

**PLANNING JUSTIFICATION
AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**SUBMITTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH APPLICATION FOR
PLANNING PERMISSION**

FOR AN EARTH BANKED SLURRY LAGOON

At

**WHITCHURCH FARM
STON EASTON
RADSTOCK
BA3 4DW**

**Prepared by:
Cooper and Tanner**

July 2022

1. **SITE ADDRESS**

- 1.1 Whitchurch Farm, Ston Easton, Radstock, Somerset, BA3 4DW as edged red on the site location plan accompanying this application.

2. **CURRENT LAND USE**

- 2.1 The site currently comprises of pasture ground adjoining other land, both of which are currently in agricultural use in connection with the farm's dairy enterprise.

3. **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Whitchurch Farm is an owner occupied dairy unit with approximately 220 milking cattle, young stock are housed at a separate location.
- 3.2 The farm buildings based at Whitchurch Farm comprise a mixture of mainly modern farm buildings with some traditional buildings. The modern farm buildings have been erected at different times as the farm has grown.
- 3.3 The farm was originally a small dairy farm although as with most modern farm businesses, it has expanded significantly since the original infrastructure was designed and the existing slurry and manure storage system is a key part of that infrastructure that is now no longer fit for modern purpose. In order to meet the existing Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) regulations there is a need to build a new slurry and manure system.
- 3.4 The applicant has commissioned ADAS to provide a report which investigates the slurry waste generated on the farm, with recommendations for a new slurry store to meet the existing and potential future levels of slurry.
- 3.5 The ADAS report has recommended that a new earth-banked slurry lagoon should be installed to provide up to 6 months of slurry storage for the farm, future proofing the farm and dealing with increasingly unpredictable wet weather.
- 3.6 Whitchurch Farmhouse is Grade II* listed however, the proposed slurry lagoon is located more than 225m away. The line of sight towards the slurry lagoon from the farmhouse is blocked by existing farm buildings and the gradient of the land.

4. **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 This proposal seeks permission for a new slurry lagoon to a capacity of approximately 4,600m³ as recommended in the accompanying ADAS report. The lagoon is designed to take slurry from the cow housing and rainwater falling onto the lagoon. The farm has an existing concrete store but this only provides storage availability for 590m³ of cow effluent (a reception pit), in which 5,118m³ is required. Thus, the size of the proposed lagoon is well designed and has been kept to a necessary minimum.

4.2 The proposal will provide the farm with up to 6 months storage capacity which is longer than the current 5 month requirement under the NVZ regulations. The additional capacity will give the farm the ability to cope with its stock numbers and allow a buffer for unexpected wet weather conditions when the lagoon would be reaching its 5 months capacity, i.e. if wet weather prevented spreading / emptying as a result of wet ground conditions.

4.3 The proposed expansion would result in the structure forming a rectangular lagoon measuring 65m x 30m, with a depth of 4.9m. A cross sectional drawing of the lagoon accompanies the planning application within the ADAS report.

4.4 The lagoon will be grass banked with a 2m high secure fence on top of the bank to a suitable HSE standard to prevent unauthorised access. The lagoon will have a rolled clay base and clay / earth sides which shall grass over to give a natural appearance.

5. USE

5.1 The expanded slurry lagoon will provide storage for livestock waste and dirty water from the farm together with direct rainwater on the lagoon. Lightly fouled water from dairy washings and clean hard standings is captured by the existing concrete store.

6. AMOUNT

6.1 The lagoon will be 65m x 30m with a depth of 4.9m. The lagoon will provide 4,600 cu m of slurry capacity (6 months storage) based upon the existing livestock numbers.

7. LAYOUT

7.1 The layout of the lagoon is rectangular. A plan accompanies the ADAS report showing the proposed layout. The layout has been designed around the existing topography of the site and the location of the existing lagoon. The lagoon will be earth banked with a 2m high security fence around the perimeter which is necessary for health and safety.

8. SCALE

8.1 The ADAS report has calculated the scale for the lagoon based upon the existing stock numbers and average annual rainfall, but with capacity for 6 months slurry and water storage. This gives the farm the ability to cope in years of peak rainfall and allows for unforeseen increases in stock numbers such as TB restrictions, which could see the farm livestock numbers temporarily peak higher than under the normal desired farming system.

9. LANDSCAPING

9.1 The lagoon will have a grassed slope which will give a natural appearance to the setting of the area. No additional landscaping measures are proposed, however the applicants are happy to take advice from the landscaping officer if necessary.

10. **APPEARANCE**

10.1 As described above the grass banks will give the lagoon a natural appearance. The security fence is not a natural feature however it is necessary for the security of the lagoon and will help prevent persons, stock and machinery from entering the lagoon. The fence will be coloured green to soften its appearance.

11. **HIGHWAYS AND PARKING**

11.1 It is anticipated that there will be a net reduction in traffic movement arising from the construction of the lagoon as the proposal will allow the applicants to store up to 6 months slurry which will require less movements with tractor and tanker in the winter months. It is also anticipated that with greater capacity the applicants can make better use in the future of an umbilical cord system, allowing slurry to be pumped directly onto the fields, further reducing the level of tractor and tanker movements.

12. **PLANNING POLICY**

12.1 The proposal has been developed with consideration of The Mendip District Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

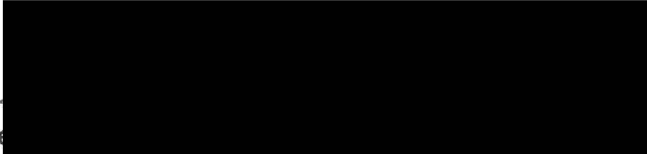
12.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides clear guidance to Local Planning Authorities in paragraph 84, that buildings constructed for agriculture or forestry in the countryside will be in locations outside of existing settlements. In paragraph 83 of the NPPF, it states that planning policies should enable the sustainable growth of all types of businesses in rural areas and promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Farming is therefore very clearly an agricultural business whose activities should be supported. A slurry lagoon is an essential part of the functioning of any dairy farm and thus is a key part to the performance of a farm business.

12.3 Core Policy 1 of the Mendip Local Plan places strict control over development outside development limits, although is more permissive where it benefits economic activity or extends the range of facilities available to the local communities. Given that farming is inherently rural in nature and a slurry store is a key facility for a livestock farm business, it is considered that the principal of the development must be acceptable according to the Local Plan.

13. **CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 This proposal allows for the slurry and dirty water storage necessary for the continuing function of a dairy farm, which it also requires in order to meet water and environment legislation. The proposal will provide a natural appearance and is not otherwise in a sensitive area with no immediate neighbours. The national and local policy allows for farm structures in the countryside and this proposal has been designed to be proportionate to the scale of the farm business. In conclusion it is our view that this proposal should be granted planning consent.

Prepared by:

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Signe

Tim Hector BSc(Hons) MRICS FAAV
Cooper & Tanner LLP
The Agricultural Centre
Standerwick
Frome
Somerset BA11 2QB