which is thermostatically controlled to maintain the desired temperature within the bird housing area, using the heating and ventilation systems. Feeding and lighting is also controlled by the computer system.
- 2.5 The use of the proposed buildings is for the rearing of broilers from day old chicks through to finished table weight. The proposed broiler rearing cycle operates on an all-in all-out system, with each cycle taking 48 days. The birds are reared for approximately 38 days following which the buildings are cleaned out in preparation for the next batch of birds. The buildings are empty for cleaning and preparation for 10 days at the end of the growing cycle. The unit will operate with 7.5 flocks per birds per annum.
- 2.6 The site is required to operate with a permit from the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting regime.

Farm Labour

- 2.7 Once fully operational, the poultry unit at Oakley Road will provide full time employment for 2 full-time workers.
- 2.8 The standard labour calculation for the proposed broiler unit is shown below, based on standard published labour data in the Farm Management Pocketbook by John Nix, 51st Edition 2021.

| Enterprise | Labour Requirement per Head / Place (standard man days) | Total Enterprise Labour Requirement (standard man days) |
|-------------------|--|--|
| 750,000 | 0.002 | 1500 |
| Total | | 1500 |

** It is generally accepted that 300 standard man days are provided by stockmen, therefore, the unit has a standard labour requirement of 5 full-time workers.*

- 2.9 The business has a standard labour requirement of 5 full-time workers based on standard data. The poultry business will be operated with 2 full-time workers on the site, plus large gangs of specialist contractors during the peak periods.
- 2.10 The labour requirements on the poultry unit vary substantially during the different stages of the flock cycle, with peak requirements for labour during catching of birds and cleaning and washing of the buildings. Additional contract staff are brought in to provide additional labour during peak labour periods.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The applicants propose to site a temporary dwelling adjacent to the poultry farm for occupation by the poultry farm manager.

- 3.2 The business under development is an intensive livestock unit, which will extend to 100,000 birds. The operation will be reliant on automated ventilation, heating, feed and water systems. The vast numbers of the livestock are such that there is a requirement for a manager to reside on the site for the proper functioning of the enterprise and to maintain animal welfare.

4. PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 Planning policy for Rural Enterprise Dwellings is provided within the Tendring Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.2 Policy HG17 of the Tendring Local Plan relates to relocatable dwellings for agricultural workers, and the text of the policy is shown below.

Policy HG17 – Relocatable Dwellings for Agricultural Workers

Outside the defined settlements, temporary planning permission for a maximum of three years, will be granted for a re-locatable dwelling (including a mobile home) for agricultural or forestry workers provided:

- i. the applicant is able to demonstrate that there is a functional need for the dwelling to be located within the relevant agricultural or forestry unit;*
- ii. there is a clear and achievable business plan to make the holding financially viable within the period of the temporary planning permission; and*
- iii. the siting, size and design of the dwelling is such as to minimise the impact upon the open countryside and landscape.*

When granting planning permission, a condition will be imposed limiting its occupation to persons solely or mainly employed in agriculture or forestry on that holding.

- 4.3 Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) states that isolated new homes in the countryside should be avoided, unless certain circumstances apply. One of those circumstances is where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.

5. ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The NPPF and the Tendring Local Plan policy HG17 requires that any accommodation is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise (a functional test). Essential need is principally determined by the nature and scale of the enterprises operated and the operations which out of necessity have to be carried out to effectively manage and supervise those enterprises. In this case the business proposes to operate an intensive livestock unit extending to 100,000 broiler chickens.
- 5.2 The operation of a poultry unit is such that there is a high demand for out of hours labour. The out of hours labour includes monitoring and chicks, feed, water, ventilation and temperature throughout each growing cycle. The unit requires supervision on a round the clock basis. At certain times within the growing cycle there are greater demands for out of hours labour, such as during the first 4 days, 3 hourly stock and system checks are required. During thinning and clearing the site at the end of the cycle, labour is required for catching and supervision, 24 hours per day.
- 5.3 The poultry unit will be heavily reliant on automated systems for ventilation and heating, feed and water. All of these systems must be monitored constantly as failure of the systems can cause serious welfare issues for the birds. Emergencies can occur at any time, and timing of emergencies cannot be predicted, hence a skilled worker needs to be available at all times.
- 5.4 Ventilation within the poultry buildings is a thermostat controlled automatic system and is critically important for the welfare of the birds. Failure of the ventilation system can cause internal temperatures to rise very rapidly. Rising temperatures initially cause heat stress to the birds and followed by suffocation and death if not immediately rectified. A skilled worker must reside on the site in order to provide supervision of the ventilation system which requires immediate action in the event of failure. The unit will have an auto-start back up generator in the event of power failure, however, other

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mechanical causes of ventilation failure require manual intervention. It is also necessary for a worker to check that the backup generator has in fact started in the event of power failure.

- 5.5 The feed and water systems within the building are also automated. Failure of this system requires rectification immediately to avoid distress to the birds.
- 5.6 The lighting system within the poultry unit is controlled by a timeswitch. Birds are nervous by nature and disruption of the lighting system causes panic. Panic amongst large numbers of birds leads to smothering. A smothering incident requires immediate physical action by stockmen to mitigate losses.
- 5.7 There is a large requirement for out of hours labour associated with the poultry unit, and a continuous requirement for checking the stock, and monitoring of the automatic systems. The demand on out of hours labour differs based on the period of the stock cycle, however, with the exception of the short cleanout period, there is an essential requirement for a skilled livestock worker to be immediately available at all times.
- 5.8 The functional needs of the business are site-specific and a manager needs to reside on the site, within sight and sound of the poultry buildings. There are no existing dwellings in the locality which are capable of satisfying the extremely site-specific functional needs. The response to emergencies associated with an intensive livestock unit on this nature needs to be relatively instant, and a target of a response within 5 minutes is appropriate to avoid losses.

Financial Viability

- 5.9 Policy HG17 requires that there is a clear and achievable business plan to make the holding financially viable within the period of the temporary planning permission. The overall development of the poultry unit and biomass boiler house represents an investment by the applicants of £2,600,000. The

profit and loss projections for the site are attached confidentially to this application and confirm that the business has a clear and achievable business plan to make the holding financially viable.

Siting and Design

- 5.10 Policy HG17 requires that the siting, size and design of the dwelling is such as to minimise the impact upon the open countryside and landscape. The proposed dwelling has been located adjacent to the site access for security purposes, and as close as practical to the poultry unit, whilst avoiding the flood zone. The proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1, however, the land to the north and west of the development is within Flood Zones 2 and 3, and therefore, as a vulnerable use, the proposed residential accommodation cannot be located within the flood zone.
- 5.11 The proposal is a twin unit static caravan, measuring 12.46 x 6.14m with a maximum height of 3.94 above ground. The size of the accommodation is modest and functional to fulfil the requirement for a worker to live on the site.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The poultry unit business to be operated at Oakley Road, Wix is an intensive livestock enterprise. The business has a site-specific functional need for a full-time livestock worker to reside within sight and sound of the livestock buildings. This is essential in order to provide for the essential supervision requirements of the poultry unit and the welfare of the large numbers of birds to be accommodated on the farm.

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