

# **WIGNALLS**

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Chartered Surveyors, Planning  
Consultants & Land Agents

## **FULL APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF AN EARTH BANK SLURRY LAGOON**

at

Horton Pasture Farm, Scar Road, Horton, Skipton, BD23 3JP

(Planning Statement including 'Statement of Agricultural Need')

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Wignalls Chartered Surveyors in support of a full planning application for the creation of an earth bank slurry lagoon at Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton, BD23 3JP (the Site) as per the submitted Location Plan. The application is submitted on behalf of Mr Watson (the Applicant).
- 1.2 Horton Pasture Farm is located within the Ribbles Valley Borough. The Site is situated circa. 200m to the north of Scar Road, 2km north east of Horton and 5km north east of Gisburn.
- 1.3 The Site is an established dairy farm managed by Mr Watson, farming 133ha. (329 acres) for 460 dairy cattle. The farm supply local community members and businesses with fresh produce.
- 1.4 It is fundamental that slurry handling facilities are provided on dairy farms in order to manage the slurry that dairy animals produce on a daily basis. Slurry storage facilities are essential to enable farmers to store slurry and spread according to the needs of the crop and soil at the time of application and to minimise the risk of pollution. Having sufficient slurry storage also facilitates more efficient usage, and reduces the need for synthetic fertilisers.
- 1.5 The Storage of Silage, Slurry and Fuel Oil (SSAFO) regulations specify that farmers must have at least four months slurry storage capacity. The Environment Agency strongly recommend that farmers have at least six months of slurry storage capacity to comply with the requirements of the Farming Rules for Water, to spread only according to crop and soil need, avoid waste and prevent contamination of water courses.
- 1.6 At present, Horton Pasture Farm has 0 months of slurry storage, with only 540m<sup>3</sup> capacity. The Applicant is looking to increase slurry storage capacity to comply with SSAFO regulations and EA recommendations, meet the needs of the business and improve the use

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of organic nutrients on the farm, enabling them to spread slurry appropriate to soil need, reduce water pollution and limit the release of greenhouse gases.

- 1.7 Since the Applicant has been identified as having insufficient storage capacity at present, the Applicant is in the process of applying for funding to aid with the construction of the slurry lagoon via the Slurry Infrastructure Grant (operated via the Rural Payments Agency). Due to the Applicant's identified need, and recognition of the environmental benefits that increased storage capacity at Horton Pasture Farm will bring, they have successfully reached Round 2. In order to receive this grant, the Applicant must have full planning permission for 6 months storage.

## **2.0 AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE**

- 2.1 The Applicant farms approximately 133 hectares (329 acres) of permanent grassland used to graze stock and take three cuts of silage each year. Grass is ensiled and fed to the dairy animals during the winter months when the animals cannot graze the agricultural land. The land farmed is predominantly Grade 4 as per the Agricultural Land Classification Maps for England and Wales (DEFRA).
- 2.2 The Applicant farms a herd of circa. 460 cattle, comprising 210 dairy cows and 250 young stock (dairy heifers and cattle).
- 2.3 The Applicant operates a successful agricultural enterprise at Horton Pasture Farm which they wish to develop and maintain.
- 2.4 Slurry handling facilities are an essential aspect of a dairy farm, and further facilities are required on Site to sustain a viable business and protect the surrounding environment. Storing the slurry safely and for longer periods of time will provide the Applicant with the flexibility to spread the slurry as and when necessary, to promote grass growth and reduce the need for synthetic fertilisers.

## **3.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 Horton Pasture Farm has been subject to several planning applications which are documented below:

- 3/2019/0612 - Construction of new agricultural machinery storage building. Approved 05/08/2019.
- 3/2019/0528 - Construction of new agricultural machinery storage building. Permission Required 26/06/2019.
- 3/2018/0145 - Construction of new agricultural building to house robotic milking parlour. Approved 25/04/2018.
- 3/2013/0816 - Proposed siting of one 30m high (Hub) Endurance Wind Turbine with a tip height of 45.071m. Withdrawn 07/01/2015.

3.2 Other similar applications within the Borough that are considered to be of relevance are also documented below:

- 3/2024/0177 - Proposed construction of an earth banked slurry lagoon and associated landscaping. Approved 03/06/2024.
- 3/2023/0705 - Proposed engineering works to form an earth banked lagoon. Resubmission of application 3/2020/0280. Approved 23/12/2024.
- 3/2023/0632 - Proposed earth banked slurry lagoon 50m x 50m. Approved 04/03/2024.
- 3/2023/0645 - Proposed earth bank slurry store with associated landscaping. Approved 6/12/2023.
- 3/2023/0493 - Proposed steel-framed, portal building to accommodate dairy cattle, dairy and construction of a slurry lagoon and landscaping as Phase 2 of a new dairying infrastructure development. Approved 10/08/2023.

## **4.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 The Proposal is for the erection of an earth bank slurry lagoon in connection with the existing agricultural operations at Horton Pasture Farm, Scar Lane, Horton, Skipton, BD23 3JP (the Site).
- 4.2 There are typically two types of slurry handling systems used on dairy farms - above ground steel tanks/towers and earth bank lagoons. Both designs serve the purpose of storing slurry, enabling the farmer to make the most of the valuable nitrogen content and provides them with the flexibility to spread slurries at times when the nitrogen will be best for the crop, reducing need for bagged and synthetic fertiliser.
- 4.3 The Applicant has opted for an earth bank slurry lagoon, which is a much more natural-appearing slurry store and has a much reduced impact on visual amenity compared to above ground steel and concrete stores.
- 4.4 Access to the proposed earth bank slurry lagoon will be via an existing track extending north from the farmyard on Scar Lane.
- 4.5 The proposed dimensions of the lagoon are:

Length: 60m

Width: 35m

Depth: 8.5m (including 750mm freeboard from slurry line to bank top)

The Proposal has a Gross External Area of 2100m<sup>2</sup> and a total working volume of 7901m<sup>3</sup>.

- 4.6 The size of the store has been determined using the AHDB Slurry Wizard which uses a range of criteria specific to the individual unit to calculate the amount of additional capacity required to provide 6 months storage on site. The proposed development provides 7901m<sup>3</sup> of slurry storage capacity, sufficient to create the 6 months storage required at Horton Pasture Farm. It is essential that adequate slurry storage facilities are provided to comply with current regulations and to meet the requirements of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant.
- 4.7 The slurry lagoon will be bordered by a earth bank which measures 5m wide and 2.1m tall. A concrete ramp will lead from the track to the southern boundary of the lagoon over the earth bank to enable access by machinery when required. A stock-proof fence with gates at entrance/exit points will be erected on the outer toe of the earth embankment to prevent livestock from entering the lagoon.
- 4.8 A synthetic liner will line the base of the lagoon to protect soil and water quality, preventing contamination and safeguarding ecosystems. The lagoon will be covered by an impermeable floating cover to prevent rainfall from entering the store and reduce the release of ammonia. Each of these design features protect the surrounding environment, and ensure that the lagoon complies with the relevant legislation.
- 4.9 The Location Plan and Cross Section drawings attached to this planning application provide further details of the proposal.
- 4.10 The proposed location of the lagoon has been chosen following careful consideration from the Applicant regarding both construction and siting to ensure minimal impact on neighbouring amenity whilst complying with the SSAFO regulations. The following aspects have been considered:
- Location in relation to the existing access track.
  - Proximity to existing farm operations on site.
  - Distance from residential properties both within and outside of the Applicant's control.

- Natural screening to the east and south-east of the site.
- Siting on unproductive agricultural land.

4.11 The construction of a new slurry lagoon will significantly increase the volume of slurry that can be stored which will in turn will enable:

- The timing of slurry spreading to coincide with rising soil temperature and grass growth in spring which increases the uptake and recovery of the nutrients contained within the slurry.
- A reduction in the potential for diffuse pollution to waterways which can be caused when spreading is undertaken in less-than-ideal conditions.
- A reduction in the risk of run-off caused by adverse weather following spreading thereby reducing the potential for direct pollution to the water environment because you can avoid spreading when periods of poor weather are forecast.
- The ability to spread slurry when the land is fit, which reduces the potential for soil erosion from rutting and soil compaction by machinery running on the land in wet conditions.
- Farm manure is a valuable nutrient resource, which if used in accordance with crop and soil need can reduce the reliance on artificial fertiliser products.

## **5.0 PLANNING POLICY**

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the provide the policy framework against which the development proposals will be assessed.

5.2 The site is designated under the following policies under the current adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy 2008-2028:

- Policy DMG1: General Considerations
- Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations

- Policy EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- Policy EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy
- Policy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways
- Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation
- Policy DME6: Water Management

5.3 In addition to the above, the following policies have been considered:

- National Planning Policy Framework
  - Achieving Sustainable Development
  - Protecting Green Belt land
  - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
  - Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

## **6.0 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT (AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT)**

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy 2008-2028 (RVLP) provide the policy framework against which the development proposals will be assessed.

### **General Permitted Development Order (GDPO)**

6.2 Slurry stores, including slurry lagoons are a form of permitted development under Part 6 Class A of the GDPO.

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- 6.3 The proposed development is compliant with the criteria set out within Part 6 Class A of the GDPO with regard to siting, and aspects of design except for the size of the development's footprint.
- 6.4 Due to the Applicant's large dairy enterprise, and a requirement for a significant amount of additional slurry storage capacity to meet with the needs of farming operations and comply with SSAFO and EA regulations/recommendations, the proposed footprint exceeds the 1500m<sup>2</sup> maximum permitted within the GPDO. In order to reach the desired capacity with a footprint of 1500m<sup>2</sup>, a depth of around 16m would be needed, which is not feasible.
- 6.5 The Applicant has therefore submitted this full planning application, supported by SCAIL emissions assessment, biodiversity net gain survey and details of compensatory biodiversity uplift and seeks full permission for the essential works on site.

#### **Development within the Open Countryside**

- 6.6 The Site is designated as Open Countryside as per the RVLP (2012 - 2026). Policy DMG2 of the RVLP sets out the types of development which are considered appropriate in the Open Countryside.
- 6.7 The proposed development complies with criteria 2, being *needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture*.
- 6.8 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (p.336) defines Agriculture to include "horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, **dairy farming**, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wools, skins or fur or for the purposes of its use for farming the land) the use of land as grazing land, meadow land, osier land, market gardens and nursery grounds".
- 6.9 The site is an established and successful agricultural enterprise, farming 460 dairy cattle across 133ha of land.

- 6.10 The proposed development is required for agricultural purposes, namely the efficient management of an existing dairy farm. Slurry handling facilities are particularly necessary within dairy farms in order to manage the slurry that dairy animals produce on a daily basis. The slurry store is necessary in complying with current regulations to protect waterways and the surrounding environments, reduce the potential for soil erosion and reduce the reliance on artificial fertiliser products.
- 6.11 On this basis, it is deemed that the proposed development is required for the purposes of agricultural and therefore considered to be appropriate development in the Open Countryside the RVLP.

### **Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy**

- 6.12 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support the development of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Further to this, Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that sustainable development should pursue economic, social and environmental objectives in mutually supportive ways.
- 6.13 Policy DMB1 of the RVLP supports this, stating that proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle. The expansion of established firms on land outside of settlements is permitted where it is essential to maintain the employment source, can be assimilated within the local landscape, and demonstrates economic and environmental benefit to the community.
- 6.14 The proposed development will support the continued operation and long-term success of the established dairy enterprise at Horton Pasture Farm. Planning permission is also necessary to secure the Slurry Infrastructure Grant funding, which is essential in funding the construction of the lagoon, an integral infrastructure which supports the rural enterprise whilst contributing to environmental protection.

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- 6.15 Earth banks have been designed to blend into the surrounding agricultural landscape, with outer banks grassed, and trees introduced to shield the development from view. Further detail can be found in Sections 7.0 and 9.0 of this report and the attached Biodiversity Gain Report.
- 6.16 With regard to community environmental benefit, the proposed development enables the Applicant to store the slurry produced on the farm in a manner that protects air quality, using the floating cover to restrict the release of ammonia, and water courses, with slurry stored in a lined pit to prevent diffuse water pollution. Support for the rural enterprise at Horton Pasture Farm also delivers community benefit in the form of retention of rural employment, and a key source of local food production.
- 6.17 It is therefore considered that the proposed development complies with Paragraphs 8 and 88 of the NPPF, and Policy DMB1 of the RVLPP in supporting a prosperous rural economy in a manner that benefits economic, social and environmental objectives in mutually supportive ways.

## **7.0 SITING, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING**

### Siting and Design

- 7.1 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF, 'Achieving well designed and beautiful places', provides criteria relating to the design and layout of new development, stating that developments ought to function well in the long term, over the lifetime of the development and to be sympathetic to surrounding built environment and the landscape setting.
- 7.2 Policy DMG2 of the RVLPP states that *"within the open countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting."*

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- 7.3 The Applicant has opted for an earth banked slurry lagoon rather than a concrete slurry tower, resulting in a more natural appearing slurry store, with contents largely stored below the existing ground level and only earth banks and a stock-proof fence appearing above the existing ground level. The proposed development will be seen in conjunction with the existing agricultural operations at Horton Pasture Farm and therefore would not be viewed in isolation but in the context of the wider farmstead - agricultural development is not an uncommon feature within the surrounding landscape.
- 7.4 The development is of a size appropriate to the required storage capacity requirements of the farm. The lagoon is designed in a highly sustainable manner, using high quality materials designed for longevity and lined and covered to benefit air and water quality.
- 7.5 The development has been sited alongside an existing track, avoiding the need to construct excessive, unnecessary areas of hardstanding within the Open Countryside and thereby limiting its visual and physical impact on the rural landscape. Additionally, its proximity to existing farming operations and livestock areas ensures that the development is well integrated into the working farm, helping to reduce unnecessary vehicle movements and improve overall operational efficiency.
- 7.6 Therefore it is considered that the development would comply with the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 135 and Policy DMG2 of the RVLP in terms of its siting and appearance.

#### **Public Right of Way Considerations**

- 7.7 The development will be visible from a public right of way (PROW) which runs alongside the eastern side of the lagoon, more detail of which can be seen in the Proposed Site Plan. At the development's closest points to the PROW, the lagoon is located circa. 11.5m and the timber post and wire fence circa. 5m in distance.
- 7.8 Policy DMG1 specifies that development should 'consider the protection and enhancement of public rights of way and access'. Policy DMB5 describes the council's ambitions to ensure the retention, maintenance and improvement of by-ways as part of the public

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rights of way network. This policy asks that development which is located within close proximity to the public right of way network deliver a net improvement.

- 7.9 Approximately 300m to the south, the PROW runs through the centre of Horton Pasture Farm, an established dairy farm where livestock and slurry handling facilities are present and actively used, as they have been for decades. It is envisaged that the proposed earth bank slurry lagoon will have a nominal impact on this PROW in comparison to the existing impacts from agricultural operations on site in terms of odour and appearance.
- 7.10 Nonetheless, the proposed development will deliver a net improvement to the PROW, through planting of rural trees. The outer earth bank will be grassed, to encourage the development to blend into the surrounding landscape. The planting of 17 trees situated east of the lagoon, as detailed in the attached Biodiversity Gain Report will enhance to the surrounding landscape and biodiversity values. These features not only improve local biodiversity but deliver a net enhancement to the public right of way with regard to visual appearance. Planting will be situated no closer than 1m from the public footpath.
- 7.11 As such, it is deemed that the proposed development would comply with Policy DMG1 and DMB5 of the RVLP in terms of the protection and enhancement of public right of way.

## **8.0 HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed development does not include any highway works. The development siting has been selected by the Applicant in order to utilise an existing access track within close proximity to the farmstead, to negate the need to develop additional access routes. The farming activities on the site remain to be accessed via Scar Road.
- 8.2 It is envisaged that no increase in vehicle numbers, movement or access needs will arise from the development.

## **9.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Protection of SSSIs**

- 9.1 Policy DME3 of the RVLP establishes that development proposals that are likely to adversely affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) will not be granted planning permission.
- 9.2 Due to the nature of the Site and proximity to several Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), an Emissions Assessment has been completed by Martin Environmental Solutions Ltd. in March 2025, by Neil Martin, a qualified environmental health practitioner and member of Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. This assessment uses the Simple Calculation of Atmospheric Impact Limits (SCAIL) model, as recommended by Natural England, to assess the impact of the proposed development on sensitive receptors, namely the SSSIs located within a 10km radius of the site.
- 9.3 The Emissions Assessment concludes that the development, combined with the additional measures identified (i.e. a fixed cover over the lagoon), will not have a significant adverse impact on the identified receptors, and no further assessment is required. Further detail can be found within the Emissions Assessment attached to this application.
- 9.4 It is therefore deemed that the proposed development complies with Policy DME3 of the RVLP, in demonstrating that the development will not have an adverse impact on nearby SSSIs.

### **Enhancing Biodiversity**

- 9.5 RVLP Policy EN4 states the Council's ambitions to conserve and enhance the area's biodiversity and geodiversity and that all developments that adversely affect a site of ecological importance permitted only when a developer can demonstrate that the

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negative effects of the proposed development can be mitigated for. Developments should also demonstrate a net enhancement of biodiversity. This development is also considered to be liable to Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, and is conditioned to deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10%.

- 9.6 As such, a Biodiversity Net Gain Survey has been completed by Envirotech Ecological Consultants in April 2025, an established RICS regulated Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveying firm. A Statutory Biodiversity Metric and a Biodiversity Gain Report have been submitted alongside this application.
- 9.7 In order to compensate for any biodiversity loss created by the proposed development, it is proposed that a 0.0775ha parcel of grassland east of the lagoon, be enhanced to 'other neutral grassland' in moderate condition via overseeding and fencing of this area. In addition, 17 small rural trees will also be planted in this area.
- 9.8 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is compliant with Policy EN4 of the RVLP and Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, with the proposal delivering a biodiversity gain of 10.41% on Site.

#### **Sustainable Design and Water Courses Protection**

- 9.9 Policy EN3 of the RVLP states that all development should be of a sustainable design and demonstrate how it will contribute towards the Borough's carbon footprint.
- 9.10 Policy DME6 establishes that applications for development should include appropriate measures for the conservation, protection and management of water such that development contributes to prevention of surface and groundwater pollution, and protect the borough's watercourses for their biodiversity value.

- 9.11 As stated previously, the proposed development is an essential component of modern dairy farm infrastructure, and is designed to protect both air and water quality. The proposed development includes a floating cover to reduce ammonia emissions and a fully lined base to prevent diffuse water pollution. Notably, the site lies within a 'Medium Priority Water Area', a designation which signals that water quality improvement and flood risk reduction are considered significant, further highlighting the importance of implementing appropriate slurry storage and management facilities on site.
- 9.12 The proposed development has been designed in manner to comply with the requirements of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant. The design therefore is in line with the following regulations:
- The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010
  - The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018
  - The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR), which include protections for groundwater
- 9.13 It follows that the proposed development is deemed to be in accordance with Policies EN3 and DME6 of the RVLP, due to the benefits to water and air quality offered by the scheme.

## **10.0 FLOOD RISK / DRAINAGE**

- 10.1 The Proposal lies within an area designated as Flood Risk Zone 1 as per the 'GOV.UK flood map for planning'. Flood Zone 1 is described as being land which has less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding caused by rivers or the sea.
- 10.2 Buildings for agriculture and forestry are categorised as a 'Less Vulnerable' uses as Annex 3: Flood risk vulnerability classification of the NPPF.

- 10.3 Since the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal would be an area less than 1 hectare; there is no requirement to undertake a flood risk assessment for this planning application.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The Applicant seeks planning permission for an earth banked slurry lagoon to support existing agricultural operations at Horton Pasture Farm. Slurry handling facilities are essential to enable dairy farmers to store excess slurry in a manner that protects surrounding water courses, reduces the release of ammonia and protects soil quality by allowing farmers to spread according to the needs of the crop.
- 11.2 The Applicant does not currently have sufficient slurry storage facilities to comply with SSAFO regulations, and meet EA recommendations to protect the natural environment and reduce contributions to climate change. The Applicant has applied for a grant to aid in the construction of the lagoon, successfully reaching Round 2. One key requirement of the grant is to have obtained planning permission for at least 6 months' worth of slurry storage infrastructure.
- 11.3 There is a pressing need for increased slurry handling facilities at Horton Pasture Farm to support the continued success of the Applicant's agricultural enterprise, protecting rural employment and local food production in a manner that safeguards the surrounding environment. The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with National Planning Policy and the Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy 2018-2028 and as such we kindly request that full planning permission is granted.