

Charles Stanton and Jenny Ottewell

Cow Ark Farm  
Cow Ark  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 3DF

STATEMENT TO SUPPORT A PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF ROOF COVERING  
AND LAYOUT OF FARM BUILDINGS – PARTIALLY COMPLETE - FROM THAT GRANTED  
APPROVAL IN 2005 AT COW ARK FARM

Prepared: January 2026

Stanton Andrews Architects

44 York Street

Clitheroe

Lancashire BB7 2DL

[Stantonandrews.co.uk](http://Stantonandrews.co.uk) Telephone 01200 444490

## Summary

This report has been prepared by Charles Stanton, Director of Stanton Andrews Architects and co-owner of Cow Ark Farm with Jenny Ottewell. This report supports a planning application submitted to RVBC as the as-built arrangement is different from the arrangement granted approval ref 3/2005/0598.

Within the justification report the following key areas have been assessed with regards to the application:

- Background of the farming business;
- Consented Building;
- Farm/building needs;
- Proposed building;
- Building Scale, Layout, Design & Access;
- Storage Calculations;
- Grant Funding for Proposed Works;
- Variation from consent and Conclusion.

### Background of the farming business

Charles and Jenny run Cow Ark Farm, Cow Ark, near Clitheroe. The business owns approx. 20ha of grassland, which is an increase of 2.3ha from the original application following the purchase of additional land in 2010. The farm has also had access for grazing and cropping for the last 3 years to a further 20 acres from a neighbour.

All of the land is cropped to grassland and is registered with the Rural Payments Agency under the following Single Business Identifier: 107659902. The business has undertaken significant investment into the land in order to increase grassland production quantity and quality, this is notably through recent liming, hedge row planting and fencing works.

Historically the farm has been a combined sheep and cattle enterprise.

A pedigree Limousin herd, Whitewell Limousin, was started in 2020 and is now one of the leading herds in the county. The decision was made in 2024 to reduce sheep numbers entirely and the farm now only breeds Limousin cattle. The farm runs two herds a pedigree herd with 8 – 10 breeding cows and a herd of similar size of non-pedigree cows that are part of an embryo transfer/recipient program. All insemination works are undertaken using Artificial Insemination, this requires a robust cattle handling system.

In total it is expected that the total number of cattle on the site could be up to 50 head. Breeding stock are typically sold at the society sales at Carlisle and Skipton in May and Carlisle in October and December. Cattle not making the grade are sold at Gisburn Auction.

## Consented Building

In 2006 the whole site was cleared and one of the consented sheds was built, the rest of the site was stoned up in preparation for the second shed. The sheds were designed to be fitted out with stocks pens with approx. 40 sqm allocated to a midden. The shed was used for housing sheep and cattle.

Originally the intention was to provide a grass roof, with hindsight this was a poor choice of architectural ambition over animal husbandry. Not only is it very heavy and difficult to install, it is expensive, difficult to maintain and doesn't allow the natural light and ventilation that a cattle shed requires.

In 2016 an application was made (3/2016/0683) to change the roof system, this was refused. This was a disappointment, without an alternative plan, the farming enterprise was scaled back and investment was halted for some years. The roof was left as is and patched and repaired.

The condition of the roof which was nearly 20 years old, had deteriorated significantly and needed to be replaced.

## Farm/building needs

Cattle are typically housed from October to April, but the dates can vary a month either way depending on weather. Calving can happen all year round but our calving tends to be in two blocks, Dec/Jan and then again in April as this allows the cows to calve supervised indoors and be AI'ed prior to going outside for the summer.

The existing shed can accommodate 3 groups of cattle, young bulls typically 10 - 16 months old being reared, halter trained and prepared for the summer shows, cows due to calve and follow on heifers from 10 months to 2 years old. There is no space for calving pens, no bull pen, no welfare pens, no space for straw or machinery storage and the cattle handling system is outside. Bedding straw was collected weekly from a neighbour.

Our vet had concerns re capacity and a letter from him dated June 2025 accompanies this application. We reached the point whereby we needed to reroof the original barn whilst also providing much needed accommodation.

The priorities for us were:-

Safe handling systems - Recently we had a serious accident where a hand was caught between a cow and a gate. Prompt surgery at Preston hospital saved the finger. The new handling system, see brochure that accompanies the application allows stock to be moved without staff being in the race/chute.

Improved protection against the weather - Winter weather tends to be not as cold but much wetter, a barn with an external feed passage and uncovered cattle handling system

is not suitable in Lancashire. We need to maximise the amount of covered space, building another barn of the same type would not address the issue.

**Improved ventilation** - Pneumonia in sheds with calves can be a major issue caused by viruses/bacteria in damp, poorly ventilated, and overcrowded housing, leading to coughs, discharge, and poor growth, so building prevention focuses on dry, well-ventilated sheds with separate age groups. Minimising rain ingress, full ridge ventilation and Yorkshire boarding are all key features that assist.

**Improved lighting levels** - Proper lighting in cattle sheds boosts growth, health, and immunity by mimicking long summer days, encouraging activity, improving rumen development, and aiding early disease detection. Complimenting with controlled lighting with regimes like 16 hours of 150 lux light and 8 hours of darkness promotes better feed intake and leaner growth, while natural light is also crucial for vitamin D and overall welfare, reducing stress and supporting natural rhythms.

**Enhanced cattle welfare** - The ability to double the loafing/feeding area for cattle allows us to increase capacity but more importantly it allows us to create six pens, with creep pens for calves as well as having dedicated calving and bull pens both with access to the outside allows us to provide more tailored care to each animal. It will also reduce bullying. In addition to the additional space we are also investing in locking yokes.

**Security** - Over the last 20 years we have had various equipment including vehicles and a trailer stolen. The increased shed space will allow the equipment to be sheltered from the weather and some of the more valuable items to be behind locked gates.

**FYM storage** - At the moment FYM is taken weekly and stored in a field, whilst this accepted practice the government is encouraging through grants etc the covering of FYM piles.

Providing a cover for FYM, offers significant environmental and economic benefits by protecting and enhancing its value as a fertiliser while reducing pollution. Covering FYM stockpiles with a roof offers several advantages:

- **Nutrient Retention:** Covers prevent valuable nutrients, particularly nitrogen (ammonia), from escaping into the atmosphere as gas or being washed away by rain. This keeps the FYM nutrient-rich and maximizes its fertiliser value for future crops.
- **Pollution Reduction:** The reduction of ammonia emissions helps to improve air quality and minimises the farm's ecological footprint. Preventing nutrient runoff into streams and groundwater protects local water bodies from contamination.
- **Odour Control:** Covering stored FYM significantly reduces unpleasant odours, which is a major benefit for farmers and their neighbours.
- **Volume Management:** Covers that keep rainwater out, prevent the dilution of the FYM and significantly reducing the total volume that needs to be stored and spread on fields, which saves time and hauling costs.

## Proposed Building

The building shell has been completed, the internal fitout has not been completed. The new shed sits on the site of the second consented barn the only difference is that the space between has been covered.

The gross footprint of the consented buildings was approx 565 sqm, the new building has a gross footprint of 760 sqm, just over a 30% increase. The new building is almost entirely dedicated to livestock accommodation with storage of straw and machinery kept to the minimum necessary.

Since 2016, when the last application was submitted. Barn construction has evolved, metal roofing is less commonly used as there is an increased risk of condensation, with fibre cement being used on most new livestock buildings. An innovation and the one that eventually spurred us to replace the roof was the increasing use of cellular poly-carbonate. See brochure that accompanies this application. The allows up to 50% light transmission.



Example project showing the use of clear roof panels.

With the expansion and change of the agricultural enterprise it has become apparent that considerable investment was required to upgrade the farm buildings to an acceptable standard. The offer of grant funding and the best practice requirements for livestock have meant that the design has had to change and the timing for construction accelerated.

The proposed new building will allow for exemplary housing for cattle, cattle handling as well as sufficient storage facilities for FYM, bedding straw and farm machinery

## Building Scale, Layout, Design & Access

The proposed module, building width, and eaves and ridge heights are the same for the existing and proposed. The overall width or mass of the development from all directions is the same or less than the consented scheme, there is negligible impact on visual amenity.

Existing hedgerow, woodland and vegetation boundaries will provide natural screening to minimise the visual impact of the development. Access will be via the existing yard entrance off Hall Hill.

The proposed building will have Yorkshire board cladding on pre-cast panels. The sides of the building will be made secure by the use of galvanised steel gates, to the North, to provide security to any machinery and equipment stored within the building.

The roof of the proposed building will be in keeping with other agricultural buildings in the surrounding areas of Clitheroe, being constructed using corrugated clear polycarbonate to the ridges with fibre cement to the gutters/edges.

Metal gutters will be installed to the roofing, with all rainwater being diverted into existing clean water land drains.



Looking South towards the barns from Hall Hill.



Looking North towards the barns from the T junction.



Looking North towards the barns from the road bend, the middle barn is not visible.

## Storage Calculations

The building will be used for the storage of FYM, bedding straw as well as for farm machinery and equipment.

### FYM/bedding

The new midden has increased from 40 sqm to 60 sqm and useable volume up to 145 m<sup>3</sup>. A typical suckler cow (over 500kg) on straw bedding produces 0.525m<sup>3</sup> of FYM/week. For a herd of 18 cows this provide adequate capacity for approx. 13 weeks half the time the stock expected to be housed.

### Straw Storage

The farm requires storage for bedding straw. Typically there will be no more than 30 heston (1.2 x 1.2 x 2.5m) bales on the farm at any one time. Based on the bales being stacked 3 bales high the area of straw required is 30m<sup>2</sup>.

### Machinery & Equipment

It is essential that the business has secure storage for machinery and equipment. The approach adopted is to double up uses so that when pens are not in use they are used for machinery storage. The principle machinery items are the David Brown tractor, livestock trailer and a Polaris. These are all kept under cover, the tractor is stored in front of the Midden/scrape passage, the trailer in the loading pen with the Polaris beside both behind a locked sheeted gate. Other items or equipment tend to be galvanised and are stored outside.

### Grant Funding for Proposed Works

There have been considerable changes in how farm businesses receive payments and grant funding. The scope for grants and deadlines varies year to year. Applications open and can close sooner than anticipated and then once a grant has been offered the time scales are such that it can be a challenge to get the works undertaken in time.

In September 2025 Cow Ark Farm was awarded an Animal Health and Welfare grant funding from the Rural Payments Agency to assist with the fitting out of the proposed building. The funding (FETF reference number: 664064) was obtained through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) Animal Health and Welfare 2025: Grant Funding Agreement.

The grant covers the cattle handling system, calving gate, blinds, LED lighting and sheeted gates. The claim window deadline is midday on 31 March 2026 and by then we must have bought the items and have them on site without packaging or installed (if the specification states).

## Conclusion

The 2006 building was becoming less fit for purpose, the roof had started to deteriorate significantly, there was significant water ingress and the cattle accommodation had reached the point whereby our vet had started to raise concerns.

The grant offer, the recent accident and the development in roofing materials focussed our need to find an alternative solution to the roofing, cattle handling and general accommodation.

The re-roofing of the existing barn and the extension as built will create an exemplary example of a livestock shed that provides cattle housing and handling systems of the highest standards whilst increasing FYM, straw and machinery storage. Additional benefits include, improved rainwater management and reduced ammonia production.

The materials are in keeping with other building of similar use in the surrounding areas of Cow Ark, Clitheroe and Lancashire. The materials, location, minimal change to the apparent massing and existing screening measures are sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and reduce the impact of the proposed development.

The grant offer and the deteriorating condition of the existing roof meant that the works were undertaken without obtaining the necessary approval to vary/amend the consented scheme.