

Agricultural and Design Statement

Applicant : A Holt, Land at Lower Hud Lee Farm,

Proposal, by full planning application, to regularise adaptations and improvements to an existing agricultural building to provide improved storage for baled hay, produce, feed, machinery, livestock equipment/handling pens and livestock shelter (“the building”). Access will be from the existing private access, track and existing hardstanding to the existing building, livestock pens and grassland. The proposal is justified as reasonably required for agricultural use in connection with the existing agricultural business to store baled fodder, store farm produce/feed, livestock equipment to protect from elements, attending to livestock, loading from covered handling pens and enable autumn/winter feeding of sheep and youngstock. The land is owned, registered and farmed as an independent farm holding by the applicant under his own business as a sole trader.

Agricultural Statement

The existing farming business comprises a flock of sheep and young stock of various ages. In addition, the applicants own business cuts grass as hay, haylage or silage for feeding stock in the autumn and the growing flock of sheep during the winter grazing period and spring lambing time. Particular importance is drawn to the requirement for hay rather than silage for young livestock because silage can harbour unsuitable moulds, even within wrapped bales. Whilst every effort taken to make the best quality of fodder in summer, some unseasonal weather can cause problems. During the autumn/winter older livestock can tolerate some low levels but there is a significant risk to young animals particularly lambs. Access to quality hay (well made and barn stored) is always recommended by vets particularly for young ages and at certain times of year.

The building exists to service the grassland which provides grazing for sheep and youngstock. The building is required to work with the natural outdoor grazing of farm animals throughout the summer and with careful management using buffer feeding, on the higher and drier north eastern part of the land, with ring feeders and troughs during autumn months before they are old enough to be sold. The ewes (sheep) are fed with hay racks and a number of troughs throughout the winter. During all these times the ground is easily poached by livestock and vehicular access from the building. This is necessary for additional in field feeding and retrieving fodder.

The building is also required to provide covered pens so sheep/youngstock may receive veterinary checks on site and/or collection for emergency treatment if required.

The applicant intends to make either first or second cut hay on part of the land for the sheep and youngstock so this can be stored in the building. The building has been well designed with the majority stone clad with openings in the frontage for practical access from the hardstanding and ventilation where required but limited so preventing rain ingress. Access to the stored fodder/feed and livestock pen will be required at all times. Dry feed, hay and equipment storage are particular requirements to service the grassland.

Equipment deteriorates outside in adverse elements, so high rates of depreciation become uneconomic. The building will protect much of the livestock equipment when not being used outside on the land.

The building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture by the existing business.

Design

The building has an open plan internally which for flexibility can be divided (with gates/hurdles) into three sections each for the particular uses with suitable access points, protection, ventilation and security. The regular use of the handling pens for vaccinations, veterinary inspections and treatments will also help prevent lameness which is more prevalent during wet winters and hot summers. This is particularly important close to the feeders where there is the highest level of use and sheep/youngstock tend to congregate.

The building has been and will be used in connection with the two fields of modest area owned by the applicant. The scale and design of the building reflect both the same historic and current agricultural use of the land. Further comments are made under the heading Appearance below.

Materials used reflect conventional construction methods with traditional external materials favouring a predominantly natural stone finish on each elevation. Some timber or green sheet cladding to a number of the gates is to be agreed. The upper part of the larger eaves height doorway and opening could also have gale breaker roller blinds for ventilation which will also stop the ingress of the extremes of driving rain damaging feed, produce and machinery. Such additions are to be agreed.

The previous large opening in the north elevation has been removed. This opening would have worked well with the operation of the building in conjunction with the traditional farm buildings and yard now forming the property Adamson House in separate ownership. There are now two walls separating the two ownerships and preventing access with vehicles.

There was also a problem with the ingress of driving rain from this north side. The current form of the building now has a similar wide doorway in the south elevation for the purposes of clear access from the hardstanding and land. This doorway replaces a wide window in the original frontage and is perfectly positioned for the loading of livestock into a trailer on the hardstanding when required.

There are two narrow doorways for access by a worker or livestock, one in the south elevation and one in the east gable. These can exclude livestock from bagged feed in storage and/or assist with the “shedding” of sheep when sorting or providing treatments including fleece clipping.

There is an opening for daylight in the south elevation (the previous format had two such openings) to provide daylight for both livestock and farm workers. Farm workers are by law entitled to daylight for work where safety requires it, particularly as there is no artificial light. The current building does not have a damp proof course. No insulation has been installed. There is no insulated floor. No building regulations have been planned for and no building regulations applied for. No new windows have been fitted so that ventilation for hay and livestock can be maintained.

The reuse of the existing structure, local reclaimed traditional materials, sustainable timber and local labour indicate the maximum sustainability of the improvements and adaptations carried out. The traditional materials will have a far greater useful lifespan than more modern materials. The use of an existing building in this case has saved a greenfield development in a different location on the land.

The building is designed for the purposes of agriculture.

Planning

The previous version of the agricultural building prior to the improvements has been used for agriculture for three generations in the same family. There is modern evidence of the lawful use for agriculture being the access by livestock and for the penning and sorting of livestock for more than ten years. The pre-improved agricultural building was not demolished, and the local authority has its own photographic evidence of this fact. The applicant, following purchase and prior to the improvement works had the use of the building in conjunction with the agricultural use of the land. The applicant undertook a program of works to improve the building and add the pitched roof. Parts of the building remained available for agricultural use throughout. This work, by all accounts, was undertaken in a couple of months. The applicant immediately on completion of works continued with the agricultural dry storage of hay and livestock equipment in the building. There is evidence of this immediate continuance of agricultural use predating that already supplied.

The current form of the building including the improvements does not have any new overlooking and does not negatively affect rights to light. The land to the north of the building is agricultural. The neighbouring single storey building standing away to the rear of the building appears to be an ancillary outbuilding and not living space. This ancillary building and the main barn conversion being the dwelling Adamson House are not negatively affected in this case by rights to light. The north elevation wall was slightly lowered so there are improvements to the provision of light.

While there is no planning policy justification to “a right of a view” it is confirmed that the current building is not directly in front of the living rooms of Adamson House. The original form of the building/land was lawful and used lawfully for agriculture. There is no new use or substantial intensification of use from the improved agricultural building and therefore no measurable effect on residential amenity.

There seems to have been an attempt to make an ill-considered planning application, which is now regretted. From the outset the applicant was at odds with the authority’s description including the word “New”. In that respect he was correct. The preexisting building was improved not demolished. The application was withdrawn and not considered or determined. More recently the authority has made various statements with evidence which now indicate that previous application was invalid both at submission and at the date of withdrawal.

The previous application form was not signed by the applicant, and he did not personally make any declaration as to any form of redundancy of the building. Such alleged redundancy being untrue at the time, demonstrated by the photographs in reports at that time.

This planning application (agricultural) does not include any regularisation of the “hardstanding” because it was already lawful. This is evidenced as existing in the 1960’s, 1969 and possibly in parts as far back as 1932. These were engineering operations and they remain in place.

The hardstanding has at various times been partly overgrown with weeds but not removed, never ceased being fit for purpose or changed from agriculture to a different use. The applicant and two previous generations of the same family have maintained parts of the hardstanding which is evidenced in the 1960’s and more recently in 2003, 2015, 2020, 2023 and 2024.

The site plan attached to this application indicates an area which is bounded by a temporary fence which gives some approximate guide to the extent of the west and east elements of the existing hardstanding. The south element of the hardstanding extends beyond the fence to be 10m from the building. The extent of the south element was further established when the grassland of the field was ploughed, and such ploughing was stopped at the south edge of the existing hardstanding.

This application reasonably seeks to retain an existing building which is in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflects local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials. The building being within an existing group of buildings protects the openness and distinctiveness of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Area and enhances rather than detracts from current setting. This National Landscape Area is an Article 2(3) Area and does not fall into the higher protection of an Article 2(4) Area such as the Norfolk Broads. The building is located close to the boundary the former AONB which terminates on the Longridge Road 600m south of the farm building.

The relevant Landscape Character Area of “undulating lowland farmland” is interspersed with farmsteads comprising farmhouses and farm buildings. Of all the different Landscape Character Areas this is has one of the lowest priorities of farmed landscapes in the AONB Management Plan in contrast to the open moorland hills being one of the highest for which the distant central Bowland Fells are renowned.

The local authority now requires a planning application to regularise the building improvements which include the replacement roof structure, now a pitched roof.

Siting

The siting of the building has provided historic agricultural use and now provides enough storage dry space for hay, to protect equipment and as covered handling pens for the high standard of welfare required for the sheep and youngstock. Having assessed a number of sites within the land block, the existing building was retained and improved. This chosen option provided least visual impact (no new site/building), best use of retaining a position within an existing group of buildings, best use of the existing hardstanding and relatively dry ground. Proximity to the existing access and best site for feeding sheep and youngstock forms part of the agricultural justification.

The existing access track and hardstanding traverses the edge of the land adjacent to the field boundary continues beside the building and to access the east elevation. The positioning of the improved existing building and hardstanding is where visual impact will be minimal. There are existing mature hedgerows on the north east side of the private access. There is also the mature Shireburn Wood to the south west of the private access. In addition there are mature hedgerow thorn trees in the field boundaries to the north and east.

The site is not independent of or prominent from the existing built form being large buildings formally the agricultural buildings and farmstead of Lower Hud Lee Farm. The site has previously been occupied by at least four further agricultural buildings in relatively recent twentieth century history. The stone from their floors and the extensive surrounding hardstanding remains under some weed growth. This is still functional as an agricultural hardstanding and has been maintained as such over the years by the previous all owners.

Transport & Access

The existing building is 600 meters distant from the adopted public highway being Longridge Road. Access to the building is from the west via the existing agricultural hardstanding, gate, access track and from the south using the private lane. This application does not seek to alter the entrance or the established use of the entrance.

The east end of the existing track/hardstanding accesses the existing building and livestock handling pen. There is a public footpath FP0303003 to the north of the building leading from the private lane. The site plan shows that the building is south of the public footpath (and existing field track) and therefore does not conflict with the use of or alter the public footpath.

The existing building and hardstanding to the south/east sides is used for access and penning livestock. An original wide doorway to the rear (north elevation) has been blocked up to facilitate this new approach to livestock gathering. The benefits being this minimises interruption to users of the footpath and has removed the large, sheeted gate which previously opened to swing over the public footpath.

Access to the field

Access to the livestock grazing/feeding areas is to be from the building, existing hardstanding and access track to the higher and drier land. This is an additional agricultural justification to reduce poaching of the grassland from agricultural vehicles and the livestock.

Clean dry fodder and feed is required for the winter period and supplementary feeding on the land. This DEFRA recommended good agricultural practice is part the standard management of all farm holdings and is an additional reasonably justified agricultural requirement in this case.

Appearance

The existing external materials are stone with a blue slate roof.

The previous version of the building was part stone exterior walls with a mono-pitch roof, blue slate in part prior to the works carried out. However, it should be noted that this slate was under-felted so not considered to be original or demonstrate the height of original wall plates.

Part of the original structure was higher than the previous version of the walls indicating an earlier mono-pitch version of greater height, which would have been more practical and possibly with a more suitable pitch for a slate roof. The current version of the building is considered no higher than this earliest form.

Certainly, more of the previous cluster of outbuildings had a pitched roofs so it is considered reasonably possible this building also had a pitched roof before the mono-pitch version.

The Ribble Valley is home to many historical examples of old barns and outbuildings where old age deterioration and storm damage has, by necessity and speed of replacement, led to a simplification to a mono-pitch style often with differing roof coverings. The current pitched roof version would not be out of keeping in a farmstead of this age and nature.

The pitched roof also matches the roofs of Adamson House (formally a barn) attached outbuilding, Lower Hud Lee farmhouse and it's recently approved annex. This annex was preceded by the approval of a garage with first floor annex of a greater height and found acceptable as a new build in the same landscape. By way of comparison, it is also greater in height than the roof form of farm building being considered in this application.

There are several access doorways to the building which have been gated. Gates could be clad in either timber or Juniper Green sheeting to be agreed.

Limestone has been used to replenish the surrounding existing access/hardstanding. The preexisting hardstanding comprises some hard stone which was part of the historic farm yard, floors of former buildings and gateways. The current area of hardstanding also has a limestone hardstanding originating in the 1950's and 1960's parts of which have been previously maintained by the applicant's grandfather, father and uncle.

Weeds, rotted manure and sediment have been removed from parts of the area of original hardstanding. The applicant has continued the use and maintenance of the pre-existing hardstanding which does not require planning permission and is not a breach of planning.

As described above there is minimal visual impact from the building where screening is provided by existing private lane-side hedges and neighbouring hedges which form adequate screening from the public highway and the more distant neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

The original agricultural building, now adapted and improved, will better the provision of suitable facilities to store livestock feed, equipment and provide covered handling areas for the sheep and youngstock. The building will assist the business in preparing to weather future pressures, the now very apparent market changes and erasing of most agri-support mechanisms.

It is not considered unreasonable to allow the applicant to retain the building as modestly improved to provide an area for the storage of hay and feed within this land parcel to avoid the spoilage. As such, it is considered that the improvements to the existing are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and appropriately scaled for the size of the land parcel.

Given the modest improvements, the location of the building within an existing group of buildings and being sited away from Longridge Road, it is not considered that there would be any detrimental harm to the landscape character of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. It is considered that the agricultural building retained in an existing agricultural use does not represent a visually incongruous or anomalous form, does not have a discordant appearance and is not of significant detriment to the character or amenities of the area. The building does comply with the aims and objectives of policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 and the National planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 86 e) and 88 a) & b).

The building has a relatively low eaves and ridge height that is considered reasonable for an agricultural storage building of this type and would match the existing former farm buildings adjacent. In terms of construction, this is typical for a traditional appearance agricultural building of this nature and reflects the existing and former buildings of the farmstead.

The retention of the improved agricultural building is justified above as a requirement for the existing agricultural enterprise, reasonably required for agriculture and is designed for agriculture on this existing agricultural unit. The proposal improves the existing business and is in line with the management strategy.

Additional details - see application form and plans