Permitting Decisions – Variation and part surrender

We have decided to grant the variation and partial surrender for Pond Dale Farm operated by Holmedale Valley Limited.

The variation number is EPR/WP3833NW/V003.

The partial surrender number is EPR/WP3833NW/S004.

We consider in reaching that decision we have taken into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements and that the permit will ensure that the appropriate level of environmental protection is provided.

Production pig numbers are reducing from 4,700 to 3,000 places. The pig housing ventilation is changing from side ventilation to high velocity roof fans and the carcass incinerator has been removed. The partial surrender removes the Pond Dale Farm ‘old site’ (and pig houses A to H), this area of the farm is now a workshop and concrete car parking area.

Purpose of this document

This decision document provides a record of the decision-making process. It

- highlights key issues in the determination
- summarises the decision making process in the decision considerations section to show how the main relevant factors have been taken into account

Unless the decision document specifies otherwise, we have accepted the applicant’s proposals.

Read the permitting decisions in conjunction with the environmental permit and the variation notice.

Key issues of the decision

Partial surrender

We have agreed to the partial surrender of Pond Dale Farm ‘old site’ (and pig houses A to H). This area of the farm is now a workshop and concrete car parking area.

The site condition report shows there are no known pollution incidents and there are no visual signs of any pollution in the Pond Dale Farm ‘old site’. We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to avoid a pollution risk and Pond Dale Farm ‘old site’ is of a satisfactory state for surrender.

Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs BAT Conclusions document

The Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference document (BREF) for the Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs (IRPP) was published on 21st February 2017. There is now a separate BAT Conclusions document which sets out the standards that permitted farms will have to meet.

All new and redeveloped housing applied for in a permit variation must be compliant with the BAT Conclusions from the first day of operation. The BAT compliance of any existing housing has been subject to a sector review, however, for some reviewed permits, only generic limits have been included and individual housing should now be considered. Any existing housing that undergoes redevelopment with changes to housing location or expansion beyond the existing footprint is classed as new plant.

There are some additional requirements for permit holders. The BAT Conclusions include BAT-Associated Emission Levels (BAT AELs) for ammonia emissions, which will apply to the majority of permits, as well as BAT AELs for nitrogen and phosphorus excretion.

For some types of rearing practices, stricter standards apply to farms and housing permitted after the BAT Conclusions were published.

BAT Conclusions review

There are 34 BAT Conclusion measures in total within the BAT Conclusion document dated 21st February 2017.

The Applicant has confirmed their compliance with all BAT conditions for the existing pig housing in their document reference ‘Appendix 2 & 2a Non-tech’ summary and dated 11/07/2024 which has been referenced in Table S1.2 - Operating Techniques, of the permit.

The following is a more specific review of the measures the Applicant has applied to ensure compliance with the above key BAT measures:

BAT 3 Nutritional management - Nitrogen excretion

The Applicant has confirmed it will demonstrate that the installation can achieve levels of nitrogen excretion below the required BAT AEL of 13 kg N/animal place/year and will use BAT 3a technique reducing the crude protein content.

BAT 4 Nutritional management - Phosphorus excretion

The Applicant has confirmed it will demonstrate that the installation can achieve levels of phosphorus excretion below the required BAT AEL of 5.4 kg P_2O_5/animal place/year and will use BAT 4a technique reducing the crude protein content.

BAT 24 Monitoring of emissions and process parameters - Total nitrogen and phosphorus excretion

Table S3.3 of the permit concerning process monitoring requires the Operator to undertake relevant monitoring that complies with these BAT Conclusions.

This will be verified by means of manure analysis and reported annually.

BAT 25 Monitoring of emissions and process parameters – Ammonia emissions

Table S3.3 of the permit concerning process monitoring requires the Operator to undertake relevant monitoring that complies with these BAT Conclusions.

The Applicant has confirmed they will report the ammonia emissions to the Environment Agency annually by utilising estimation by using emission factors.

BAT 27 Monitoring of emissions and process parameters - Dust emissions

Table S3.3 of the permit concerning process monitoring requires the Operator to undertake relevant monitoring that complies with these BAT Conclusions.

The Applicant has confirmed they will report the dust emissions to the Environment Agency annually by utilising estimation by using emission factors.

BAT 30 Ammonia emissions from pig houses

The Applicant has confirmed it will demonstrate that the installation achieves levels of ammonia below the required BAT AEL for the following pig types:

- Pigs > 30kg: 3.6 kg NH_3/animal place/year (fattening pigs (production pigs over 30 kg) in houses 1 & 2 with fully slatted floors (FSF) and deep pit).

Detailed assessment of specific BAT measures

Ammonia emission controls – BAT Conclusion 30 (pigs)

A BAT Associated Emission Level (AEL) provides us with a performance benchmark to determine whether an activity is BAT. The BAT Conclusions include a set of BAT AELs for ammonia emissions to air from animal housing for pigs.

Detailed assessment of BAT AELs

Pig housing

The two existing pig houses were built in approximately 2007 under the original permit for this site and operate under BAT 30a 0 with fully slatted floors and a deep pit system. This site is not within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) and the Applicant has confirmed that they have 4 months storage under the fully slatted floors and within the slurry reception tanks.

As part of the request for further information received 20/03/2025 and 21/03/2025 it was confirmed that the ventilation on the two pig houses was changed in 2023 from side fans to roof fans with no other changes to the pig houses since 2017. Therefore, it was agreed that these two pig houses can be classified as existing housing with a deep pit system. These responses are referenced in Table S1.2 - Operating Techniques, of the permit.

As part of the pre application screening for this variation, information was provided by the Applicant regarding occupancy and crude protein reduction. This site operates as an all-in, all-out batch system of 15 week cycles, with approximately 3.5 cycles per annum. The batch calculator was used to calculate a bespoke emission factor of 1.91 kg NH_3/animal place/year, which included a 20% reduction on crude protein figures, and is below the relevant BAT AEL of 2.6 kg NH_3/animal place/year showing compliance with the BAT AEL.

Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)

This permit implements the requirements of the European Union Directive on Industrial Emissions.

Groundwater and soil monitoring

As a result of the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive, all permits are now required to contain a condition relating to protection of soil, groundwater and groundwater monitoring. However, the Environment Agency's H5 Guidance states that it is only necessary for the Operator to take samples of soil or groundwater and measure levels of contamination where there is evidence that there is, or could be existing contamination and:

- The environmental risk assessment has identified that the same contaminants are a particular hazard; or
- The environmental risk assessment has identified that the same contaminants are a hazard and the risk assessment has identified a possible pathway to land or groundwater.

H5 Guidance further states that it is **not essential for the Operator** to take samples of soil or groundwater and measure levels of contamination where:

- The environmental risk assessment identifies no hazards to land or groundwater; or
- Where the environmental risk assessment identifies only limited hazards to land and groundwater and there is no reason to believe that there could be historic contamination by those substances that present the hazard; or
- Where the environmental risk assessment identifies hazards to land and groundwater but there is evidence that there is no historic contamination by those substances that pose the hazard.

The site condition report (SCR) for Pond Dale Farm (received 11/07/2024) demonstrates that there are no hazards or likely pathway to land or groundwater and no historic contamination on site that may present a hazard from the same contaminants. Therefore, on the basis of the risk assessment presented in the SCR, we accept that they have not provided base line reference data for the soil and groundwater at the site at this stage and although condition 3.1.3 is included in the permit no groundwater monitoring will be required.

Ammonia

The Applicant has demonstrated that the housing will meet the relevant NH_3 BAT AEL.

There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located within 5 kilometres of the installation boundary. There are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and one Ancient Woodland (AW) within 2 km of the installation boundary.

The farm operation is an all-in, all-out batch system and hence a bespoke emission factor was calculated using production pigs over 30 kg and operating times over the cycle. The bespoke emission factor was calculated as 1.91 kg NH_3/animal place/year which included a 20% reduction for crude protein.

Ammonia assessment – LWS / AW

The following trigger thresholds have been applied for the assessment of these sites:

- If the process contribution (PC) is below 100% of the relevant critical level (CLe) or critical load (CLo) then the farm can be permitted with no further assessment.

Initial screening using ammonia screening tool version 4.6 (dated 28/03/2025) has indicated that emissions from Pond Dale Farm will only have a potential impact on the LWS and AW sites with a precautionary CLe of 1µg/m^3 if they are within 295 m of the emission source.

Beyond 295 m the PC is less than 1µg/m^3 and therefore beyond this distance the PC is insignificant. In this case all LWS and AW are beyond this distance (see table below) and therefore screen out of any further assessment.

Table 1 – LWS / AW Assessment

Site	Distance from site (m)
Ravensworth Park – Castle Fetch LWS	1310
Aske Estate Woodlands LWS	1334
Hartforth Wood AW	1333

No further assessment is required.

Decision considerations

Confidential information

A claim for commercial or industrial confidentiality has not been made.

The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance on confidentiality.

Identifying confidential information

We have not identified information provided as part of the application that we consider to be confidential.

The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance on confidentiality.

The regulated facility

We considered the extent and nature of the facility at the site in accordance with RGN2 ‘Understanding the meaning of regulated facility’.

The extent of the facility is defined in the site plan and in the permit. The activities are defined in table S1.1 of the permit.

The site

The Operator has provided plans which we consider to be satisfactory, showing the extent of the site facilities.

The plans show the location of the part of the installation to which this permit applies on that site.

The plan is included in the permit.

Site condition report

The Operator has provided a description of the condition of the site, which we consider is satisfactory. The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance on site condition reports.

Nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations

We have checked the location of the application to assess if it is within the screening distances, we consider relevant for impacts on nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations. The application is within our screening distances for these designations.

We have assessed the application and its potential to affect sites of nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations identified in the nature conservation screening report as part of the permitting process.

We consider that the application will not affect any site of nature conservation, landscape and heritage, and/or protected species or habitats identified.

See Ammonia section in the Key Issues above for more details.

We have not consulted Natural England. The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance.

Environmental risk

We have reviewed the Operator's assessment of the environmental risk from the facility.

The Operator’s risk assessment is satisfactory.

General operating techniques

We have reviewed the techniques used by the Operator and compared these with the relevant guidance notes and we consider them to represent appropriate techniques for the facility.

The operating techniques that the applicant must use are specified in table S1.2 in the environmental permit.

The proposed techniques for priorities for control are in line with the benchmark levels contained in the Sector Guidance Note EPR6.09 and we consider them to represent appropriate techniques for the facility. The permit conditions ensure compliance with The Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference document (BREF) for the Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs (IRPP) published on 21st February 2017.

Updating permit conditions during consolidation

We have updated permit conditions to those in the current generic permit template as part of permit consolidation. The conditions will provide the same level of protection as those in the previous permits.

Improvement programme

Based on the information on the application, we consider that we need to include an improvement programme.

These are historic improvement programmes carried over from the previous permits and are now confirmed to be completed.

Emission limits

We have decided that emission limits are required in the permit. BAT AELs have been added in line with the Intensive Farming sector BAT Conclusions document dated 21/02/2017. These limits are included in table S3.3 of the permit.

Monitoring

These monitoring requirements have been imposed in order to ensure compliance with Intensive Farming BAT Conclusions document dated 21/02/2017.

Reporting

We have specified reporting in the permit, using the methods detailed and to the frequencies specified.

We made these decisions in order to ensure compliance with the Intensive Farming sector BAT Conclusions document dated 21/02/2017.

Management system

We are not aware of any reason to consider that the Operator will not have the management system to enable it to comply with the permit conditions.

The decision was taken in accordance with the guidance on Operator competence and how to develop a management system for environmental permits.

Growth duty

We have considered our duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth set out in section 108(1) of the Deregulation Act 2015 and the guidance issued under section 110 of that Act in deciding whether to grant this permit variation.

Paragraph 1.3 of the guidance says:

“The primary role of regulators, in delivering regulation, is to achieve the regulatory outcomes for which they are responsible. For a number of regulators, these regulatory outcomes include an explicit reference to development or growth. The growth duty establishes economic growth as a factor that all specified regulators should have regard to, alongside the delivery of the protections set out in the relevant legislation.”

We have addressed the legislative requirements and environmental standards to be set for this operation in the body of the decision document above. The guidance is clear at paragraph 1.5 that the growth duty does not legitimise non-compliance and its purpose is not to achieve or pursue economic growth at the expense of necessary protections.

We consider the requirements and standards we have set in this permit are reasonable and necessary to avoid a risk of an unacceptable level of pollution. This also promotes growth amongst legitimate operators because the standards applied to the Operator are consistent across businesses in this sector and have been set to achieve the required legislative standards.