

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Retrospective Roof Over Existing Open Silage Clamps

Black Moss Farm, Elmridge Lane, Chipping PR3 2NY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the erection of a roof over existing open silage clamps at Black Moss Farm, Chipping.

The proposal comprises the construction of a steel framed roof over existing silage clamps situated within the established agricultural yard. The development has been undertaken to improve the environmental performance of the farm, protect forage quality and significantly reduce contaminated surface water generated from rainfall falling onto exposed silage.

The application should therefore be considered as an environmental enhancement to an existing agricultural facility rather than the creation of a new agricultural use.

The proposal has been designed having regard to the site's location within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), whilst also recognising the operational requirements of a modern working livestock farm.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

Black Moss Farm is a long-established working livestock farm comprising traditional stone farm buildings together with a number of modern agricultural buildings developed over many decades.

The silage clamps are located within the existing operational farmyard and are surrounded by other agricultural buildings, slurry infrastructure and hardstanding. The proposal therefore occupies an established developed part of the farmstead and does not extend agricultural development into open countryside.

The roof covers existing silage clamps measuring approximately 40 metres by 34 metres with a maximum ridge height of approximately 11.8 metres. The structure is constructed using a galvanised steel frame with natural grey fibre cement roofing sheets and juniper green profile wall sheeting above concrete retaining panels.

3.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design is intentionally simple and functional.

Agricultural buildings are designed around operational efficiency rather than architectural expression. Accordingly, the proposal adopts a straightforward portal frame construction using traditional agricultural materials that are common throughout the surrounding farm complex.

The muted grey roof and dark green wall cladding reduce visual prominence and reflect the colour palette of agricultural buildings throughout the Bowland landscape.

The proposal sits alongside existing agricultural buildings and is read as part of the existing farmyard rather than as a standalone feature.

4.0 OPERATIONAL NEED

The silage clamps are fundamental to the operation of the livestock enterprise.

Silage must be stored close to:

- the livestock buildings;
- existing feed passages;
- the slurry handling facilities;
- the main farmyard circulation routes;
- machinery storage and loading areas.

Relocating the clamps elsewhere within the holding would create significant operational inefficiencies requiring repeated transportation of forage across the farm, increasing vehicle movements, fuel consumption, labour costs and health and safety risks.

The existing location has therefore developed naturally around the operational requirements of the farm and represents the only practical location capable of serving the livestock enterprise.

The roof simply improves the performance of this existing facility.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

One of the principal reasons for roofing silage clamps is to reduce the volume of clean rainfall becoming contaminated by contact with silage.

When rainfall enters open silage clamps it produces silage effluent and dirty water which requires collection, storage and management.

By preventing rainfall entering the clamps, the development:

- significantly reduces dirty water production;
- reduces the risk of polluted run-off entering surrounding watercourses;
- improves water quality;
- reduces pressure on slurry storage infrastructure;
- improves silage quality by reducing spoilage;
- reduces nutrient losses;
- improves overall farm resource efficiency.

These are recognised environmental improvements encouraged through the Government's Catchment Sensitive Farming programme led by Natural England, Defra and the Environment Agency. The programme provides advice and support to farmers to improve water quality, reduce diffuse pollution and improve farm infrastructure.

Government Capital Grant schemes specifically support roofing over silage stores where doing so reduces dirty water production and separates clean rainwater from contaminated agricultural runoff. Roofing silage stores is identified as an eligible infrastructure improvement because it assists compliance with agricultural pollution controls and reduces environmental impacts.

The proposal therefore represents a significant environmental enhancement rather than simply additional built development.

6.0 FOREST OF BOWLAND NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The site lies within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires decision-makers to seek to further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes.

Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within National Landscapes.

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF requires particular consideration of major development proposals within National Landscapes.

Although the proposal exceeds the local threshold that may trigger consideration as major development, it should be recognised that this is not major development in the conventional planning sense.

The proposal:

- does not introduce a new agricultural activity;
- does not expand the developed footprint of the farm into open countryside;
- occupies an existing operational silage clamp;
- forms part of the existing farmyard;
- delivers demonstrable environmental improvements through reduced water pollution;
- supports the continued viability of an established agricultural business.

The proposal therefore satisfies the exceptional circumstances test by providing essential infrastructure required for the continued operation of an established agricultural enterprise whilst delivering significant environmental benefits.

The development also demonstrates that no alternative location exists.

The silage clamps must remain adjacent to livestock housing, feed storage, machinery movements and slurry management infrastructure. Relocation elsewhere would result in operational inefficiencies and increased vehicle movements which would themselves have greater landscape and environmental impacts.

7.0 LANDSCAPE INTEGRATION

The proposal has been carefully designed to integrate with the existing farmstead.

Key considerations include:

- construction within the existing developed farmyard;
- retention of the existing silage clamp footprint;
- use of traditional agricultural materials;
- muted colour palette;
- location amongst existing agricultural buildings;
- avoidance of development within open fields.

As a consequence, the roof is viewed as part of the wider agricultural complex rather than as an isolated building.

The visual effect on the wider National Landscape is therefore limited.

8.0 ACCESS

No changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements.

The development utilises existing farm access roads and existing operational areas.

No additional vehicle movements are generated beyond those already associated with normal agricultural operations.

Indeed, the proposal is likely to reduce operational movements by improving the efficiency of silage handling and reducing management associated with dirty water collection.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The retrospective roof over the existing silage clamps represents a well-designed, functional agricultural development that delivers significant environmental benefits.

The proposal:

- improves water quality by reducing contaminated run-off;
- supports the objectives of Catchment Sensitive Farming;
- protects silage quality;
- improves the operational efficiency of the farm;
- occupies an existing developed area;
- avoids unnecessary expansion into open countryside;
- preserves the character of the wider National Landscape through appropriate siting and agricultural design.

The development is therefore fully justified on operational, environmental and landscape grounds and accords with the objectives of national planning policy relating to sustainable agriculture, water quality, rural enterprise and the conservation and enhancement of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.