

Nocton Parish Council

The Chief Planning Officer
North Kesteven District Council
Council Offices
Sleaford
NG32 7XX

4th March 2010

Application for Nocton Heath Dairy Farm ref 09/1040

Dear Mr Rowson,

Thank you and Mr Feltham for your helpful advice and guidance on procedures, planning rules and the timetable for the consideration of the application on Tuesday.

We found this most helpful in informing the council's discussion of their response and were reassured by your commitment to consult the council again when the revised Environmental Impact Statement is available. This will also give the council the opportunity to amend the following response in the light of information from the applicant's presentation on 15th March, and the responses of the Environment Agency, LCC Highways, Anglian Water and your Environmental Services department.

The council have the following urgent concerns about the proposed development (references are to the existing Environmental Impact Statement).

1. Access and Traffic

1.1 We are very concerned about the proposed access onto the B1188. This will considerably increase the traffic on a heavily used Red Route during construction (which is planned to take at least three years) and operation. In spite of the councils requests for a 50 mph limit to protect the houses and the two junctions traffic is still permitted 60mph at this point. Large HGVs will be accelerating loaded day and night past the 14 houses on B1188 just north of the access point and returning vehicles slowing down through the gears. This will make far more noise than the 'passing vehicles' quoted in the EIS (p15 5.4.9)

To avoid these problems and shorten mileages the council would prefer the access road to go westwards from the site to join either Dunston Heath Lane at a point west of the bends and directly to the A15, or to Bloxholm Lane and thence to the B1178 west of East Mere and so left to the A15. We realise that either of these routes would involve the widening and strengthening of the minor roads suggested but both have wide verges along the required lengths.

1.2 Wherever the final access is if the development is permitted the council would wish to see a specific and enforceable Routeing Agreement (with penalties for infringement) restricting HGV movements to specified A and B classified routes (with the exception of the unclassified sections referred to in 1.1) and minimising night time movements. B1202 through the village should be avoided except when requiring access to adjacent land. Baseline data on the roads in the surrounding area should be collected before pp is granted.

2. Noise

2.1 Nocton is generally a quiet place at night and the parishioners would wish it to remain so since night time noise has been shown to disturb sleep and if repeated cause stress. The ESS lists anticipated noise from some machines but omits that from the proposed power plant. These plants are noisy and in particular produce low frequency noise which travels long distances at night and which is particularly noticeable when other noise levels are low. Virtually all the dwellings in Nocton are down the prevailing direction

of the wind from South to West. This prevalence in direction is greater during the summer (35% App.10 p1) when residents would wish to have their windows open and be outdoors in the long evenings. Therefore the council will need assuring that evening and night time noise will not exceed the WHO limit of 30dB at the nearest existing house and this should be a condition of permission.

2.2 The combined effect of noise and disturbance from traffic particularly on the dwellings alongside the B1188 appears to have been ignored in the EIS.

3. Air quality

3.1 The air quality in Nocton is presently very good but would be considerably reduced by any odour or dust from the proposed upwind site of the development. Control of smells would appear to depend on the frequency of scraping down and satisfactory operation of the anaerobic digester. We are concerned that the capacity of the digester appears to be only 10% over the estimated requirement (App. 10 p1). What back up measures will be available in the event of the digester being overwhelmed or breaking down?

3.2 There is no proposed limit on odour levels at the nearest existing dwelling. We would wish that such limits on at least hydrogen sulphide and ammonia, perhaps proposed by EA, be made a condition of planning permission.

3.2 There appears to be no provision for controlling dust in the event of dry weather. Some satisfactory control measure for dust should be a condition of permission.

4. Water quality

4.1 Nocton and Dunston Becks flow through the villages and are spring fed from the Lincolnshire Limestone aquifer which underlies the proposed site. This rock is very permeable and further has many vertical fissures which allow faster permeation of water to the aquifer. The clarity and quality of the Nocton beck is an asset to the village which we are very concerned to protect. Possible contamination by nutrients (chiefly Nitrates, potassium salts and phosphates, all soluble and present in cow urine and faeces) would threaten this water with eutrofication and thus environmental damage in the form of algal blooms etc. On a wider scale the aquifer is drawn on for the public water supply by boreholes at Dunston and Branston Booths. Water should not exceed the regulated limits of nutrients. Once contaminated it would take many years for the aquifer to recover its former purity. Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England have spent much time and money creating and overseeing schemes and regulations to protect such vulnerable groundwater assets including this one.

The potential for a unit of this size with 8000 cows in a small area to cause contamination is considerable, it is proposed that the cows lay on sand beds which could apparently allow urine through into the subsoil and hence the aquifer (p9 3.2.17). It appears that some of the areas outside the housing, 'soft surfaced cow tracks' may be permeable also (p7 3.2.2) Will the permeable swales taking rainwater from the roofs presumably into the subsoil, be adequately protected from contamination? (p52 10.6.8) In addition to these hazards there is the potentially huge contamination if as in 3.2 above the effluent system is overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or thawing snow or it breaks down.

4.2 No analysis is apparent for the 'liquid fraction' piped to the lagoon after separation of the solids. (p6 3.1.12) Without this it is difficult to say whether the potential for contamination by leakage or overflow of the lagoon or leakage of pipework would be significant.

4.3 Will the proposers undertake to comply with the new Nitrate Regulations currently being introduced from the beginning of their operations?

5. Light pollution

5.1 We would wish to see interior lights fitted above eaves height to minimise light shining out through the open sides of the buildings and all outside lights to be fitted with reflectors to cast the light downwards.

6. Local economy

6,1 The proposers now say that many of the 85 Jobs will probably not be taken up by local people due to shortage of dairy skills In this area which effectively removes one positive factor of the application.

Would the proposers be prepared to commit to a specific and significant number of trainee posts for stockmen and veterinary assistants to augment the local job opportunities?

In conclusion we would like to bring to your notice that such massive dairy units have been constructed and operated in the USA (e.g. Desert Rose Farm Twin Falls Idaho 8000 cows) and have caused considerable problems to neighbours even two miles away particularly strong smells, flies and ground and surface water pollution. We are very concerned that the same problems should not be allowed to occur here.

We are of course aware that animal welfare is not taken into consideration for planning permission but are bound to make you aware that very many of our parishioners, not by any means all vegetarians or animal rights campaigners, have considerable concerns and misgivings about the welfare of the cows proposed to be kept in such concentrated quarters and also about the consequences of any disease outbreak in such a massive herd.

We thank you for considering these concerns and of course we are willing to clarify any of them if required.

Yours sincerely

Miss E Storr

Chairman Nocton Parish Council