



PLANNING STATEMENT IN RELATION TO A PRIOR NOTIFICATION

APPLICATION

FOR THE

ERECTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL BUILDING

AT

LAND NORTH EAST OF LEYFIELDS

THORNCLIFFE

NR LEEK

ST13 7LP

ON BEHALF OF

MR A WILSON

JULY 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- This Statement has been produced to support a prior notification application to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in relation to Land to the North East of Leyfields, Thorncliffe. This scheme relates to the erection of a small timber clad agricultural barn to serve this established agricultural holding.
- The proposed building will be used to store hay for winter feed for the applicants Pedigree Highland Cattle Fold and store livestock handling, welfare and veterinary equipment used as part of the management of the fold of cattle grazing on this land.
- The Pedigree Highland Cattle Fold are key to the management of this upland pasture and the applicant is working in conjunction with Natural England under a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme to achieve environmental and ecological improvements to this holding. During summer, a flock of 40 ewes and lambs graze the land in conjunction with the cattle.
- A small building is essential to serve this upland agricultural holding.
- This Statement is accompanied by the following plans–
 - ✓ Location Plan (2024-Wilson-001)
 - ✓ Block and Landscaping Plan (2024-Wilson-002)
 - ✓ Proposed Elevations and Roof Plan (2024-Wilson-003)

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE FARM BUSINESS

- The applicant operates a small agricultural business breeding pedigree highland cattle under the registered prefix 'Leyfields' which is registered with the Highland Cattle Society. <https://www.highlandcattlesociety.com/>
- The business operates under livestock holding number 37/075/0163 and Herd Registration UK431991.
- The landholding extends to 30.06 acres (12.16 hectares), being located in a single block at the application site.
- The fold currently comprises 4 breeding cows plus youngstock and a pedigree bull which runs with the cows throughout the year. To expand the fold, pedigree heifers will be retained. Due to the

nature and physical attributes of the Highland cattle breed, the herd are most suited to outwintering and graze the pasture throughout the year.

- Over summer, a hay crop is taken from the meadow and at present the applicant does not have the ability to store any of this produce for winter feed.
- During winter when grass availability and quality is low, supplementary feeding is essential to keep the animals in a healthy condition and specifically the incalf cows that have a higher feed requirement during the latter stages of pregnancy.
- Routine veterinary tasks, fold management, vaccinations and disease screening (bovine TB & BVD) is carried out in the handling pen adjacent to the access gate.
- The Highland Cattle fold are a key part of the existing Higher Level Stewardship Scheme with the following Natural England management options being in place on this land –
 - ✓ UL18 – Grazing cattle on upland grassland and moorland
 - ✓ HC15 – Maintenance of successional areas and scrub
 - ✓ HK7- Restoration of species-rich, semi-natural grassland
 - ✓ HQ7 – Restoration of fen
 - ✓ HG12 – Wetland grazing supplement (cattle)
 - ✓ HR7 – Supplement for difficult sites
 - ✓ UL18 – In-bye pasture & meadows with very low inputs (SDA)
- The applicant can only achieve the landscape, bio-diversity and ecological benefits, which controlled cattle grazing on this land are a key part of, with the necessary facilities and storage requirement to serve the agricultural enterprise throughout the year and in all weather conditions.
- The applicant must have a pragmatic solution to address the lack of storage on this landholding to ensure that this business is both viable and can continue to achieve the wider benefits highlighted above.

3.0 NEED FOR AGRICULTURAL STORAGE

- The primary reason for an agricultural building on this landholding is store hay which will be used for supplementary feeding over the winter period. At present, the current hay crop is harvested in summer and stored offsite with a temporary arrangement with a local farmer. Hay is then brought back to the land in winter to supplementary feed.
- Due to the topography and exposed nature of the site, the applicant has had numerous problems accessing his fold of cattle during winter by vehicle or tractor when the roads are blocked with snowfall. This has led to the applicant having to carry hay on foot from the village to his animals, creating a significant management burden and is completely unsustainable practice taking into account the extend of the agricultural holding and as the winter feed requirement increases with the expanding herd.
- Furthermore, access with agricultural machinery is difficult during period of wet weather whereby the land becomes easily poached.
- Therefore, a small barn on this landholding would allow the applicant to store sufficient hay to ensure that there is a suitable supply of hay for supplementary feeding during adverse weather. Hay can then be fed to the cattle from the barn by hand or with a small ATV, thus reducing the damage by larger agricultural machinery and problems with access during adverse weather.
- Furthermore, due to the accessible nature of the site, the building will be used to store livestock handling equipment and veterinary sundries which can be secured to the building and out of sight from the public road.

4.0 PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL BUILDING

4.1 – Siting and Size Considerations

- The proposed site is adjacent to the existing livestock handling area and within close proximity to the highway.
- When considering the wider topography of the land, this location is the least obtrusive and most pragmatic site for a small barn.
- The overall height of the building has been kept as low as practically possible with the barn being cut-in to the existing landform.
- The proposed barn will provide a modest a floor area of 75m² providing storage for approximately 500 conventional bales of hay leaving sufficient space for livestock handling equipment and sundries which are required as part of the fold management.

4.2. Landscape and Visual Impact

- As the building is of a modest size and overall massing, the building will not appear prominent in the wider landscape. Being sited on the lowest part of the landholding and within close proximity to the adjacent handling pen and road, the function and purpose of this building will part of the upland agricultural landscape.
- The low overall height, partial screening from the adjacent dry stone wall and timber cladding will soften the impact of the building in the wider landscape.
- Established screening along the roadside boundary screens views of the proposed site from the North and additional native tree planting is proposed adjacent to the roadside gate to break up views of the building from the short distance of the highway where the building will be visible.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- In conjunction with Natural England, the applicant operates a small-scale upland livestock enterprise which primarily uses native breed cattle to manage and improve sensitive environmental areas across the wider landholding.
- The grazing herd of pedigree highland cattle are a key part of the overall management of this landholding.
- This scheme will provide a small barn to allow the applicant to primarily store the hay crop to supplementary feed the cattle over winter.
- As a livestock keeper, the applicant is legally obligated to provide sufficient feed for the animals in his care over the winter and during any adverse weather events, therefore it is imperative that a storage solution onsite is achieved.
- A small-scale building is proposed, being sited in the least obtrusive location on this landholding. Retention of existing established screening and further supplementary planting will also reduce the impact of this scheme.
- Consideration should also be given to the positive contribution which this small-scale upland farm business makes to the local landscape, environment and rural economy.