Water Neutrality Statement

Orchard Farm, Emms Lane, Brooks Green, Horsham RH13 0TR

Former packing station – Proposed B8 use

Background

The site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which covers the whole of Horsham District and parts of the administrative areas of Chichester and Crawley. Natural England have written to these authorities and provided a Position Statement on developments which may place increased pressure on water abstraction this zone. The Position Statement explains in greater detail (including with reference to recent case law) that abstraction from the Sussex North Water Supply Zone may be having an impact on protected sites, namely the Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar. In order not to exacerbate the impact, developments within this zone must not take palace unless they can be considered water neutral and do not result in an increase in mains water usage.

Water neutrality can be achieved through minimising water use through a water budget, strict water targets, greywater recycling, rainwater harvesting, water-efficient fixtures and water offsetting.

The application proposals

The application proposes the change of use of a former packing station into Class B8 storage/distribution use.

It is recognised that the intensity of the use of buildings can result in different water demands depending on the use and occupancy and therefore regard has to be had to this.

Baseline water usage position

The water bills (enclosed) for the farm show that water usage averaged 65-67m^3 per day (65,000-67,000 litres per day). This is considerable reflecting the volumes of poultry at the farm and staff. Within the previous applications (DC/23/1512 and DC/24/0185) Officers and Natural England based their assessment on the lower end of the average water usage (65,300 litres per day). This was split proportionately over the 11 buildings on site equating to an average water usage of 4.14 l/p/d per m^2. Applying the proportional split to the application building which measures 2,340m^2, this arrives an at existing baseline water use of 9,687.6 l/p/d (application site).

Previously approved water usage for DC/23/1512

The approved development identified a water usage of 2,900 l/p/d in the buildings for that application (a reduction from the 11,279 l/p/d associated with the poultry use for those buildings).

Previously approved water usage for DC/24/0185

The approved development identified a water usage of 3,615 l/p/d in the buildings for that specific application (a reduction from the 17,719.2 l/p/d associated with the poultry

use for those buildings). As the previous applications related to different buildings on the farm with the water usage proportionally split across the buildings, the water usage has no bearing on the current application and the water usage does not need to be considered cumulatively.

Poultry buildings brought back into use

Similarly, whilst some of the former poultry buildings have now been brought back into use (4,087m^2), the water usage of these would be consistent with the baseline water usage (16,920.2 l/p/d) and have no bearing on the current proposals.

Proposed development water usage

The application building has a GIA of 2,340m^2 which is already in B8 use. The building has both a male and female toilet and kitchen area for staff. The OffPAT employment density figures identify that a B8 use could generate 1 employee per 80m^2 this equates to 29.25. In reality, the existing use employs a fraction of this figure and so water usage is far lower than that accounted for in this statement. However, understandably the Council will need to consider the impact based on the averages.

Assuming a generous water usage per person of 50 litres per day for a person employed in a warehouse unit (rounded up to 30) and applying the employment densities this would provide a daily average usage of 1,500 litres per day for B8 storage and distribution.

Therefore, the water usage of the new unit (1,500 l/p/d) would be a small fraction (15.5%) of those of the baseline poultry use (9,687.6 l/p/d) within the application building. There would also be a significant headroom of 8,187.6 l/p/d in the event that the unit used more water than estimated.

Conclusion

Having regard to the above, the proposed commercial use of the former packing station would be water neutral and would not result in any greater mains water usage than the existing agricultural use. In fact, the proposals would positively reduce the water usage on the site from historic levels. This would be the case even if all of the buildings at the farm were converted to commercial uses. This water neutrality strategy also accounts for the worst case scenario in terms of water usage (given the significant headroom above) to ensure there is no harm to the aforementioned habitats.