

320161159P

Lower Gazegill Farm – Farm Tea Room – Design and Access Statement

Proposed Development

The proposed development of a farm Tea Room is a natural progression of the diversification of the farm business and an additional area for visitors to relax and sample our produce. The design has utilised natural timber and is sympathetic to its proposed location and has been designed to enhance the natural surroundings and create habitat for insects and wildlife. The farm has undertaken a number of diversification projects which have all helped secure a sustainable and viable farm business in a volatile sector, without these undertakings it is almost certain that another dairy herd would have been lost and further reliance on outside funding would have been needed just to exist. The tea room will add another dimension to the business and allow further educational activities to take place, the farm now hosts around 250 free school and group visits a year.

Use and Necessity

The farm tea room will further secure the farm business that through diversification has taken a wholesale agricultural holding to a retail operation. This process has allowed the holding to retain its agricultural roots whilst becoming a viable and vibrant rural business that has increased the number of people it employs and increased spend within the local and rural economy. The farm outlet is a popular destination for consumers of organic meats and milk and many of our existing customers have indicated a strong support for any such development. The farm clientele not only visit to purchase their organic produce but also enjoy the experience of visiting and learning about sustainable and low input agriculture, this development would allow customers to spend more time on farm and enjoy exploring more of the farms' natural habitat. It is envisaged that hot and cold beverages and light bites and snacks be offered. There is a current priority within Lancashire encouraging farm diversification projects such as this and across the local priorities identified, this development fits with three of the five main areas for rural development.

Setting and Size

The proposed structure has been designed to seat around 45 people with additional space allowed for rural workshops and meetings. Current visitors to the site have indicated strong support for the facility and the setting would be unique in offering low and even zero miles food. Through our charitable initiatives of the CIC Care Farm and the Shed Adventure (a dementia carer respite project) we would offer work based training and occupational therapy opportunity to adults with mental health illness or disability whilst also providing a social platform for our regular dementia carers who meet on the farm. The overall structure is deemed of an appropriate size allowing for some future proofing and because its' unique footprint does not lend itself to extension. In addition the location has been chosen for its tranquil and peaceful setting allowing visitors to experience the surrounding organic farmland.

Layout

A number of alternative buildings on farm were considered for development (change from agricultural to food service) but all of which were in an inappropriate location or by doing so it involved replacing the converted livestock building with another. In addition to looking at existing buildings and their utilisation, consideration was given to the chosen location in terms of access and parking, guest comfort and enjoyment and safety of visitors. Access and parking adjacent to the proposed building were assessed as best option and eliminated the need to walk from the existing parking area through traffic entering and leaving site. It would also allow children to move safely whilst visiting and the whole development would be enclosed in one pedestrian area.

Scale of Development

The overall size of the building is metered to expected use and allows good access internally for visitors whilst giving clear disabled access to all areas. The current site is on the curtilage of the existing buildings footprint and has been chosen for accessibility and visitor enjoyment. As the building is not an agricultural livestock or storage shed it has been designed to blend with the site rather than the existing agricultural buildings and by using green oak, cedar shingles and a living roof the building will blend very well with the surroundings. The use of this building will allow additional activities to take place that will have an educational and life skills bent, such activities fit comfortably with the existing educational activities currently taking place on site. From a commercial perspective it will allow the farm business to further diversify and add value to its agricultural produce. A current priority aim to alleviate some of the difficulties faced by rural communities, particularly the lack of access to services and the provision of infrastructure that make a contribution to growing the local economy and developments such as community buildings, public spaces, or cultural or tourism amenities are a high priority in Pennine and North Lancashire.

Landscaping

Minimal landscaping will be necessary and the car park and access walkway to the Tea Room will be fenced using post and rail fencing and then planted with indigenous hedge plants to soften the car park and provide some weather protection. The building will have a green living roof and this will be planted appropriately for pollen gathering insects as well as giving the roof a degree of blending to its location.

Materials and Appearance

The entire structure will sit on a concrete raft foundation that is installed with underfloor heating. The building will be constructed using a green oak frame and walls will be sheep's wool insulated and clad internally with plasterboard and skim finished and externally with a marine ply covered with a damp proof membrane and clad with cedar shingles. All doors and windows will be double glazed units set into oak frames. The roof structure will be a green living roof. The surrounding area will be grass with an access walkway from the car park, this surface will be metalled and all weather.

Access

Access to the site is via Hardacre or Robin Lane then by accessing Dancer lane. All access routes are single carriageway with passing places. There are no issues or changes regarding emergency access or disabled access. Once on site the route to the car park is clearly signed and good 2 way traffic is possible.

Environmental

The environmental impact is measured by the chosen construction materials which with the exception of the concrete foundation are all sustainable and very low carbon. The building will be fitted with external nesting boxes and bat access boxes to encourage further expansion of our bat population. The green roof space will allow pollen harvesting insects niche plants for their activities. All sewerage from the building will be through a sewerage treatment plant that will discharge into a wet system ensuring the cleanest possible water returned to water course. The Tea Room will be "off-grid" and all lighting will be solar lead acid battery LED. The small appliances will run from hydrogen cell battery technology and the cooking facilities will be a wood fired oven, a chargrill and a Tandoor oven. The timber for the oven will be harvested from sustainable plantations on farm and from the immediate surrounding area and all charcoal used will be produced on site and will financially benefit the CIC Care Farm that is hosted here as this is an activity that it will undertake.

Summary

The proposed development is a natural progression of a dynamic and award winning farm business. The tea room will be unique and there is nothing in the surrounding area that will offer the same experience. Many groups meet on a regular basis and a number of these would prefer to meet in a catered location, the local area does not offer a catered venue that can lend itself easily to this. Tourism is a key development area for the Ribble Valley and there is great emphasis on increasing visitor numbers and extending visitor stay duration. The Ribble Valley and surrounding area not only offers some of the best establishments in which to eat but also some of the most unique too, we are of the belief that this development would sit well amongst what the valley has to offer and indeed be another unique tourism experience. The farm continues to grow and is now supporting other local family run organic farms where it purchases livestock at guaranteed above market rate. Produce is being sent nationwide via courier and an additional website has been developed to host the extra traffic, all in all the farm business has grown without intensifying or by gaining any further acreage. The farm has over 60 local suppliers and contributes to the local economy and the Tea Room would only increase this local spend.

