

Planning Statement

Proposal:

Prior Notification for the erection of a roof over an existing manure storage area

At

Oxhay Farm, Meerbrook

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Prior Notification application under Part 6 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the erection of a roof over an existing farmyard manure storage area at Oxhay Farm, Meerbrook.

The proposal represents an environmental improvement to an existing agricultural facility and has been designed to improve the storage and management of farmyard manure generated by the holding. The development does not seek to increase livestock numbers or expand the farming enterprise but will provide significant improvements to existing agricultural infrastructure through the reduction of dirty water generation and diffuse agricultural pollution.

The proposal forms part of works being undertaken with assistance from the Catchment Sensitive Farming Grant Scheme, the objective of which is to improve water quality by reducing agricultural pollution entering the wider environment.

2.0 Agricultural Holding

Oxhay Farm is an established agricultural holding extending to approximately 72 acres, all of which are within the applicant's ownership.

The holding currently supports approximately 150 breeding ewes plus followers together with 74 pigs. Alongside the commercial farming enterprise, the holding continues to work in partnership with Trading Standards by providing temporary accommodation for pigs requiring emergency welfare housing whilst animal welfare investigations are undertaken.

The livestock enterprise generates significant quantities of farmyard manure throughout the year, requiring suitable storage facilities to ensure it can be managed safely and spread at appropriate times in accordance with good agricultural practice.

3.0 Existing Manure Management

Farmyard manure generated by the existing sheep and pig enterprises forms an important resource within the agricultural operation and is retained for subsequent application to the applicant's own agricultural land in accordance with good agricultural practice and crop requirements.

The existing manure storage area has served the holding for many years and remains appropriately located within the established farmyard. However, increasingly prolonged periods of wet weather have highlighted the limitations of an uncovered storage area, with significant volumes of clean rainfall entering the stored manure.

As a consequence, unnecessary volumes of contaminated dirty water are generated, reducing the nutrient value of the stored manure whilst increasing the volume of runoff requiring management. The proposal therefore represents an improvement to existing agricultural infrastructure rather than the creation of a new agricultural use or additional storage facility.

Agricultural Holding Number: 37/067/0177

4.0 Existing Situation

The farmyard contains an established uncovered manure storage area adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings. The accompanying photograph demonstrates the existing conditions following periods of rainfall, with standing water surrounding the manure store. This photograph clearly illustrates the environmental issue the proposal seeks to address.

By providing a roof over the existing storage area, the proposal will prevent clean rainfall entering the manure store, significantly reducing dirty water generation whilst improving the management of farmyard manure.



5.0 Proposed Development

The proposal comprises the erection of a simple steel portal framed roof structure over the existing manure storage area.

The building has been specifically designed as an open-fronted agricultural structure measuring approximately 15.0 metres long by 9.0 metres wide, constructed with profiled metal cladding above concrete panel walls. The open-fronted design provides suitable ventilation whilst protecting the stored manure from direct rainfall.

The proposal does not create additional manure storage capacity and will simply provide weather protection to the existing storage area. The development therefore represents an improvement to existing agricultural infrastructure rather than an intensification of the farming operation.

6.0 Agricultural Need

The proposed building is reasonably necessary for the efficient operation of this established livestock holding.

The existing sheep and pig enterprises generate farmyard manure throughout the year which must be stored safely until suitable weather, and ground conditions allow spreading onto agricultural land. Covering the existing manure store will improve storage conditions, preserve nutrient content and reduce the generation of contaminated runoff resulting from rainfall entering the manure heap.

The proposal represents good agricultural practice and will improve both operational efficiency and environmental performance without altering the scale of the farming enterprise.

7.0 Catchment Sensitive Farming

The proposal is being delivered with financial assistance through the Catchment Sensitive Farming Grant Scheme, recognising the environmental benefits that will be achieved through improved manure management and the reduction of diffuse agricultural pollution.

The existing uncovered manure storage area is vulnerable to direct rainfall, resulting in excessive volumes of contaminated dirty water being generated around the farmyard. By providing a permanent roof over the existing storage area, the proposal will substantially reduce rainfall entering the manure store, thereby reducing the volume of contaminated runoff requiring management and limiting the potential for nutrient losses to the surrounding environment.

The proposal reflects current best practice in agricultural manure management and supports national objectives to improve water quality, protect watercourses and encourage more sustainable farming practices. By retaining nutrients within the stored manure, the proposal also improves its value as an organic fertiliser, allowing nutrients to be recycled back onto the holding at the most appropriate time for crop and grassland requirements.

Importantly, the proposal does not increase livestock numbers, manure production or the operational capacity of the holding. Instead, it represents an investment in improving the environmental performance of an existing agricultural enterprise and demonstrates the applicant's commitment to responsible land management and long-term environmental stewardship.

The proposed development therefore provides benefits that extend beyond the holding itself, contributing towards wider catchment management objectives through the

reduction of diffuse agricultural pollution whilst supporting the continued viability of this established livestock enterprise.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming Grant Scheme does not fund agricultural expansion but instead supports infrastructure that delivers measurable environmental improvements.

8.0 Environmental Benefits

The principal purpose of the proposal is to improve environmental management on the holding.

By preventing rainfall from entering the existing manure store, the development will significantly reduce the generation of dirty water and minimise diffuse agricultural pollution originating from the farmyard.

The proposal directly supports the objectives of the Catchment Sensitive Farming Grant Scheme by reducing the volume of contaminated runoff leaving the site, improving nutrient retention within the stored manure and enabling manure to be spread only when weather conditions, soil conditions and crop requirements are appropriate.

Retaining valuable nutrients within the manure improves its fertiliser value and reduces the need for imported fertilisers, providing both environmental and economic benefits. The proposal therefore represents a significant improvement to the long-term sustainability of the holding.

9.0 Siting

The proposed roof will be constructed directly over the existing manure storage area within the established farmyard.

The development utilises an existing operational area and does not extend agricultural activity into the surrounding countryside. Its position adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings ensures it reads as part of the established farmstead and minimises its visual impact within the wider landscape.

10.0 Scale and Appearance

The proposed building has been designed solely to provide weather protection over the existing manure store and is of a scale entirely appropriate to its agricultural function.

Construction will comprise a steel portal frame with profiled metal roof and wall cladding above concrete panel walls using materials commonly found throughout agricultural buildings within the locality. The simple functional design reflects the agricultural character of the farmstead and will assimilate naturally alongside the existing buildings.

The proposal has deliberately been designed as a modest and functional agricultural structure that remains subservient to the existing farm buildings and preserves the character of the traditional farmstead.

11.0 Heritage

The farmhouse at Oxhay Farm is a Grade II Listed Building (List Entry No. 1374746). The proposed development has been carefully designed to respect its setting and agricultural context.

The proposed roof will be constructed over an existing manure storage area within the established working farmyard and does not introduce a new agricultural activity or expand the operational extent of the holding. Instead, it represents an improvement to existing farm infrastructure that remains directly associated with the day-to-day operation of the agricultural enterprise.

The proposed structure adopts a simple, functional agricultural design using materials commonly found on modern farm buildings. Its modest scale and location alongside existing agricultural buildings ensure that it will read as a natural component of the working farmstead rather than an isolated or incongruous addition.

Furthermore, by enclosing the existing manure storage area, the proposal has the potential to improve the overall appearance of the farmyard whilst preserving the agricultural character and setting that contribute to the significance of the listed farmhouse.

12.0 Climate Change and Sustainability

The proposal contributes positively towards climate resilience and sustainable agricultural management.

Reducing rainfall entering the manure store will significantly decrease dirty water generation, improve nutrient retention and reduce the risk of diffuse agricultural pollution entering surrounding land and watercourses.

The development will also improve the efficiency of nutrient management across the holding, allowing manure to be stored safely until optimum spreading conditions occur. This supports sustainable farming practices and contributes towards improved water quality and environmental protection.

13.0 Access

The proposal will utilise the existing farmyard access and internal circulation routes.

No alterations are proposed to the existing access arrangements, and the development will not result in any increase in traffic movements associated with the holding.

14.0 Planning Balance

The proposal represents a significant environmental enhancement to an established agricultural holding. Rather than facilitating agricultural expansion, it improves the management of existing farmyard manure, reduces dirty water generation, minimises diffuse agricultural pollution and supports nationally recognised Catchment Sensitive Farming objectives.

The development is modest in scale, is located entirely within the established farmstead and utilises an existing manure storage area without increasing livestock numbers or operational capacity. The simple agricultural design is entirely appropriate to its function and will sit comfortably alongside the existing farm buildings.

When considered as a whole, the proposal delivers significant environmental, water quality and operational benefits whilst introducing only a very limited change to the appearance of the existing farmstead. The proposal therefore represents sustainable agricultural development that supports both the long-term viability of the holding and wider environmental objectives.

The proposal also preserves the setting of the Grade II listed farmhouse by maintaining the established agricultural character of the working farmstead and improving the appearance of the existing manure storage area. As such, the proposal delivers environmental, operational and heritage benefits whilst remaining entirely appropriate in its agricultural context.

15.0 Conclusion

The proposed roof over the existing manure storage area is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture on this established livestock holding.

The development will improve the management of farmyard manure, reduce the generation of dirty water, minimise diffuse agricultural pollution and enhance the environmental performance of the holding whilst supporting the objectives of the Catchment Sensitive Farming Grant Scheme.

The proposal utilises an existing operational area within the farmstead, introduces no increase in manure storage capacity or livestock numbers, has no impact upon highway safety and is entirely appropriate in its scale, siting and appearance.

It is therefore respectfully requested that Prior Approval is confirmed.