



Higher Wardle Agricultural building Justification Statement

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Application for planning permission for agricultural building at Higher Wardle Farm Biddulph

Introduction

This report has been prepared under the instructions received from John Davies to make an assessment of the farming enterprises at Higher Wardle Farm. The information in this report is supporting evidence for a planning application for the erection of an agricultural building which is proposed to be sited at Higher Wardle Farm Top Road Biddulph Moor Stoke on Trent ST8 7LF . It is proposed that the buildings will be used to house livestock, namely beef cattle, store machinery and agricultural commodities.

1. Location and Area

The farm lines outside the settlement of Biddulph Moor. The farm is situated in the Green Belt and special landscape area off Top Road.

2. Description

Higher Wardle farm is owned by John Davies and is a working livestock farm which has expanded from the original 1.70ha to an area now covering 25.5 ha's (63 acres) of grassland. The farm has recently taken on an additional 10 acres of nearby rented grassland which will be used to produce winter forage and graze livestock. John currently owns 45 breeding pedigree ewes and total of 130 sheep, John also finishes 22 cattle a year which are bought as yearlings in spring and grazed throughout the year before being sold as stores before winter as there is no suitable winter housing. There are currently 3 on the holding which have been housed in the hay barn following the consumption of the winter forage by the sheep

John is soon to be joined in the farming business by his 22 year old son, who is graduating from Agricultural College.

The business plan is to reduce the sheep flock to 30 ewes and 90 sheep and increase the beef finishing herd to ensure better margins and improved grassland utilisation there is also the capacity and skills levels on the farm to purchase cows and start a breeding herd.

Currently there is enough grazing during the spring and summer for the sheep and their off spring and for the cattle, with the increase in land area there is also enough grassland to ensure that silage and hay can be produced for winter forage. However during the winter months (Oct – March) the animals have to be housed to avoid poaching the grassland up, having to travel on the fields with machinery and to ensure the best welfare for the animals and to store the winter forage. The sheep flock lambs in Dec and are housed until April the following year during this period there is a requirement to house 100 sheep this can be facilitated in the existing buildings however the cattle have to be sold as there is insufficient winter housing.

Photograph 1 Shows Higher Wardle and the existing farm buildings



3. Agricultural Justification

The proposed general purpose agricultural building will be in the curtilage of the existing farmyard and will be used to house cattle, winter forage, bedding, inputs and machinery. Currently the cattle have to be sold prior to winter housing or before the ewes and lambs are weaned as they require the accommodation due to the time of year and their age. The sheep are housed from Dec and April and utilise all the current winter housing capacity, this means that forage and machinery has to be stored outdoors.

The proposal to erect the additional buildings will increase the welfare and husbandry elements involved in cattle rearing and managing the cattle. Having the capacity to house cattle on site will ensure that there is also a stockman on site to observe and maintain the housing environment and their wellbeing. There is also the added benefit of being able to keep the animals until such times that they are able to be sold based on market demand and not when they have to be sold due to lack of housing capacity.

The additional benefit to the additional building is that it can be used all year round for the finishing of intensively produced grain feed beef cattle thereby improving the overall productivity on a marginal upland farm with diminished productive capacity due to the disadvantages of weather, altitude and topography.

The size of the proposed building is dictated by the code of welfare for beef cows, and the Farm assurance standards. The proposed building will be 36.576m long x 22.860m wide (120' x 75') meaning the internal floor space will be 819m². The building will be split with a feed passage up the middle which will be 36.29m long and 4.57m wide (165m²) – This would leave 648m² for the livestock accommodation (excludes trough, gate, barrier and post areas) this will be divided into two as the shed will be split, 324m² per side the cattle will be loose housed on straw bed to be comfortable and have more space, the requirements for large cattle are 10m² each this is made up of 6m² for laying down and a further 4m² for loafing (moving around) the proposed building provides enough space for 30 fully grown cattle per side. As the animals mature they will need more space to avoid unnecessary contact.

The length of the shed is also suitable for all the animals to feed in the feed passage (each animal requires 75cm of feed space at the trough 36 x 75cm is 27 metres at once therefore 40 younger cattle can feed in each side and as they require 7.5m² of floor space for laying and loafing) all at the same time this prevents bullying and fighting amongst the cattle and better welfare management as you can easily observe any animals not coming forward to eat which could be a sign of a potential health issue.

The location of the farm is also in a TB testing area and there is potential that the herd could come into contact with the wildlife reservoir, to reduce the risk of this contact or aid capacity if the farm was shut down and had movement restrictions the stock could be accommodated in the proposed building.

The proposed building will ensure winter housing for the animals within the buildings and suitable covered feed space.

All supplementary feed and bedding material can be stored in the building during the summer months, this will prevent it being exposed to the elements and therefore maintaining its quality and reduce the requirement to use increasing amounts of plastic wrap.

As the proposed building is next to the grazing pasture it can also be used as a shelter during periods of unexpected wet or stormy weather outside of the normal winter housing. The proposed building will also incorporate the cattle handling system which will be used for routine and emergency health and welfare treatments.

Also at the end of the winter months the Farm Yard manure will be collected and spread on the pasture land owned and rented by the farm as a fertilizer, this will reduce the requirement for the purchase of artificial fertilizers.

The welfare codes recommend that young calves should not mix with older cattle and should be kept in their age groups, the size of the proposed building will allow groups of cattle to be split to allow the different aged cattle to have adequate space. As young calves and stores are smaller than finished cattle they also require less room and therefore more stock can be put in the same floor area.