

Justification for sheep housing and handling pens at Lords Farm

Background

Chris Cornthwaite has recently acquired the farm tenancy at Lords Farm. The unit extends to 49ha (121 acres) of permanent grassland within the Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA). A farm tenancy map is shown below.

Chris has previously managed the farm on an annual grazing licence and based on his improvements to the land through drainage, fencing and some re-seeding the landlord has now let the farm on a Farm Business Tenancy.

Chris is an enthusiastic Texel breeder and runs a flock of 250 pedigree breeding ewes producing high value breeding females and high genetic value rams. The breeding policy includes the use of artificial insemination and naturally mated ewes. Surplus lambs are sold into the finished market.

Prior to Chris managing the farm the unit was in a state of serious disrepair with derelict buildings removed by the landlord. Lords farmhouse has been renovated and is let on a separate tenancy to Chris and his partner. A derelict barn is adjacent to the farmhouse and is excluded from the FBT.

Need for sheep housing

The need for a new farm building is critical. Prior to getting the tenancy of the holding lambing has taken place in temporary polytunnels at [REDACTED]. The bio-security issues of disease transfer has been a concern and sheep could only be housed for a short period.

The polytunnel arrangement is unsuitable for Lords Farm. The exposed nature of Lords Farm means this type of accommodation is not practical. Access with farm machinery for feeding and cleaning out is not possible and the exposed location would inevitably result in storm damage which could present a risk to livestock and personnel.

Chris Cornthwaite is from a family that have farmed for multiple generations. He is an excellent stockman and the welfare of his animals is of paramount concern. Regardless of this, the legislation regarding animal welfare is laid down in the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000. The regulations cover numerous aspects of animal welfare including the obligations for animal keepers to provide appropriate husbandry for their animals. Strict penalties will be imposed on individuals who do not comply.

The government also provide guidance to farmers. Relevant to the farming enterprise at Lords Farm this is the form of the **Codes of recommendations for the welfare of livestock: sheep**.

The codes comprise 138 paragraphs dealing with specific aspects of animal husbandry and the general requirements to meet the required standards.

Pertinent to Lords Farm the guidance includes:

Paragraph 46 - All sheep farmers should have easily operated and efficient handling pens, to facilitate routine management and treatment, on a size and scale to suit the flock numbers.

Paragraph 103 - Effective ventilation of buildings (to avoid high humidity, condensation and draughts) is essential, as sheep are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Properly

designed ventilation will permit the free circulation of air above sheep height and avoid draughts at sheep level.

In addition to the general advice regarding the design of buildings and appropriate materials to ensure animals are kept dry and pens can be disinfected there is the following guidance relating to space allowances.

Space allowances

116. The space allowance and group size for housed sheep should be determined according to age, size and class of livestock. Some examples of current good practice, with adequate ventilation and well-bedded on straw indoors, are set out below.

Category of sheep	Space
Lowland ewes (60kg to 90kg live weight)	1.2m ² to 1.4m ² floor space per ewe during pregnancy
Lowland ewes after lambing with lambs at foot up to 6 weeks of age	2.0m ² to 2.2m ² floor space per ewe and lambs
Hill ewes (45kg to 65kg live weight)	1.0m ² to 1.2m ² floor space per ewe during pregnancy
Hill ewes after lambing, with lambs at foot up to 6 weeks of age	1.8m ² to 2.0m ² floor space per ewe and lambs
Lambs up to 12 weeks old	0.5m ² to 0.6m ² floor space per lamb
Lambs and sheep 12 weeks to 12 months old	0.75m ² to 0.9m ² floor space per lamb/sheep
Rams	1.5m ² to 2.0m ²

Proposed building

The proposed building will be of steel frame design with concrete panels to 1200mm and clad above with Yorkshire boarding. This will ensure there building can be easily cleaned and disinfected when required and there is adequate ventilation. Galebreaker retracting screens above the doors will provide additional shelter when weather conditions are harsh and allow additional ventilation when air circulation is poor (see images below).

A total of 22 pens providing 320m² of space allows for 228 60- 90kg pregnant ewes to be housed which will be adequate for the flock as ewes and lambs will be turned out to grass as soon as possible post parturition. 15 individual pens will also be available for individual ewes with lambs until they are strong enough to turn out.

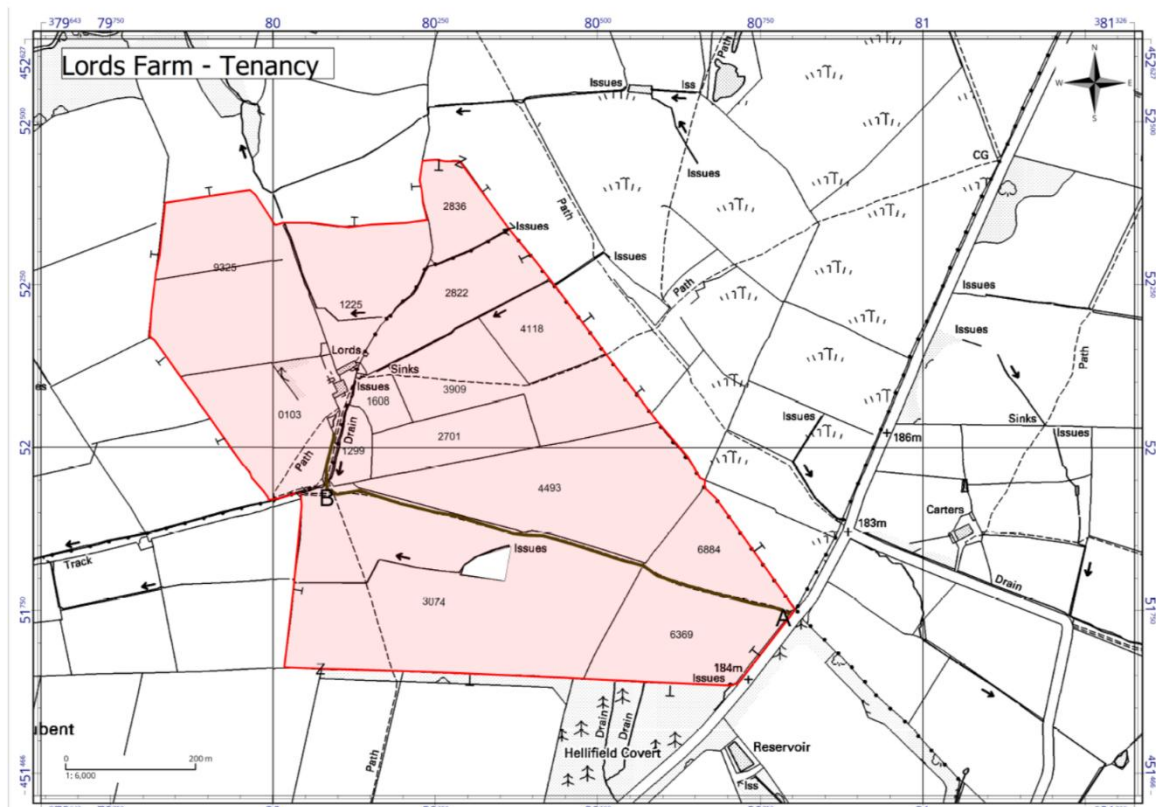
In summer the building will be used when shearing takes place and when animals are prepared for sheep sales.

The handling pens can allow access from the surrounding fields or directly from the sheep housing.

Summary

The need for sheep housing at Lords Farm is unquestionable. To meet animal welfare regulations and ensure unacceptable losses do not occur at vulnerable times such as lambing it is imperative that a fit for purpose building is provided.

The size of the proposed building is appropriate for the flock numbers. The handling pens will allow animals to be handled in an acceptable manner when routine operations such as dosing, foot trimming, vaccinating etc takes place and also allow safe loading and unloading to trailers for transportation.



Galebreaker



DESCRIPTION

The Galebreaker Rollerscreen system is a spring-operated windbreak allowing for changeable ventilation as well as protection from the weather. Designed to fit above gates, lower walls and feed barriers, the Galebreaker Rollerscreen provides fast access to sheds and feed passages and is fully adjustable to fit any opening. Coming in a standard colour of green and designed and delivered in kit for maximum ease of installation on site, this rollerscreen is available in M75 Standard Mesh or M90 High Performance Mesh. M75 standard mesh has a permeability of approximately 25% and the M90 high performance mesh has a permeability of approximately 10%, making the M90 more suitable for exposed locations. Black and grey fabric are also available