

HARVEY HUGHES

INDEPENDENT RURAL CONSULTANTS

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Planning and Agricultural statement to support full planning
application for Roofing over feed yard at Higher Green Meadow,
Buxworth.

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1.0 Introduction

This application has been prepared and submitted on the instruction of Mr M Winterbotham. To be submitted to High Peak Borough Council, for a proposed roofing over cattle feed and loafing area.

This report has been prepared by Anna Goldie BSc (Hons) PgC ASAg, an agricultural consultant for Harvey Hughes Ltd in Northwich, Cheshire. The report outlines the planning proposal and the agricultural justification for the building.

2.0 Agricultural Summary

Mr Winterbotham farms at Higher Green Meadow, an established agricultural holding extending to approximately 21.34 hectares (52.7 acres) of predominantly permanent grassland. The land is managed for livestock production and provides the grazing and forage resources necessary to support both the beef and sheep enterprises operated from the holding.

The principal enterprise is a beef rearing operation, whereby young calves are purchased and subsequently reared on the farm until approximately 18 months of age before being sold as store cattle. Alongside this, Mr Winterbotham maintains a flock of breeding sheep, which utilise the permanent grassland for grazing throughout the year. The mixed livestock system allows the grassland resource to be utilised efficiently whilst providing a diversified and resilient agricultural business.

The management of both enterprises requires significant daily husbandry input, including feeding, bedding, health monitoring, pasture management and routine livestock handling. During the grazing season, cattle and sheep are managed across the holding's grassland parcels, whilst during the winter months livestock are housed or managed in designated feeding areas where conserved forage and supplementary feeds are provided. Maintaining a reliable supply of quality feed is therefore essential to the productivity, welfare and overall performance of the livestock.

The permanent grassland surrounding the farm provides both grazing and forage crops, with silage and hay produced annually to support winter feeding requirements. The efficient storage and handling of these feed resources is critical to the operation of the business, particularly during periods of adverse weather when livestock are reliant upon stored forage.

The existing farmstead contains a range of agricultural buildings and infrastructure associated with the livestock enterprises. A key component of the operation is the feed yard adjoining the existing livestock accommodation, which is used extensively for the storage, handling and distribution of feed to cattle. During periods of wet weather, the exposed nature of the existing feed yard can result in feed spoilage, increased wastage and run off into the land and tributary River Goyt.

The proposed extension will provide a covered area over the existing feed yard, improving the protection of feedstuffs from rainfall and weather-related deterioration. This will reduce feed losses, improve feed quality and contribute towards higher standards of livestock welfare by ensuring a more consistent and hygienic feeding environment. The roofing will also help to reduce slurry production, reducing pressures on slurry storage.

The proposal therefore represents a modest but important enhancement to the existing agricultural infrastructure, directly supporting the continued viability, efficiency and long-term

sustainability of an established mixed livestock farming business. The roofing has been supported by the local Catchment Sensitive Farming officer and is funded under government capital grant to protect the local water courses.

3.0 Proposed Building

As outlined above, the proposal relates to the provision of a roof structure over an existing feed and loafing yard currently utilised by cattle within Mr Winterbotham's beef enterprise. The development will be formed through the extension of an existing agricultural building by a single structural bay, creating additional covered accommodation whilst remaining closely associated with the existing farmstead and livestock housing facilities.

The proposed extension has been specifically designed to improve the functionality of the existing feeding area by providing protection from rainfall and adverse weather conditions. The covered area will allow feed to remain dry and palatable for longer periods, reducing wastage and improving feed utilisation by livestock. In addition, the roofed area will help maintain a cleaner and drier loafing environment for cattle, contributing positively towards animal welfare and reducing the accumulation of surface water and mud within the yard.

The proposed roofing to be as follows:

Length:	= 9.144m
Width:	= 9.144m
Height to Eaves:	= 3.3m
Height to Ridge:	= 4.55m

The total floor area of the building is **84m²**.

The scale of the extension has been determined by the dimensions of the existing building and the operational requirements of the livestock enterprise. By extending the structure by a single bay, the proposal provides a practical increase in covered space without resulting in disproportionate development. The extension will integrate seamlessly with the existing building, maintaining the established agricultural appearance of the farmstead.

The western elevation of the proposed structure will directly adjoin the existing agricultural building, ensuring the extension appears as a natural continuation of the existing development. The eastern elevation will remain open, providing unrestricted access for livestock and machinery to the feed yard and allowing efficient feed distribution using existing farm equipment. The open frontage also promotes natural ventilation, an important consideration in livestock environments, helping to maintain good air quality and reduce the build-up of moisture within the covered area.

Only a limited section of the southern elevation, measuring approximately 3.397m in height, will be externally visible. This elevation, together with the north elevation, will be clad using a combination of pre-cast concrete panels and traditional Yorkshire boarding. The concrete panels will provide durability and protection from livestock activity, whilst the Yorkshire boarding will allow the free movement of air and natural light through the structure. This approach not only assists with livestock welfare and feed preservation but also helps to soften the visual appearance of the building within the surrounding landscape.

The roof will be constructed using materials that match the existing building, ensuring visual continuity and reinforcing the agricultural character of the development. As the proposal

extends an existing structure and is located entirely within the established farmstead, it will appear as a modest and functional addition that is wholly in keeping with the operational requirements of the holding.

Overall, the proposed extension represents a practical improvement to the existing livestock facilities, providing enhanced feed storage and feeding conditions whilst supporting the efficient management of the beef enterprise and improving standards of livestock welfare.

4.0 Visual impact and access

The proposed development is located immediately adjoining an existing agricultural building at Higher Green Meadow and forms a modest extension to the established farmstead. By extending an existing structure over an existing feed and loafing yard, the proposal maintains a compact and consolidated pattern of development, avoiding any unnecessary encroachment into the surrounding agricultural landscape.

Access to the site will be gained via the existing farm access track leading from Dolly Lane. The proposal will not require any alterations to the existing access arrangements, nor will it generate any significant increase in traffic movements beyond those already associated with the day-to-day operation of the farm. The development simply enhances an existing livestock feeding area and therefore integrates seamlessly into the current agricultural operation.

The site is an existing farm yard and therefore has ample space available for parking provisions for vehicles during construction, the business is not open to the public and therefore does not require official 'parking spaces'.

In visual terms, the proposal will have a negligible impact upon the wider landscape. The building is positioned within the existing farmyard and is screened by the surrounding agricultural buildings and landform. As a result, the development cannot be viewed from any public highway, public footpath or other publicly accessible vantage point. Consequently, there will be no material impact on public views, landscape character or visual amenity.

The scale of the extension has been carefully designed to remain subordinate to the existing building. Measuring approximately 84m², the proposal represents a relatively small addition that follows the established form, height and appearance of the adjoining structure. The extension will therefore appear as a natural continuation of the existing agricultural building rather than as a separate or visually prominent feature.

The materials proposed for the construction of the extension are typical of modern agricultural development and reflect those commonly found on farms throughout the local area. The walls will comprise a combination of pre-cast concrete panels and traditional timber Yorkshire boarding. The concrete panels provide durability and practicality within a livestock environment, whilst the Yorkshire boarding allows natural ventilation and light penetration, reducing the visual mass of the building when viewed from outside the site. The use of timber boarding also introduces a softer, more traditional agricultural appearance that helps the structure assimilate into its rural setting.

Overall, the proposal represents a modest and functional agricultural extension that is appropriately sited within an established farmstead. Due to its location, scale, design and choice of materials, the development will not result in any significant adverse effects on the character of the countryside, the appearance of the surrounding landscape or the visual amenities enjoyed by members of the public.

5.0 Requirement

The proposed development seeks to provide roofing over an existing external feed and loafing yard used in conjunction with the adjoining cattle housing building. The area forms an integral part of the livestock accommodation, allowing cattle additional space to move, exercise and access feed outside of the main housing structure. The feed barrier is located along the external yard, meaning livestock utilise this area several times throughout the day for feeding and general movement.

Beef cattle spend a significant proportion of their day either resting, feeding or ruminating. Typically, growing cattle will spend approximately 12 to 14 hours lying down and a further 3 to 4 hours actively feeding. The remaining time is spent walking, drinking and loafing. As a result, cattle can spend an average of around 8 hours each day within the loafing and feeding area. Consequently, this yard is heavily used throughout the year and forms an essential component of the overall livestock accommodation system.

At present, the feed and loafing yard is exposed to the elements. During periods of rainfall, significant volumes of clean rainwater enter the yard and mix with livestock manure and slurry. This increases the volume of slurry requiring storage and handling, creating additional costs and management pressures for the business. The increased slurry volumes place greater demand on existing slurry storage facilities and can lead to higher spreading costs through increased fuel, labour and machinery requirements. By covering the yard, the amount of clean water entering the slurry system will be substantially reduced, resulting in more efficient slurry management and reduced operational costs.

The proposed roof will also provide protection to feed presented within the yard. Exposure to rainfall can lead to feed spoilage and wastage, reducing feed quality and increasing feed costs. Wet feed is less palatable to livestock and can result in reduced feed intake. By keeping feeding areas dry, the proposal will improve feed utilisation and reduce unnecessary waste, delivering both economic and environmental benefits.

From an animal welfare perspective, the provision of a covered loafing area is particularly important. Cattle are susceptible to adverse weather conditions, particularly prolonged periods of heavy rainfall, strong winds and fluctuating temperatures. Whilst cattle can tolerate cold conditions relatively well, persistent wet weather can increase stress levels, reduce comfort and lead to greater energy requirements as animals use additional energy to maintain body temperature. For growing cattle, this energy is diverted away from weight gain and growth performance, resulting in reduced daily liveweight gains and a direct financial impact on the business.

Providing a dry and sheltered loafing environment allows cattle to remain cleaner, drier and more comfortable throughout the year. This can contribute towards improved health, reduced incidence of lameness and other welfare-related issues, and improved growth rates. The proposal therefore represents an important investment in both livestock welfare and farm productivity.

In addition to the welfare and operational benefits, the proposed roof will contribute towards improved environmental management by reducing the volume of contaminated runoff generated within the yard. By minimising rainwater entering the slurry system, the development will improve the efficiency of nutrient management and reduce the risk of diffuse pollution associated with livestock operations.

Overall, the proposed extension is required to improve the functionality of the existing livestock accommodation, enhance animal welfare, reduce feed wastage, improve slurry management and support the continued efficient operation of the beef enterprise at Higher Green Meadow.

6.0 Environmental Considerations

Whilst the proposed development relates to a relatively modest extension covering approximately 84m² of an existing feed and loafing yard, environmental considerations have been carefully assessed as part of the design process. The proposal has been developed not only to improve the operational efficiency of the farm but also to deliver environmental benefits through improved manure management, reduced pollution risks and enhanced protection of local water resources.

6.1 Catchment Sensitive Farming

The proposal has been developed following guidance and recommendations provided through the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) programme. The holding lies within a priority catchment area where phosphorus pollution has been identified as a key water quality concern. As a result, measures that reduce the risk of nutrient losses and contaminated runoff are actively encouraged.

At present, the existing uncovered loafing yard is exposed to rainfall throughout the year. As cattle utilise the yard on a daily basis, manure and urine are deposited onto the concrete surface and become mixed with rainwater, creating additional volumes of dirty water and slurry requiring collection, storage and subsequent land application. This not only increases the volume of slurry generated by the enterprise but also increases the potential risk of contaminated runoff entering the wider environment if not managed appropriately.

The proposed roof structure will significantly reduce the volume of clean rainwater entering the livestock yard and mixing with livestock waste. By preventing rainfall from falling directly onto the loafing area, the proposal will reduce slurry production at source and improve the efficiency of the farm's existing manure management system. This will lessen the burden on slurry storage infrastructure and reduce the quantity of contaminated water requiring handling and spreading.

Importantly, the development will contribute towards reducing the risk of nutrients and sediments entering nearby watercourses, including the River Goyt catchment. By separating clean water from dirty water, the proposal aligns with the objectives of Catchment Sensitive Farming and represents a practical measure to improve environmental management on the holding.

In addition to the proposed roofing, the applicant is undertaking complementary self-funded improvements to the farmyard drainage arrangements. These include the installation of a raised hump and associated surface water management measures designed to prevent clean runoff from adjacent fields entering the livestock yard. Collectively, these improvements will reduce the volume of water requiring collection and storage whilst minimising the risk of clean water becoming contaminated by livestock waste.

Overall, the proposal represents a positive environmental improvement that will enhance nutrient management, improve water quality protection and support the long-term environmental sustainability of the farm business.

6.2 Ecological Enhancements

An Ecological Enhancement Assessment has been undertaken by Dr Alexander Lewis and accompanies this application. The assessment considers the ecological value of the site and identifies opportunities to maintain and enhance biodiversity alongside the proposed development.

As the proposal relates solely to the roofing of an existing operational farmyard area, there will be no direct loss of habitat, vegetation or ecological features. Nevertheless, the ecological assessment demonstrates the applicant's commitment to ensuring that environmental considerations form part of the overall development process and that opportunities for biodiversity enhancement are considered where appropriate across the wider holding.

The proposal therefore has no adverse ecological impacts and sits comfortably within the context of the existing agricultural operation.

6.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposed development comprises the installation of a roof over an existing concrete feed and loafing yard that forms part of the established farmstead. The site is entirely hard surfaced and is already in active agricultural use. As a result, the proposal does not involve the removal of vegetation, the loss of habitats or any change to land that currently provides ecological value.

Given that the development is confined to an existing concreted yard area, there is no measurable loss of biodiversity associated with the proposal. Supporting information prepared by Dr Alexander Lewis confirms that the development will not result in any adverse impacts on habitats or protected species.

The proposal therefore does not give rise to any biodiversity loss and maintains the existing ecological baseline of the site. Furthermore, through improved manure and runoff management, the development has the potential to deliver indirect environmental benefits by helping to protect surrounding habitats and watercourses from nutrient pollution.

7.0 Conclusion

The proposed development at Higher Green Meadow represents a necessary and proportionate agricultural investment directly linked to the ongoing requirements of a well-established mixed livestock enterprise. The extension of the existing feed and loafing yard will provide essential covered space to support cattle management, improve feed efficiency, and enhance overall farm productivity. The proposal is modest in scale and clearly aligned with the functional needs of the holding, ensuring that it remains appropriate to the existing farmstead context.

From an operational perspective, the development will deliver clear and measurable benefits. These include improved livestock welfare through the provision of a dry, sheltered environment, reduced feed spoilage and waste, and a significant reduction in clean water ingress into the slurry system. This will improve slurry storage efficiency and reduce associated handling and spreading costs. In addition, the scheme supports improved environmental performance in line with Catchment Sensitive Farming principles, particularly in relation to nutrient management and the protection of water quality within the wider catchment, including the River Goyt.

Visually, the proposal will have a negligible impact on the surrounding landscape. The development is contained entirely within the existing farmyard, immediately adjoining established agricultural buildings, and is not visible from public viewpoints. As such, it will not

result in any adverse effects on landscape character or visual amenity. The design, scale and materials are consistent with modern agricultural buildings and ensure the extension integrates seamlessly with the existing built form.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be fully justified in agricultural terms and represents a sustainable enhancement to the existing farming operation. It accords with good environmental practice, supports long-term business viability, and delivers clear welfare and environmental benefits. It is therefore respectfully submitted that planning permission be granted by High Peak Borough Council.