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Planning Services
Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury
HP18 8FF

Our Ref: F001-10-23

21 April 2023

Dear Sirs

**Prior Notification – Agricultural Development – Lagoon for Slurry Storage
Home Farm, Foscote, Buckingham, MK18 6AH**

We write on behalf of the farming business F H Pullin & Sons Limited to enclose a prior notification application relating to a proposed lagoon for the storage of slurry on land at Home Farm, Foscote.

The Proposal

It is proposed to create a new earth bank, lined slurry lagoon on land at Home Farm, Foscote. This will allow the farming business to continue to meet the minimum slurry storage requirements, as well as enabling the storage of slurry at a strategic point on the farm to enable application of the slurry to the surrounding land at the optimum time.

The proposed slurry lagoon will measure 40m x 25m, excavated to a depth of approximately 3m (banks at gradient 1:2.5 as recommended) within land owned by the Applicant. The lagoon will be lined with a high density polyethylene liner to ensure that the lagoon is impermeable.

There will be a perimeter wire stock netting fence around the lagoon at a height of 2m to prevent access by both people and livestock, to comply with safety requirements. In addition, there will be adequate tyre ladders installed around the perimeter and a buoyancy aid installed.

When in use, the surface of the lagoon will be covered. This helps to reduce the amount of rainfall that gets into the lagoon, as well as helping to control odours and the release of gases.

Agricultural Justification

The farming business of F H Pullin & Sons Limited operates a cattle farming enterprise, principally dairy cattle, (around 700 head of cattle in all) alongside a sheep meat enterprise (around 1,000 head of sheep) and an arable farming enterprise (across 429 hectares). The dairy enterprise is spread across the holdings farmed by the business, with Home Farm being used as a principal site for the housing and grazing of youngstock. Home Farm extends to around 178 hectares in all, and the land on the holding is used by all of the three main enterprises.

In line with government guidance, the farming business must have at least six months worth of slurry storage available. Growth of the enterprises to improve viability has resulted in a need for additional slurry storage.



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The location proposed at Home Farm is also part of a wider strategic plan to improve the efficiency, viability, and environmental credentials of the arable farming operation. The slurry produced by the dairy enterprise is of good nutritional value for crops. The use of naturally produced products also helps to build up soil organic matter, which is particularly important as progressive farming businesses work towards more regenerative approaches to their farming production.

Using slurry products from the farm's own enterprises also reduces the need to rely upon manufactured fertiliser products. Such manufactured products are energy intensive during their manufacture and transport, therefore not environmentally friendly. Storing slurry at strategic points across the holdings of the business enables the application of slurry at the optimum time. It also helps to reduce the amount of transport involved in getting fertiliser applied to the land that requires it.

Making optimum use of the farm produced slurry also enables the Applicant's business to be less susceptible to the effects of significant price volatility in the farm inputs market caused by supply and political issues. For example, in February 2021, artificial nitrogen based fertilisers were readily available at a cost of around £270 per tonne. By October 2021, that price had doubled and by summer 2022, prices had increased further to around £850 per tonne, over three times the price of the same product the year before. Although prices have fallen since then, the cost of such products is still nearly double that of two years ago. This highlights the need for farming businesses to make better use of naturally produced fertilisers.

The government is keen to help farming businesses to meet their storage requirements and, ultimately, reduce environmental risks and help farming viability. The government has, therefore, opened the Slurry Infrastructure Grant to applications, assisting farm businesses with the cost of installing compliant slurry storage and handling systems. The Applicant has secured approval in principle under the grant scheme.

Compliance with Permitted Development

The proposed development is considered to meet the criteria for permitted development on the basis that:

- The agricultural unit is in excess of 5 hectares and the proposed development comprises the creation of a lagoon for the storage of slurry;
- The parcel of land on which the development is proposed is in excess of 1 hectare;
- No Class Q or Class S rights have been utilised on the agricultural unit;
- The development does not relate to a dwelling;
- The proposal is designed for the purposes of agriculture;
- The area of the site does not exceed 1,000m²;
- The development is not within 3 kilometres of an aerodrome;
- The development is more than 25 metres from a trunk or classified road;
- The development is more than 400m from any protected building. The only dwelling within 400m is the farmhouse at Home Farm, owned by the Applicant;
- The development is not related to a biomass boiler or anaerobic digestion;
- No development has taken place or is proposed on the same agricultural unit within 90 metres of the application site within the preceding two years.



Summary

The proposed slurry lagoon is necessary for the purposes of agriculture and will enable the established farming business of F H Pullin & Sons Limited to improve efficiency, improve viability, remain compliant with the government slurry storage regulations and make positive steps towards environmental protection and reducing the carbon footprint of the farming operations.

The proposal is deemed compliant with the requirements for permitted development.

We trust that you have sufficient information to process this application however, please do contact the writer if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely


Darren Stanbridge
Partner

Enc: Prior Notification Application