Planning/Design and Access Statement including water neutrality and heritage statement

Extension to existing agricultural building

Thakeham Place Farm

The Street

Thakeham

On Behalf of Thakeham Farms

March 2024

Henry Adams

1. Introduction

1.1 Henry Adams LLP act on behalf of TJ & JJ Binnington of Thakeham Farms in respect of this full planning application for the extension of the existing agricultural building at Thakeham Place Farm, Thakeham.

1.2 Thakeham Place Farm is an established dairy farm and a supplier of milk to Marks and Spencer. Various planning applications and prior notification applications have been approved on the site over a number of years to facilitate this use confirming the Local Planning Authority's support for this agricultural business in this location.

1.3 Technological advances have been made in the industry which now allows for milking to be undertaken by robots housed within concrete sheds within the cattle building. This has necessitated the removal of several stalls reducing the amount of space available for cattle housing. This application therefore seeks permission for an extension to the building to effectively replace the space lost by the installation of the robots and does not result in an increase in the size of the herd.

1.4 In support of the application, this statement sets out the relevant background for determination of the planning application, the context of the site and surroundings, details of the proposed development and an assessment of the relevant planning considerations. It also seeks to demonstrate that there will be no impact on water neutrality or nearby heritage assets.

2. The Site and its Surroundings

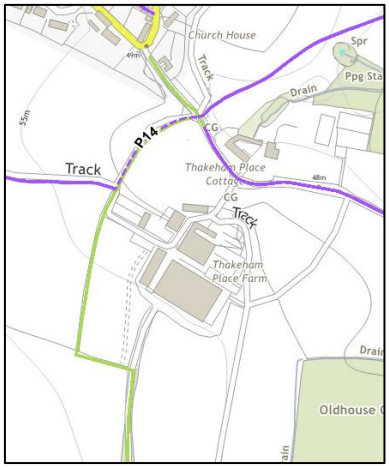
2.1 Thakeham Place Farm is located to the south-east of the village of Thakeham served by a private track from the junction of The Street and Crays Lane. It comprises a cluster of agricultural buildings with the building the subject of this application located on the southern side forming the main cattle housing and milking area. The building is formed two adjoining structures; a large span portal framed building on the south side and a narrower portal frame building on the north side immediately abutting. To the south-east side lies an open concrete yard across which it is proposed to extend the buildings.

2.2 To the west of the farm lies two cottages that are in the ownership of the applicant which are approximately 120m from the proposed extension. The main farmhouse, Thakeham Place is situated to the north and is Grade II listed. The farmhouse is approximately 175m from the proposed extension.

2.3 The farm is situated in undulating landscape comprising pasture, hedgerows with hedgerow trees and tracts of woodland. The farm is situated at a relatively low point in relation to its surroundings but the land does rise towards the south and as a result the

buildings are dug into the site with banked ground around the area proposed for the extension.

2.4 There are a number of public rights of way in the vicinity including a bridleway following the sunken lane to the south of the site and then passing around the western side of the farm. Footpaths and a permissive path radiate out from the main farm access track to the north.



Extract from WSCC iMap

3. The Application Proposal

3.1 The application proposes the extension of the existing cattle housing/milking building by extending the south-eastern end over the existing hardstanding. The building will be extended by 2 no. bays each measuring approximately 12m x 45m which gives an overall floorspace of approximately 540sqm.

3.2 The extension will be built to the same profile as the existing and will be mostly open sided with concrete panels to the base and vertical timber cladding above where shown.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which comprises three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The three objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).

4.2 Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF seek to ensure that planning decisions support a prosperous rural economy. Criterion (b) within paragraph 88 requires planning decisions

to enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

4.3 The development plan comprises the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 (HDPF) and the Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan 2017. The most relevant policies of the HDPF are as follows:

- Policy 1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy 10 – Rural Economic Development
- Policy 26 – Countryside Protection
- Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 33 – Development Principles
- Policy 34 – Heritage Assets

4.4 The most relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are:

- Thakeham 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Thakeham 6: Design
- Thakeham 7: Heritage Assets
- Thakeham 9: Development in the Countryside

4.5 Also of relevance is Natural England's position statement in respect of Sussex North Water Resource Zone.

5. Planning Considerations

5.1 The site lies outside any defined built-up area and therefore is in the countryside for the purposes of planning policy. It is clear from paragraph 88 of the NPPF and the policies of the Development Plan that there is no objection in principle to agricultural development in the countryside where it is required to enable the development of agricultural businesses (para. 88 of NPPF) and essential to its countryside location to support the needs of agriculture (Policy 26 HDPF). It is therefore submitted that the principle of this extension to an agricultural building for agricultural use is acceptable.

5.2 The proposal has to accord with the other policies of the development plan and in this case it is considered that key matters to be addressed are:

- Agricultural need for the extension
- Design and impact on landscape character
- Impact on the setting of any heritage assets
- Impact on amenities of nearby occupiers
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Water neutrality

Agricultural need

5.3 As mentioned previously, Thakeham Farms is a supplier of milk to Marks and Spencer, a company that monitors all aspects of the business particularly health and welfare of the cows. Inspection and monitoring of the business is also regularly undertaken by the RSPCA. The unit was modernised in 2012/2013 but now needs upgrading to keep up with latest standards of technological innovation that improve overall efficiency.

5.4 Within the building the cows are housed in cubicles with generously padded mattresses with sawdust overlay and easy access to their feed. Each cubicle is dimensioned to give each cow individual comfort and security.

5.5 It is intended to install 4 robotic milkers within the existing building. Each robot will milk approximately 55/60 cows. Cows need convenient and direct access to the robots where they will offer themselves to be milked 3/3.5 times per day. Space at the western end of the building will therefore be given over to the installation of the robotic system the space required for the cows to circulate and access the robots. This will require the removal of some of the existing cubicles. It is intended to replace these cubicles within the proposed extension.

5.6 The internal layout of the building will therefore be rearranged to accommodate the robots, new cubicles and circulation space allowing the cows to access the robots and the grazing land where they have to graze for at least 120 days per annum. As mentioned earlier, the proposal will not result in an increase in stock numbers and is likely to be reduced as less herd replacements will be reared on the farm.

Design and impact on landscape character

5.7 The existing building, although large in scale, does sit comfortably in the landscape due to the surrounding topography and the fact that it is slightly dug into rising ground. There has also been hedging planted around the building that is now providing a good screen. The building is also seen in the context of the existing group of buildings that forms the hub of the farm and is clearly associated with the agricultural use of the surrounding land and very much an expected feature of the rural landscape.

5.8 In the context of the existing building and its surroundings, this minor addition will not be significant or materially impact on the landscape setting or view. It will be situated on the existing hardstanding with no alterations required to the surrounding land or landscaping. It is submitted that the extension can be readily assimilated into the existing landscape setting.



SE end of existing building to be extended over existing hardstanding



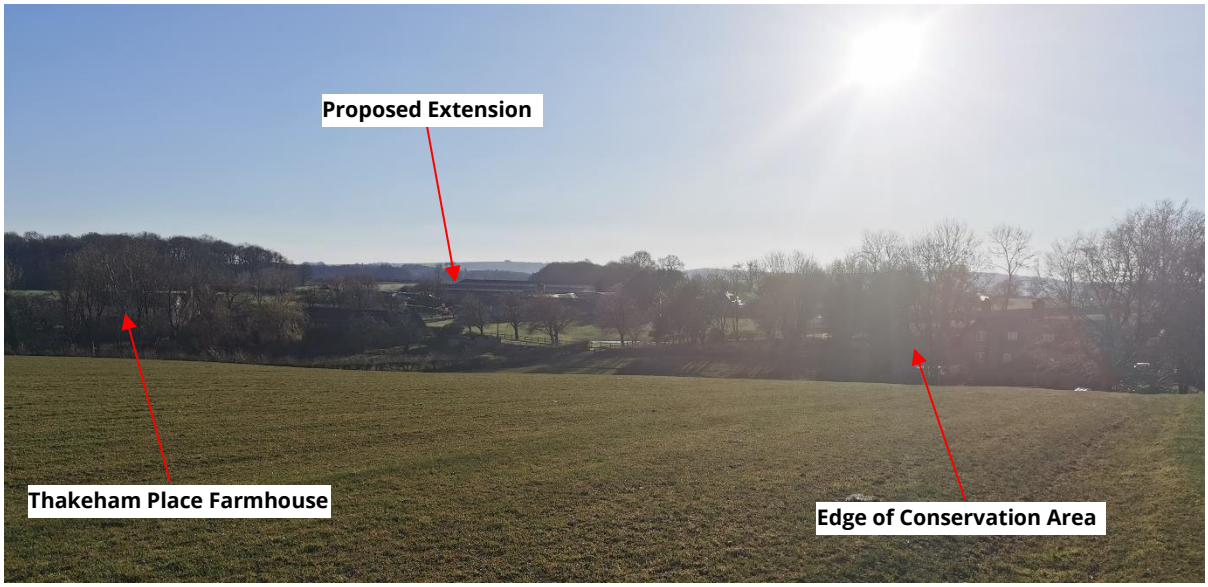
View of existing building from north showing levels and landscaping

Impact on the setting of any heritage assets

5.9 The heritage assets in the vicinity comprise the farmhouse Thakeham Place to the north of the site which is Grade II listed and Thakeham Conservation Area which is centred around The Street to the north-west of the site.

5.10 The operational part of the farm where the existing building is located is some distance from the heritage assets with intervening structures and trees that visually separate it from the historic fabric of the village and farmhouse. The extension is also insignificant amongst the group of existing farm building and can only be seen in relation to the heritage assets

over long distances from higher ground such as in the photograph below. In this context it is submitted that there will be no impact on the significance of the heritage assets.



View from North (near Church) southwards towards the Application Site and Heritage Assets

5.11 The only public right of way to the south of the buildings is within the sunken lane and there are therefore no views from the south towards the heritage assets which are interrupted by the proposed development.

Impact on amenities of nearby occupiers

5.12 The closest residential properties to the proposed extension are all within the farm holding. The nearest properties unrelated to the holding are in The Street over 300m away. The proposal will extend the building further from those properties and will cover an area of yard that is already in use for operational purposes and movement of cattle.

5.13 It is therefore submitted that the erection of a building over this area will not result in an intensification of use, particularly as there will be no change in the number of cattle in the building as previously mentioned. There will therefore be no additional harm in our opinion to the amenities of nearby residential properties.

Ecology and Biodiversity

5.14 The proposal does not result in any alteration to habitat, landform or landscape features as it utilises an existing concrete apron. The proposal will not alter the existing building other than the removal of the vertical hit and miss boarding from the end elevation which

due to its semi-open nature provides ventilation and unlikely to be suitable to support any protected species.

5.15 It is therefore considered that the proposal will not conflict with the Policy 31 of the Local Plan that seek to protect green infrastructure and biodiversity.

Water Neutrality

5.16 Horsham District lies within Southern Water's Sussex North Water Resource Zone (WRZ). Sussex North WRZ is supplied from groundwater abstraction on the River Arun at Hardham. The abstraction site is located close to a group of nature conservation sites, known as the Arun Valley Sites, that are nationally or internationally designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Area, and a Ramsar Site for their rare and protected habitats.

5.17 Pursuant to Regulation 63(5) of the Habitats Regulations permission may only be granted where it can be demonstrated there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Protected Sites. It therefore needs to be demonstrated that the use of water in the supply area before the development would be the same or lower after the development otherwise mitigation measures are required to achieve water neutrality.

5.18 It is acknowledged that there are factors relating to animal management that can affect the amount of water that is consumed. This can include matters such as the age of the and type of animal, the amount of time spent indoors and environmental factors such as light and humidity.

5.19 Taking these factors into account, it is submitted that the proposal will not result in an increase in use of mains water because:

a) the number of cattle is not being increased as a result of the proposal (and in fact is likely to decrease) and
b) the environment within the barn or the amount of time the cattle spend there will not change and
c) the management of the herd will not change in terms of feed and age of stock.

5.20 It can therefore be concluded that the proposal will not result in an increase in the use of mains water and as such mitigation is not required as there will be no impact on the Arun Valley protected sites.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This application proposes an extension to an existing agricultural building that is required to enable the rearrangement of the internal cattle stalls to facilitate the installation of

milking robots. The robots represent the latest technological advance in dairy farming and will improve the efficiency of the agricultural business.

6.2 The advice in the NPPF and policies of the development plan support agricultural uses in the countryside. It has been demonstrated in this case that the proposal meets a genuine need for an existing, established business to adapt and therefore complies with Policy 26 of the Local Plan.

6.3 All other relevant matters have been considered and no adverse consequences have been identified that would outweigh the positive support for agricultural development in this location. It has been concluded that it is of an appropriate scale respecting landscape character and does not impact on heritage assets, amenities of adjoining occupiers, ecology or biodiversity.

6.4 It is therefore submitted that the proposal, when assessed against the policies of the Development Plan, represents sustainable development and it is requested that planning permission is granted for the development as proposed.