

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
On behalf of Appleton Farms Limited



since 1865



**Erection of agricultural building to be used as a calving shed
on land at Home Farm, Ringwood Road,
Ringwood, Deal, Kent CT14 8FB**

**Finn's Reference – 1072/03
January 2024**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This is a full planning application for the erection of an agricultural building to be used as a calving shed at Home Farm, Ringwould Road, Ringwould, Kent, CT14 8FB.
- 1.2 Following the death of the principal farmer, changes are required to the running of Appleton Farms Limited resulting to the need for the dairy operations at Home Farm and the calving operations at New Townsend Calving Unit being merged together at Home Farm.
- 1.3 This building will provide the new calving shed at the farm.

2.0 Site location and description

- 2.1 The application site sits on land within Home Farm and is situated to the north-east of the existing farm buildings.
- 2.2 Home Farm is a busy working dairy producing a milk yield well above the national average and soon, the calving operations will be combined with the dairy also.
- 2.3 Home Farm is situated south of Dover Road and the junction with Ringwould Road. The village of Kingsdown is located approximately 1.38km to the East and the town of Walmer is located approximately 2.3km which has rail links to London and Dover.

3.0 Relevant Background Information

No relevant background information.

4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposal is to erect a new agricultural building at Home Farm to provide a calving unit. The new building will measure some 30.5 metres in length by 15.25 metres in width with an eaves height of approximately 4.9 metres and ridge height of approximately 8 metres. Location wise, the building, which is to be enclosed on three sides, will face directly across the existing yard to the main cattle shed, enabling direct visual contact between the cattle and shared use of the existing concrete yard surface for servicing the cattle.
- 4.2 Access to the proposal will be via the current farm access off Ringwould Road.

4.3 The proposals include new native species hedging to be planted to the north of the new calving shed, as detailed on drawing number 231207-SP-001.

5.0 Relevant Development Plan Policy

Core Strategy 2010

5.1 The Core Strategy (CS) was Adopted in 2010, prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework. The degree of consistency with the Framework depends upon the continued relevance of the policy. Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy states that development will not be permitted outside of the settlement boundaries as defined in CS Policy CP1, unless it functionally requires such a location or is ancillary to existing development or uses. In this case, the new calving unit is directly related to and ancillary to the existing agricultural functions at Home Farm and therefore the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of Policy DM1.

5.2 CS Policy DM15 seeks to protect the countryside and limit development within it. The Policy supports development justified by the needs of agriculture and therefore the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of Policy DM15.

5.3 CS Policy DM16 addresses landscape character. The supporting text confirms this does not preclude the possibility of development in the right location. The policy gives support to development where 'it can be sited to avoid or reduce the harm' to landscape. The proposals will re-use a small area of the existing farmyard and include the provision of a new native species hedgerow to be planted to the rear of the new building, enabling provision of a new natural screen along this part of the farmyard which currently does not exist. Currently the farm buildings are fully visible from the road and this proposal will help to provide natural screening as well as a new habitat corridor. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of Policy DM16.

Emerging New District Local Plan 2024

5.4 Emerging policy SP14 seeks to enhance and promote green infrastructure in all new planning applications. This proposal includes the planting of new native species hedgerow along a side of the farm currently with open views of its cattle sheds to the road and wider landscape. The proposed new hedgerow planting will help to green up this side of the farm buildings and establish a new habitat corridor, meeting the aims and objectives of emerging Policy SP4.

- 5.5 Emerging Policy NE2 addresses landscape character and the Kent Downs National Landscape (so renamed in December 2023 as a result of changes brought in by the Levelling Up Bill). The site sits just 53 metres within the northern boundary of the National landscape designed area and is set against the backdrop of the large cattle buildings that have been present at this site prior to the 1990's and expanded significantly since then as the dairy has grown.
- 5.6 In terms of landscape character, this particular location has the appearance of a large working dairy farm and is a very busy environment with constant movement of large farm machinery and cattle. The proposed new calving shed will fit in with this existing character.
- 5.7 The farm recognises that the application site is located within the National Landscape designation and has proposed the planting of native species hedging between the road and the building, which will in time establish as a new soft green edge to the established farmyard and soften the appearance of the buildings within the National Landscape. It is considered that the proposals meet the aims and objectives of emerging policy NE2.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- 5.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated in July 2021 to give guidance on creating 'beautiful places' and making reference to the new National Design Guide.
- 5.9 In rural areas, the Framework supports the development of agricultural businesses (paragraph 88).

The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026

- 5.10 The Area of Outstanding natural Beauty (AONB) is now known as National Landscape following changes brought in during December 2023 as a result of the Levelling Up Bill. The Management Plan (MP) includes Chapter 6 regarding 'Farmed Landscape' and it recognises the important role that farming has in the managed landscape.
- 5.11 FL3 states that farming practices that improve the Kent Downs AONB landscape character and qualities, or mitigate damaging impacts, will be supported. The proposals seek to site the new building close to the existing buildings and offer the

provision of new native species hedge planting, which will help to mitigate the existing landscape impacts of the existing open views of the substantial farm buildings and result in a landscape benefit to the National Landscape designation.

6.0 Key Issues

6.1 The key issues are;

- Principal of development;
- Need for the development;
- Suitability of the site; and
- Impact on the countryside.

Principal of development

6.2 The proposal is to erect a new calving shed at Home Farm to consolidate the dairy business here. Calves are currently located at New Townsend Farm in St Margarets which is some 4.3 km from the dairy. This is unsustainable and following the sudden passing of the principal farmer, the farm is bringing in changes to consolidate the cattle at Home Farm.

6.3 The need for the new building is specifically related to the farming needs of this large established dairy farm and is supported by the Framework.

Need for the development

6.4 The dairy operation at Home Farm, Ringwould has been grown from a very low base over a 20-year period into a 520 strong herd of Holstein-Friesians with new buildings and covered modern milking parlour. The herd produces about 10,000 litres of milk per cow annually, above the national average. Over that time the farm has established the parallel calving operation at New Townsend Farm St Margarets. The farm now proposes to follow leading national guidelines and consolidate the operation combining the calving unit at Home Farm and to expand the dairy herd to 600 head.

6.5 The unforeseen recent death of the principal farmer has accelerated the unavoidable, urgent and planned need to combine the dairy and calving operations at the Home Farm site. In the competitive dairy side of the operation, the farm has worked hard to establish a strong economic model and stable workforce which has of necessity meant

entreating and securing skilled workers from outside the area. There is a core workforce of 11 supported by 4 flexible workers. There are a variety of skills from dairy management through to calving and weaning. With investment of over £3M over the last 10 years mainly in new plant and buildings and with good vehicular access to the dairy operation at Ringwould, it makes commercial sense that the combined operation should be centred at Home Farm.

- 6.6 Home Farm has a constant weekly flow of 10+ calves and onward heifers passing through the calving unit and 13 cows that are pregnant. The gestation period for the cattle is 9.5 months, calves may weigh 40/50 kg at term, and they can take between 9 and 22 months to be ready to enter the parlour. Cows can calve at any point in the day and often this will happen in the most unsociable hours of the day. The calving process takes 2 to 12 hours during which time it is critical that the calf is monitored to ensure a safe and healthy birth process. Manual intervention is normally required to reduce risk to mother and calf. Interventional Veterinary support is required for 1 in 30 births or roughly 6 times a year.
- 6.7 All calving and dairy operations gain a significant husbandry benefit from having a direct audible link between the farmers and the stock and a separate planning application is currently being considered by the Council for new agricultural worker dwellings. Accordingly consolidation of the dairy and calving resources in one place will bring much needed efficiencies to the enterprise at every operational stage.

Suitability of the site

- 6.8 The application site is within the farm confines and the proposed building will face directly onto the farmyard and face the existing cattle buildings. Located at the northern edge of the farmyard, the new building will help to screen the open sides of the existing cattle shed and the proposed new landscape planting will establish to form a natural green boundary to the farmyard which currently does not exist, thereby providing a benefit in terms of visual appearance of the existing farmyard.

Impact on the countryside

- 6.9 Home Farm is situated within the northern extremity of the National Landscape at Ringwould. The site itself is situated at the farms northern point of land ownership here with the farm buildings stretching out to the south and south-east.

- 6.10 The northern edge of the farmyard benefits from some localised boundary tree planting to the southern side of Ringwould Road but this does not provide any screening of the existing farm buildings from lower down Ringwould Road.



View from Ringwould Road

- 6.11 As can be seen from the existing view from Ringwould Road, the proposed buildings location would sit in front of these existing buildings and the new proposed hedge planting will establish to help provide a natural green screen to this side of the farmyard.
- 6.12 This will result in an improved visual appearance at the edge of the National Landscape designated area and it is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of the Kent Downs Management Plan and Policy DM16.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This proposal will enable the better operation of the farm business and consolidate the cattle at Home Farm. The improvements will result in a more sustainable operation by basing the calves onsite and improve the economic competitiveness of the farm in a very competitive dairy market.
- 7.2 The existing open sided views of the cattle sheds from Ringwould Road will be improved as a result of the positioning of the new building creating a visual barrier and the proposed planting of the new native species hedgerow which will grow to establish a soft edge to the farmyard and improve the visual appearance of the farmyard within the edge of the National Landscape designation. It is considered the proposals will result in visual improvements to the surrounding countryside and the National

Landscape, complying with the aims and objectives of CS Policy DM16 and the Kent Downs Management Plan.

- 7.3 The siting of the new calf shed has been carefully chosen to relate directly to the existing cattle sheds and form a shared yard, making better use of existing hardstanding areas. It is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.