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Design & Access Statement

Rowan Bank Farm, Horton in Craven

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Introduction

This Planning, Design and Agricultural Justification Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs D. Newhouse in support of a Prior Approval application for the extension of an existing agricultural building at Rowan Bank Farm, Horton-in-Craven.

The application seeks Prior Approval under the provisions of Part 6, Class A of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

The proposal comprises an extension to the existing agricultural livestock building approved in 2022. The extension is required to meet the operational demands of the expanding farming enterprise and to provide additional covered accommodation for winter housing and improved livestock management.

The proposal has been designed to form a direct continuation of the existing building, using matching materials and construction techniques. It will remain wholly ancillary to the established agricultural use of the holding and will not alter the overall character or function of the farmstead.

Site and Agricultural Holding

Rowan Bank Farm is located at Horton-in-Craven, Lancashire, and comprises an established agricultural holding extending to approximately 36.31 hectares (89.74 acres) of permanent pasture and meadow.

The holding occupies a rural location characterised by agricultural land, scattered farmsteads and traditional farming enterprises. Access to the holding is obtained via the existing farm entrance from the public highway, which provides direct access to the established farmyard and agricultural buildings.

Planning permission was granted in 2022 for the construction of the existing livestock building, which has enabled the enterprise to successfully establish its winter housing facilities on the holding. The building now forms the principal livestock accommodation serving the cattle enterprise.

The holding is managed as a commercial agricultural business and supports a beef cattle enterprise together with associated grazing and forage production. Existing agricultural buildings provide livestock accommodation, machinery storage, feed storage and general operational facilities required for the efficient management of the holding.

The proposed extension is located immediately adjoining the existing livestock building within the established farmstead. The proposal therefore represents a continuation of the existing built form, rather than the creation of a separate or isolated agricultural building elsewhere on the holding.

Locating the development adjacent to the existing building group, ensures efficient operation of the farm whilst minimising landscape impact and making best use of the existing yard, access arrangements and agricultural infrastructure.

Planning History

The application site benefits from an established planning history relating to agricultural development.

Since Mr and Mrs Newhouse purchased the holding in 2022, planning permission was granted for the construction of the existing agricultural livestock building to provide winter accommodation for cattle, following the relocation of the applicants' farming enterprise to Rowan Bank Farm.

The purpose of the approved development was to consolidate the agricultural business onto the home holding, improve livestock welfare and provide suitable accommodation for the continued operation and future expansion of the enterprise.

Since completion of that development, the applicants have continued to invest in the business. The holding has increased from approximately 16.19 hectares, as described in the original planning submission, to 36.31 hectares, and livestock management has expanded accordingly.

The proposed extension should therefore be viewed as the next logical phase in the evolution of the farming enterprise, rather than as a separate or unrelated development. It builds directly upon the investment previously approved by the Local Planning Authority and reflects the successful growth of an established agricultural business.

Existing Agricultural Enterprise

Rowan Bank Farm operates as an established family-run beef cattle enterprise.

The holding currently supports:

Livestock	Current Numbers
Breeding Cows	25
Yearlings	4
Stock Bull	1
Current Total	30

Whilst current livestock numbers total approximately thirty head, the holding has the capacity to accommodate up to 65 head of cattle throughout the production cycle, as animals are retained, purchased and sold at different stages of production.

The cattle enterprise operates on a seasonal grazing system, with livestock generally housed between October and May, subject to prevailing weather and ground conditions. Winter housing forms an essential part of the farming operation, protecting pasture from excessive poaching during wet periods, while ensuring livestock welfare throughout the winter months.

The existing cattle building provides valuable accommodation but has become increasingly constrained as the business has developed. Modern livestock management requires different classes of stock to be housed separately in order to maintain animal welfare standards, facilitate feeding regimes and ensure safe handling practices.

The applicants continually review and improve the operation of the holding through investment in buildings, infrastructure and livestock management. The proposed extension forms part of this ongoing investment and will ensure the holding remains capable of supporting a productive and sustainable agricultural enterprise.

Proposed Development

The application seeks Prior Approval for an extension to the existing agricultural livestock building.

The existing building measures approximately 100 feet (30.48 metres) in length by 45 feet (13.72 metres) in width, providing approximately 4,500 square feet (418m²) of livestock accommodation.

The proposed extension will measure approximately 80 feet (24.38 metres) by 30 feet (9.14 metres), providing an additional 2,400 square feet (223m²) of agricultural floor space.

The extension will be physically attached to the existing building and will operate as a single integrated livestock housing facility.

Construction will utilise materials matching those of the existing building, comprising:

- Steel portal frame construction.
- Reinforced concrete wall panels.
- Yorkshire boarding and profiled metal cladding.
- Natural grey fibre cement roof sheeting.
- Matching rainwater goods and external finishes.

The building has been designed solely for agricultural purposes and will provide additional covered livestock accommodation, together with improved operational efficiency for the management of cattle throughout the winter housing period.

No separate agricultural unit is created by the proposal, and no changes are proposed to the existing farm access, yard arrangements or overall operation of the holding.

Purpose of the Development

The purpose of the proposed extension is not simply to increase the amount of livestock housing available on the holding but to improve the functionality of the existing livestock building and provide facilities that better reflect modern livestock management practices.

Since the construction of the existing cattle building in 2022, the farming enterprise has continued to develop and the operational requirements of the holding have evolved accordingly.

Whilst the existing building provides adequate housing accommodation, its current layout restricts the efficient segregation and management of livestock throughout the housing period.

The proposed extension has therefore been designed to improve the functionality of the existing building by providing additional management space, together with a dedicated covered feed passage.

The proposal represents an investment in the long-term efficiency, welfare and sustainability of the farming enterprise rather than an increase in livestock numbers alone.

Functional Requirement

The operation of a modern beef enterprise requires livestock to be managed in a number of separate groups depending upon age, condition and breeding status.

At Rowan Bank Farm this is particularly important due to the presence of a stock bull within the herd.

The existing building provides limited opportunity to safely segregate livestock when management requirements change throughout the year.

The proposed extension will provide the flexibility required to:

- safely separate the stock bull from breeding cows whenever necessary;
- accommodate different management groups independently;
- isolate individual animals where veterinary treatment or close observation is required;
- improve stock handling and movement through the building;
- reduce stress caused by mixing incompatible groups of livestock.

The proposal therefore provides an important operational benefit that cannot be achieved through the existing building layout.

Covered Feed Passage

Approximately half of the proposed extension will comprise a dedicated covered feed passage.

This area is not intended to accommodate livestock and has therefore not been included as additional housing capacity.

The feed passage will provide a dry, weather-protected area, for the storage and distribution of feed throughout the winter housing period.

Providing feed under cover offers a number of operational and welfare benefits including:

- maintaining feed quality by protecting feed from rainfall;
- reducing wastage caused by wet or contaminated feed;
- improving feeding efficiency;
- allowing livestock to be fed without machinery entering occupied pens;
- reducing stress and disturbance to cattle during feeding;
- improving health and safety for farm operators by separating machinery movements from livestock accommodation.

The provision of a covered feed passage reflects modern agricultural building design and represents good livestock management practice.

Animal Welfare

The proposal has been designed with animal welfare as a primary consideration.

The additional accommodation will provide increased flexibility in the management of livestock, allowing cattle to be grouped according to their individual requirements, rather than solely according to available building space.

Improved segregation reduces stress, improves feeding efficiency and enables closer monitoring of livestock health throughout the winter housing period.

The proposal will also improve handling arrangements by allowing animals to be moved more safely between management groups, whilst reducing unnecessary interaction between incompatible stock.

Collectively these improvements represent a significant enhancement to the welfare standards achieved, within the existing livestock accommodation.

Compliance with Livestock Welfare Standards

The Red Tractor Farm Assurance Standards recommend minimum space allowances for housed cattle of approximately 5.85m² per animal, depending upon livestock type and management system.

The existing building already provides sufficient floor area to satisfy these minimum standards for the current enterprise.

Accordingly, the proposed extension should not be viewed simply as an increase in livestock accommodation.

Instead, the proposal has been designed to improve the functionality and efficiency of the building by providing dedicated management space together with a covered feed passage, enabling livestock to be housed and managed more effectively whilst supporting higher standards of animal welfare.

The extension therefore reflects good agricultural practice and demonstrates continued investment in the long-term sustainability of the farming enterprise.

Design Principles

Agricultural buildings are, by necessity, functional structures designed primarily to meet operational requirements.

The proposed extension has therefore been designed to provide practical, efficient and durable livestock accommodation whilst respecting the character of the existing farmstead.

Rather than introducing a separate building into the countryside, the proposal extends the existing approved building, thereby maintaining a compact and coherent group of agricultural buildings.

Scale

The proposed extension has been carefully designed to provide only the accommodation necessary to meet the operational needs of the holding.

The dimensions of approximately 80 feet by 30 feet reflect the minimum additional floor area required to provide sufficient livestock housing and management flexibility.

The proposal remains proportionate to the size of the holding and reflects the scale expected of an established commercial cattle enterprise, extending to over 36 hectares.

Siting

The extension will adjoin the existing livestock building within the established farmstead.

This location has been selected because it:

- maintains a compact building group;
- reduces visual impact;
- allows efficient livestock handling;
- utilises existing services and infrastructure;
- avoids unnecessary encroachment into agricultural land.

Extending the existing building represents the most sustainable and least visually intrusive solution available.

Landscape Integration

The proposed development will be viewed in the context of the existing agricultural buildings and farmyard.

By utilising matching materials and extending the existing building rather than constructing a detached structure, the proposal will integrate naturally into the existing agricultural complex.

The extension is not considered to result in any significant adverse effect upon the wider rural landscape.

Access Statement

Vehicular access to the holding will continue to be taken via the existing established farm entrance.

No alterations to the access arrangements are proposed or required.

Internal access will continue to utilise the existing farmyard and hardstanding areas which already serve the livestock building.

The proposal is not expected to generate any increase in vehicle movements beyond those associated with the normal operation of the agricultural enterprise.

There will be no adverse impact upon highway safety or the operation of the surrounding road network.

Planning Policy Assessment

This application has been submitted under Part 6, Class A of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), which permits the extension of agricultural buildings on established agricultural units, subject to the relevant limitations and the Prior Approval process.

The proposal relates to the extension of an existing agricultural cattle building on an established 36.31-hectare holding. The extension is required solely for agricultural purposes and will remain ancillary to the operation of the farm.

Whilst the application is made under the GPDO, it is also consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which supports the sustainable growth of rural businesses and recognises the need for appropriate agricultural development. The proposal represents continued investment in an established farming enterprise, improving livestock management and welfare whilst making efficient use of the existing farmstead.

The proposal also aligns with the objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, in particular:

- Policy DS2 by supporting the sustainable growth of an established agricultural business through investment in essential farm infrastructure.
- Policy DMG1 by extending an existing agricultural building using matching materials, retaining the compact form of the farmstead, utilising the existing access and avoiding any unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity or highway safety.
- Policy DMG2 by responding to a clearly identified agricultural need. The extension is required to improve the functionality of the existing livestock accommodation, allowing more effective stock segregation, a dedicated covered feed passage and improved livestock management.
- Policy EN2 by extending an existing building rather than introducing a separate structure into the countryside. The use of matching agricultural materials ensures the development integrates with the existing farmstead and preserves the character of the surrounding landscape.

Overall, the proposal represents a logical and proportionate extension to an established agricultural enterprise. It supports the continued viability of the holding, improves operational efficiency and animal welfare, and accords with both national planning policy and the objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Landscape Character

The existing farmstead already forms part of the established agricultural landscape.

The proposed extension represents a continuation of the existing built form and will be viewed alongside the approved livestock building rather than as an isolated feature within the countryside.

The use of matching agricultural materials ensures the proposal remains visually recessive and entirely consistent with the character of surrounding agricultural development.

Highway Considerations

The proposal will continue to utilise the existing farm access serving Rowan Bank Farm.

No highway alterations are proposed.

The extension will not materially alter vehicle movements associated with the agricultural operation of the holding, beyond those expected as part of the continued management of the existing livestock enterprise.

There are therefore no highway safety concerns arising from the proposal.

Residential Amenity

The proposed extension is located within the established farmyard and adjoins the existing livestock building.

The proposal does not introduce a new agricultural use but facilitates the continued operation of an existing lawful agricultural enterprise.

Given its location within the existing farmstead, together with the absence of any significant change in operational activity, the proposal is not expected to give rise to any unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity.

Overall Planning Balance

The proposal represents the logical and proportionate expansion of an established agricultural enterprise.

It provides essential livestock accommodation required to support modern farming practices while remaining sympathetic to the existing farmstead and surrounding rural landscape.

The proposal:

- is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture;
- supports the long-term viability of a rural business;
- improves livestock welfare and operational efficiency;
- makes efficient use of existing agricultural infrastructure;
- minimises visual impact by extending an existing building rather than constructing a detached structure;
- accords with the principles of the NPPF and the objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to represent an appropriate form of agricultural development, and it is respectfully requested that Prior Approval is granted.