

Agricultural and Design Statement

Applicant : J Harrison – Land south of B6243, Longridge

Proposal, by prior notification, to construct an agricultural general purpose storage building (“the building”) to provide for storage of baled hay, feed, and livestock equipment including handling pens. Access will be from existing field track access to existing timber building and grassland. The proposal is justified as reasonably required for agricultural use in connection with the existing agricultural business to store baled hay to protect from elements, attending to livestock, loading from covered handling pens and enable autumn/winter feeding of sheep. The land has been rented on a long term basis and farmed by the applicant.

Agricultural Statement

The existing farming business includes a flock of breeding sheep and a large number of store lambs of various ages. While the existing business also farms both dairy and beef cattle they are not usually kept or grazed on this block of land. Lambing of the sheep usually takes place at the main farm. In addition, the business intends to make large square bales of hay on this block of land for feeding the growing flock of sheep during the winter grazing period. This hay needs to be stored on this block of land because the main farmstead is some considerable distance away by road, does not have any spare building space and it is not practicable or economic to take hay away from this block of land to return it again during the winter months. There are no agricultural buildings on the various blocks of land farmed by the business between the main farmstead and this furthest outlying block of land. Importance is drawn to the requirement for hay rather than silage for sheep and store lambs because silage can harbour unsuitable moulds, even within wrapped bales. Whilst every effort can be taken to make the best quality of fodder in summer, some unseasonal weather can cause problems. Access to quality hay (well made and barn stored) is always recommended by vets particularly for young ages and at certain times of year.

This proposal for a general purpose building to service the grassland which provides grazing for sheep and mowing of grass for hay. The building is required to work with the natural outdoor grazing of sheep throughout the summer and with careful management using buffer feeding, on the higher and drier parts of the land, with ring feeders and troughs during autumn/winter months. During all these times the ground is easily poached and safe vehicular access from the building, including access with a tractor which is necessary for additional in field feeding and retrieving fodder. Large square bales can only be lifted and moved from the building/stack with a tractor/loader due to their weight usually over 0.5 tonne.

During the autumn 100 ewes with four rams are grazing this block of land. The number may be reduced in December depending on the ground conditions. In the spring up to 180 ewes with lambs at foot will graze all of the land during the spring flush of grass.

Following spring grazing on the whole 21.27 acres the number of ewes may be reduced. If a building can be provided to store hay then grass can be conserved with hay made on 10 acres. This will approximate around 70 square bales, stored in the building prior to feeding to sheep on the land in autumn, winter and early spring. The building is also required to cover the handling pen 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). In the event of an emergency or for immediate care/monitoring an isolation pen will be provided. In addition an area will be set aside for shelter of some (not all) pregnant ewes in extreme bad weather conditions. Both the aforementioned scenarios are provided for within the permitted uses of a general purpose agricultural building.

Access to the stored fodder and livestock pen will be required at all times. Dry feed and hay storage are particular requirements to service the grassland. The building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture by the existing business.

Design

The steel portal framed building will have three sections each designed for the particular uses with suitable access points, cladding 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 tend to congregate.

Materials reflect conventional construction methods whilst favouring a predominantly natural timber finish on the upper parts of each elevation and some timber or green sheet cladding to a number of the gates. The two eaves height doorways (tractor clearance 3.2m) also have gale breaker roller blinds which will be used to stop ingress driving rain damaging hay.

The building is designed to suit the specific uses outlined for the purposes of agriculture.

Siting

The siting and finish of the building has also been carefully planned to provide a modest sized building but still provide enough storage space for dry hay, and cover 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, being away from residences, best use of existing natural screening and best use of dry ground. Proximity to the existing timber clad building and field track (also forms part of the agricultural justification).

The proposed short extension of the existing access track traverses the edge of the land adjacent to the existing track to continue in front of the proposed building and to access the north elevation. The positioning is set away so as not to affect the existing hedgerow and so the extended access/hardstanding is provided beside the building.

The positioning of the building is situated where visual impact will be minimal.

Transport & Access

The proposed building is 235 meters distant (so more than 25m) from the adopted public highway being the B6243. Access for agricultural purposes to the fields and proposed site from the north east is via private track through the land using the existing gated field access. This agricultural application does not seek to alter the established use of the entrance. The south west end of the existing track accesses close to the existing timber building and proposed site. There is a public footpath FP0302054 on a private lane west of the grassland and field hedgerow and is 50m from the proposed agricultural building. The site plan shows that the existing field track running east across the land is away from this and therefore does not conflict with or alter the public footpath.

Access around the field

Access to the sheep grazing/feeding areas is proposed from the proposed building 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 existing number of sheep. Clean dry fodder and feed is required for the winter period and supplementary feeding. This avoidance of poaching grassland is DEFRA recommended good agricultural practice and part the standard management of all farm holdings. This is an additional reasonably justified agricultural requirement in this case.

Appearance

The materials are going to be of mainly timber boarding above low concrete walls. There are accesses to the front of the building which will be clad in either timber or Juniper Green sheeting.

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

The priority to make either first or second cut hay for the sheep so this can be stored in the building. The building has been well designed with the majority clad in natural timber boarding and some timber and green profile cladding to gates where required for preventing rain ingress.

The eaves height has been kept to a minimum being 3.65m below which is a tractor clearance of 3.2m. With a minimum roof pitch for fibre cement sheets the resultant pitched roof has a ridge height of 4.55m. As described above there is minimal net visual impact from the existing situation where screening provided by existing roadside hedges, mature tree lines and neighbouring hedges forms adequate screening from the distant neighbouring properties and more distant public highway.

Conclusion

The completion of the proposed agricultural general purpose building will improve the provision of suitable facilities to store livestock feed and provide covered handling areas for the sheep. The building will assist the business in preparing to weather the pressures of the now very apparent market changes and now removed agri-support mechanisms. The addition of the agricultural general purpose 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