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# METHWOLD MEGAFARM [2025]

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## Methwold Megafarm - West Norfolk and King's Lynn Borough Council (2025)

An application, made by Cranswick PLC, sought consent for a large-scale combined poultry and pig operation, comprising facilities to rear approximately 714,000 chickens and 14,000 pigs annually. The Methwold site in Norfolk lies within the River Wissey catchment, a tributary of the River Great Ouse.

Planning permission was refused unanimously on multiple grounds. These included the applicant's failure to assess the **greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)** associated with the development, and significant concerns around the management of waste - including the risks posed by the storage and spreading of manure and digestate - and the absence of a cumulative environmental assessment.

In particular, objectors highlighted that the application failed to assess the downstream GHG emissions arising from the rearing and processing of animals and associated waste, including Scope 3 emissions. The Council accepted that this failure to assess foreseeable and significant climate impacts rendered the application materially deficient. This is consistent with the legal principles set out in *Finch v Surrey County Council* [2024] UKSC 20, in which the Supreme Court confirmed that where downstream emissions are an inevitable consequence of a project - such as oil from an oil extraction project or manure from intensive livestock production - those emissions fall within the scope of assessment required by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Further, concerns were raised by objectors regarding the lack of information about how manure and digestate would be managed, including how and where waste would be treated or spread, and the likely effects on third-party land and watercourses. These objections

noted that no in-combination assessment had been carried out under either the EIA Regulations or the Habitats Regulations, and that the cumulative environmental risks had not been properly addressed.

The Council found that these concerns were valid and contributed to a wider conclusion that the environmental effects of the proposed development had not been lawfully or adequately assessed. The refusal reflects an increasing recognition that where significant evidence of environmental risk is presented - particularly relating to climate emissions and diffuse pollution - local planning authorities must ensure that these issues are explicitly addressed in any lawful planning determination.

The decision also reflects the broader legal principle, as established in *NFU v Herefordshire Council* [2025] EWHC 536 and *Vanbrugh Court Residents' Association v Lambeth LBC* [2022] EWHC 1207 (Admin), that the existence of separate environmental regulatory regimes does not relieve planning authorities of their obligation to assess environmental risk. Where there is credible evidence that those regimes are not operating effectively, no assumption of adequate regulation can be made.