

Agricultural and Design Statement

Applicant : E Roper and Son, Lyme House Farm

Proposal, by prior notification, to construct agricultural general purpose sheep pens without roof ("the pens") to provide for erection of livestock equipment including handling pens. Access will be from existing field track access to grassland. The proposal is justified as reasonably required for agricultural use in connection with the existing agricultural business for attending to livestock for welfare reasons and sorting in handling pens of sheep. The land is owned and farmed by the applicant.

Agricultural Statement

The existing farming business comprises a dairy herd with followers. In the autumn it is planned to take on a flock of sheep of various ages. The business has historically had a flock of sheep lambed on the holding and more recently store lambs have been fattened on the holding over the autumn and winter. This grazing of the grassland benefits the sward which in turn improves the quality of the silage cuts and grazing by cattle in the following season.

This proposal for the livestock pens to service the grassland which provides grazing for cattle and sheep. The pens required to work with the natural outdoor grazing of sheep throughout the autumn and winter months before they are old enough to be sold. During all these times the ground is easily poached and so the pens construction and location are paramount. The pens are also required so sheep may receive veterinary checks on site and/or collection for emergency treatment if required (for clarity it is confirmed that livestock will not be housed in the handling pens).

The pens are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture by the existing business.

Design

The pens will have three sections each designed for the particular uses with suitable access points, railed timber fencing protection, 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.

The external materials of timber posts and timber rails reflect conventional construction methods whilst favouring a predominantly natural timber finish on each elevation and some timber or green sheet cladding to a number of the internal gates. The pens are designed for the purposes of agriculture.

Siting

The siting and finish of the pens have also been carefully planned to provide a modest sized arrangement but still provide enough space in handling pens for the high standard of welfare required for the sheep. Having assessed a number of sites within the land block, the proposed site was chosen for least visual impact, best use of existing natural screening and best use of dry ground. Proximity to the existing best site for both gathering and access forms part of the agricultural justification.

The proposed use of the existing access track to the edge of the land adjacent to the existing field boundary remains unaltered beside the pens and allows to access the land south east of the pens. The positioning of the pens are situated where visual impact will be minimal.

Transport & Access

The proposed pens are approximately 200 meters distant (so more than 25m) from the adopted public highway being the east part of Four Acre Lane. Access to the site and field is from the south west via private surfaced lane using the existing agricultural field gate access. This application does not seek to alter the agricultural use of the entrance.

Access around the field

Access to the livestock grazing/feeding areas is proposed from the pens via the grassland and existing 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. The provision of suitable livestock pens is 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 external materials are going to be of mainly timber posts and rails and some metal gates. In addition, some internal gates (galvanised/Juniper) clad at low levels for one internal bay. There are several accesses to the pens to be gated with galvanised metal gates.

Limestone will be used for the internal surfaces and repairing the surrounding access/hardstanding with improved compacted fine surface to match and complete the existing suitable agricultural access.

As described above there is minimal net visual impact from the existing situation where screening provided by existing roadside hedges, neighbouring hedges and nearby woodland forms adequate screening from the public highway and more the more distant neighbouring properties. The proposal with low height (1.2m) external timber fencing and standard field gates are in keeping with the usual agricultural practice/appearance of the area and being small scale does not detract from or cause any measurable harm to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

Conclusion

The completion of the proposed agricultural livestock pens will improve the provision of suitable facilities including handling areas for the sheep. The pens will assist the business in preparing to weather the future pressures of the predicted market changes and reform of the current agri-support mechanisms. The addition of the agricultural pens are justified above as a requirement for the existing agricultural enterprises, reasonably required for agriculture and are 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