

Agricultural and Design Statement

**Applicant : D.M. & L.A. Airey, Robsgreave Farm, Rock Brow, Thornley, Preston
PR3 2HX (Site grid reference - 363515 , 441172)**

Proposal, by prior notification, to construct an agricultural general purpose building (“the building”) to provide for facilities including for storage of hay, feed and livestock equipment. Also included are a covered livestock handling system with associated holding pens, isolation pen and area for covered livestock shelter for those animals at specific risk in bad weather conditions. Access will be from existing access drive to existing farm yard area, close to livestock housing and grassland. The proposal is justified as reasonably required for agricultural use in connection with the existing agricultural business to store baled hay, bagged feed, store livestock equipment to protect from elements and provide loading from a covered area. This building will enable the better care of the livestock, land and assist the feeding of cattle/sheep. The land is owned and farmed by the applicants.

Agricultural Statement

The existing farming business comprises a herd of dairy cattle and young stock of various ages. In addition, the business makes silage and bales for feeding livestock in the autumn/winter. Sheep occupy all the grassland during the winter grazing period.

This proposal is for the building to service the existing range of dairy cattle buildings and particularly the adjoining calving grassland field which provides grazing for in-calf cattle in for spring, summer and autumn, later for sheep in winter. The building is required to work with the dairy cattle enterprise, with careful management/record keeping, throughout the year, provide shelter for new born/those giving birth and supporting outside buffer feeding for some cattle during autumn months before housing in the existing livestock buildings. During the winter the sheep, during extreme weather conditions, are fed in the fields with hay with racks and concentrates/minerals in a number of troughs during the worst winters (sheep are not usually lambed on this holding). The proposed use of the building will comply with the permitted uses of a general purpose building set out in the planning legislation (for clarity it is confirmed that livestock will not be housed in the proposed storage building). During all these times the ground is easily poached and safe vehicular access is required from the building, including access with a tractor which is necessary for additional in field feeding and retrieving feed. Large round or 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.

Access to the stored hay and livestock feed will be required at all times. Dry feed and a covered livestock handling system with temporary holding/isolation pens are particular requirements to service the grassland. The proposed building is close to an existing grouping and reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture by the existing business.

Design

The steel portal framed building will have four sections each designed for the particular uses with suitable access points, cladding protection, ventilation and security. Sufficient ventilation for the hay to be stored will be provided by timber space boarding, vented sheets, gale breaker blinds and some openings above sheeted gates.

Materials reflect conventional construction methods, and the existing buildings close by, whilst favouring a predominantly natural timber finish on three elevations and juniper green profile sheeting on the upper parts of one elevation. The south gable elevation will have two timber sheeted gates, an open section with timber space-boarding above to ridge height. The north gable elevation (facing existing livestock buildings) will be fully clad with vented profile sheeting (colour juniper green) above a concrete panel lower wall (externally screened by an existing stone wall). The west elevation has some timber or steel doors/gates to a number of the doorways. Two of the eaves height doorways also have gale breaker roller blinds which will be used to stop ingress driving rain damaging feed and produce. The east elevation will have some timber space-boarding below eaves height with openings below including timber sheeted gates. The roof is proposed to have fibre cement roof sheets (natural grey) with clear plastic rooflights. The building is designed 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, protect livestock equipment and cover handling pens for the high standard of welfare required for the cattle and sheep.

Having assessed a number of sites within the land block, the proposed site was chosen for proximity to existing buildings, least visual impact, best use of existing natural screening and best use of dry ground including approach over the existing hardstanding. Proximity to the existing best site for feeding the in-calf cattle and sheep referred in agricultural justification.

There is no requirement to extend either the existing hardstanding or access track which traverses the edge of the land adjacent. The positioning does not to affect any existing trees or hedgerows. The positioning of the building using the existing hardstanding is situate close to existing buildings where visual impact will be minimal within the National Landscape.

Transport & Access

The proposed building is 140 meters distant (so more than 25m) from the adopted public highway being Rock Brow. Access to the farmstead is from the south via private drive using the existing access. This application does not seek to alter the use of the entrance. The north end of the drive accesses the existing hardstanding. There are no public footpaths on or near the proposed site or the means of access.

Access around the field

Access to the cattle and 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, the existing number of cattle and sheep. Clean dry fodder and feed is required for the winter period and supplementary feeding. 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 materials are going to be of mainly timber boarding and some green (Juniper) profile cladding at low levels for one gable (north). There are several accesses to the building, some of which may 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 agricultural access.

The priority to make either first or second cut hay for the younger cattle/sheep if this can be stored in the building can in turn help to reduce the number of wrapped bales stored outside. The building has been well designed with the majority clad in natural timber boarding and some green profile cladding where required for preventing rain ingress.

As described above there is minimal net visual impact from the existing situation where screening provided by existing roadside hedges and neighbouring hedges forms adequate screening from the public highway and more the more distant neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

The completion of the proposed agricultural general purpose building will improve the provision of suitable facilities to store livestock feed, machinery and covered handling areas for the cattle youngstock and sheep. The building 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 general purpose building is justified above as a requirement for the existing agricultural enterprises, reasonably required for agriculture and is designed for agriculture on this existing agricultural unit.

The proposal improves the existing business by providing feed/specialist facilities at hand to the calving field as required and is in line with the management strategy to calve cows at grass, with free movement, so promoting the most natural and low stress births.

Additional details - see application form and plans