

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL STATEMENT

Proposed Agricultural Storage Building at Denford

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies a prior notification application under Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended, for the erection of an agricultural storage building at Denford.

The proposed building would be used solely for the storage of fodder, agricultural machinery, implements and livestock management equipment associated with the applicant's agricultural enterprise.

2. The Agricultural Unit

The applicant occupies and manages an agricultural unit extending to approximately 31 acres.

The unit comprises approximately seven acres of agricultural land at the application site, together with a further 24 acres of agricultural land at Wetley Rocks. The land at Wetley Rocks has been rented and farmed by the applicant for several years and is used principally for fodder production and seasonal livestock grazing.

The land is managed collectively as part of the same agricultural enterprise. Livestock are purchased for grazing during the growing season and are generally sold before winter. Consequently, permanent livestock housing is neither required nor proposed.

The agricultural enterprise nevertheless requires suitable facilities for the storage of the fodder produced from the land and for the machinery and equipment necessary to manage the unit. There are currently no agricultural buildings available to the applicant for these purposes.

3. Existing Agricultural Activities

The agricultural unit is used for grassland management, seasonal livestock grazing and fodder production.

Approximately 200–250 large bales of fodder are produced in a typical year, although the precise quantity varies according to seasonal growing and weather conditions. The fodder is used partly to support livestock kept by the applicant, with the remaining proportion sold to other agricultural holdings in the surrounding area.

At present, the crop is predominantly baled as wrapped silage and stored externally on the rented land. The plastic wrap represents a significant recurring expense and creates agricultural plastic waste which is becoming increasingly difficult and costly to dispose of responsibly.

The availability of covered storage would allow the applicant to reduce reliance upon individually plastic-wrapped bales by enabling dry baled fodder to be stored under cover where crop and weather conditions permit.

The machinery and equipment used in managing the agricultural unit include:

- two tractors;
- a baler;
- a topper;
- a tedder;
- a hedge cutter;
- chain harrows;
- smaller handheld agricultural implements;
- mobile sheep washing and handling equipment;
- temporary livestock fencing; and
- associated livestock welfare equipment.

In the absence of a building on the agricultural unit, machinery and implements have had to be stored at a number of third-party agricultural holdings. This results in equipment being dispersed between different locations and creates operational difficulties, particularly during time-sensitive periods of mowing, harvesting and fodder production.

These informal arrangements are dependent upon the continuing availability of storage space belonging to other farmers and do not provide a secure or satisfactory long-term means of supporting the agricultural enterprise.

4. Need for the Proposed Building

The proposed building would provide a single secure and weather-resistant facility for the storage of fodder produced from the agricultural unit, together with the machinery, implements and livestock equipment required for its management.

Covered fodder storage would enable the applicant to reduce reliance upon plastic-wrapped bales, reducing both the recurring cost of purchasing plastic wrap and the quantity of agricultural plastic waste requiring disposal.

The building would provide sufficient capacity for approximately 200–250 large bales produced annually, subject to seasonal variation, together with the two tractors, baler and other machinery and equipment used in connection with the agricultural enterprise.

Adequate internal space is required not only for the physical storage of fodder and machinery but also to allow the safe access, manoeuvring, loading and retrieval of bales and agricultural equipment. The proposed floorspace is therefore directly related to the existing agricultural activities undertaken across the unit.

Consolidating machinery at the applicant's own land would reduce reliance upon informal storage arrangements at unrelated agricultural holdings and ensure that equipment is available when required. This is particularly important during harvesting, when agricultural operations are time-sensitive and dependent upon suitable weather conditions.

The fodder stored within the building would be produced from land farmed by the applicant as part of the agricultural unit. The building would not be used to receive or store fodder or other agricultural produce on behalf of third parties and would not be used for any unrelated commercial storage or distribution purpose.

5. Scale and Design

The proposed building would measure approximately 30.48 metres in length by 15.24 metres in width, providing a floor area of approximately 465 square metres.

It would have an eaves height of approximately 6.10 metres and a ridge height of approximately 8.14 metres. The dimensions would provide the height and internal clearance necessary for the safe operation and storage of modern agricultural machinery, the stacking and handling of large fodder bales and the movement of equipment within the building.

The roof would be finished in Juniper Green profiled steel sheeting incorporating an anti-condensation backing and translucent GRP rooflights. The walls would also be clad in Juniper Green profiled steel sheeting.

The use of translucent rooflights would provide natural daylight within the building and reduce the need for artificial lighting during normal daytime agricultural operations.

The building is functional and agricultural in its form, materials and appearance. The proposed Juniper Green finish would provide a subdued external appearance appropriate to the surrounding rural landscape.

6. Agricultural Purpose

The proposed building has been designed specifically to meet the storage requirements of the agricultural unit.

It would be used for:

- the covered storage of baled fodder produced from the agricultural unit;
- the storage of tractors and fodder-producing machinery;
- the storage of grassland and hedgerow management equipment;
- the storage of livestock handling, welfare and fencing equipment; and
- associated agricultural implements and materials.

It would not be used for livestock housing, agricultural contracting machinery unrelated to the holding, general commercial storage, vehicle repairs, industrial activities or any other non-agricultural purpose.

The development is therefore reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit.

7. Conclusion

The applicant occupies and manages an agricultural unit extending to approximately 31 acres. The land is actively used for fodder production and seasonal livestock grazing, producing approximately 200–250 large bales of fodder annually.

There are no existing agricultural buildings available to the applicant. Machinery and implements are currently dispersed between third-party agricultural holdings, while wrapped fodder is stored externally on the rented land.

The proposed building would provide covered storage for fodder produced from the agricultural unit and secure storage for the machinery, implements and livestock management equipment required to farm the land.

Covered storage would enable the applicant to reduce reliance upon plastic-wrapped bales, thereby reducing recurring production costs and agricultural plastic waste. It would also allow machinery to be consolidated at the applicant's own land and made readily available during time-sensitive agricultural operations.

The scale of the building reflects the quantity of fodder produced, the machinery required to manage the unit and the internal space necessary for safe access, manoeuvring and handling. The building would be used solely for agricultural purposes associated with the applicant's agricultural enterprise.

The development is therefore reasonably necessary for agriculture within the unit and is submitted for consideration under Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.