

Agricultural, Design and Access Planning Statement

*For, Thornley Hall Farm, Thornley with Wheatley
Applicants : G E Airey & Sons*

This full planning application is submitted for a proposal to provide an access track and the necessary covered storage capacity for open yard rainwater runoff, wash water and diluted liquid manure from existing and approved agricultural yards, livestock buildings and facilities. The site is set well away from the road and can be constructed within the natural contours of the land so minimising impact. The proposed site is close to the existing farm buildings and accesses directly from the existing farm yard via the approved yard extension and access track. The necessary works are reasonably required for the existing agricultural business.

Agricultural Justification

Proposal to create an access track and liquid storage facility to service the approved buildings and facilities. The need for a separate liquid storage facility for the approved dairy cow buildings for the home bred cows, heifers and youngstock has been identified by the applicant and advisors.

Over many years of careful breeding the herd numbers, yield and size of animal have increased. The youngest animals will benefit from the new layout of approved youngstock housing with more bed and feeding space. The ratio of pens to animals is increased so as to provide an excess so there is always a convenient clean space. Specific high energy feed rations can be fed more frequently through the day during the periods when the cattle are housed.

As with all livestock businesses there is an increasing number of welfare regulations, detailed dairy contracts and regular veterinary inspections for record keeping. The provision of safe and stress free livestock housing for both cattle and farmer are paramount.

The existing buildings and approved building will be run together with a sustainable integral rainwater harvesting system to make best use of clean roof water and minimize the use of a soakaway for rainwater in periods of intense rainfall. Where possible the design uses overhanging roofs to minimise open yard areas with unnecessary dirty water being collected and stored.

Given the significant variations in milk and heifer replacement prices as a result of supply, market and currency fluctuations it is necessary to provide a greater level liquid storage facilities for the heifers and cows. The business can then weather the more difficult times forecast ahead following departure from the current EU agri support mechanisms.

The farm is not in an NVZ area. However the liquid storage requirements have been calculated to be in keeping with the current SSAFO guidance by providing a full six months storage. The proposed storage facility is complemented by slatted storage under the existing and approved buildings. The total combined capacity fully complies with the guidance for timely applications to land. The rainfall collected directly from rainfall over the cover of the storage facility is clean and can be stored separately. Dirty water/yard washings make up the largest proportion of the capacity. All of these elements have to be stored but in doing so the dilution rate is greater so storage is safer and better for the environment. Importantly the required cover excludes further rainfall for most efficient capacity and minimizing overall size of the proposed store. Both the retention of nutrients for seasonal reuse and separation of rainfall indicate high sustainability.

Design

The proposed access track and covered liquid storage facility is located close to two existing livestock buildings. The design uses the existing contours of the land and some limited excavation so will appear lower than may be expected. The sides of the store will be substantially lower than the two buildings adjacent to the east and similar to the approved building to the south side. The orientation is parallel to the existing silage clamp and approved livestock buildings. The recently approved youngstock building will be partially obscuring and reducing the apparent visual impact. From distance the eye leads to the ridgelines of the existing farm buildings. The site has been chosen following the assessment and analysis of a number of potential sites. The requirements include close proximity to buildings, use of existing natural land features and being well away from watercourses. The materials to be used are concrete access track, natural grey concrete panels and engineered pvc cover on a supporting structure. Top soil will be replaced adjacent to the access track as landscaping and reseeded in grass. A stockproof safety fence will be erected of timber posts at 2 metre spacing and green tinted ryelock netting to complete the project. The design and materials finish have regard for the siting and match the existing landscape of lowland agriculture based amongst managed green fields.

Transport & Access

The majority of day to day access will be from the yards, existing/approved farm buildings and the surrounding blocks of land which serve them. Access to the farmstead and yards is from the public highway using the existing entrance and drive. The access and use of it will remain unchanged for the existing business.

Access around the proposal

Access to and around the storage facility uses the proposed concrete and approved stoned track from the hard standing to access adjoining fields and farm yard area of the adjacent approved farm building extensions. The new storage facility will specifically serve the adjacent existing range of farm buildings and approved youngstock building.

Appearance

The use of the natural contours of the land in the design process will reduce the visual impact to a minimum. The north west and south west edges of the proposal will meet the existing ground level and benefit from the shallow earth bank landscaping forming a grassed screen which will blend into the existing grass field and rising land contours. The north east and south east edges of the proposal will be finished with a grassed over earth bank up to the approved stoned access. There are a number of field hedgerows in the vicinity and around the boundaries of the holding especially on the roadsides with mature trees where screening is beneficial. The land to the north east of the holding is bounded by existing field boundaries comprising high hedges and mature trees. The materials including the outer grass landscaping will complement the land surrounding farmstead area. The proposal is dominated by the substantial range of existing livestock buildings and approved youngstock housing. The strategic location of the proposed new storage facility will add negligible visual impact to views from the road to the north east.

AONB Considerations

The proposal has been formed with keen regard to the existing agricultural and landscape policies of both the NPPF and the RVBC Core Strategy. The planning balance of this project being a modest expansion of sustainable facilities required for an existing business includes the long standing acceptance of agriculture as both a majority land use and an existing business type which has helped form the AONB landscape.

This business has managed the immediate landscape in line with the AONB Management Plan over the decades and the holding for generations before the formation of the AONB. The applicant is aware of the sensitivities of the area and has land entered into various of the government environmental enhancement and land management schemes.

The proposed infrastructure is government supported and meets the objectives set out by the Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative and the River Ribble Catchments Trust. The existing range of modern farm buildings provide substantial screening and a backdrop on the adjacent and more elevated land. Two of these buildings obscure the peak of the cover and all of the concrete panels from the road to the east. The proposal is also screened from the listed farm house by the existing farm buildings adjacent to the south east side.

Conclusion

The proposal is closely associated with the existing farm buildings and approved projects and is positioned in line with the implemented scheme. The proposal is distant from the farm house which is listed and screened by a range of substantial modern farm buildings set out in two rows. The proposed access track and liquid storage facility for rainwater, dirty water and diluted liquid manure will improve the management of the holding and comply with the requirements of the SSAFO regulations. The proposal is both sustainable and reasonably required for the management of the existing agricultural business.