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Planning Statement

In Support of a Retrospective Application for the Retention of an Agricultural Building, Formation of Hardstanding, Storage Bays and New Access

Land East of Woodhouse Lane, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 7TB

Applicant: Mr Jack Spence

Date: October 2025

1. Introduction

This statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the retention of an agricultural building, the formation of a hardstanding area, lego block storage bays for organic manure storage, and the creation of a new access from Woodhouse Lane, Norden, Rochdale.

The proposal seeks to regularise the existing works that have been undertaken to support the ongoing agricultural enterprise at this site, which forms part of a 65-acre agricultural holding extending across this site and Woodhouse Fold Farm.

The holding is registered with DEFRA under holding number 44/623/0577.

2. Description of Development

The application seeks retrospective permission for:

- Retention of an agricultural building measuring 22.8m in length, 9.1m in width, 3.6m to eaves and 4.8m to ridge, with a 3.0m front overhang and a 3.6m lean-to to the gable end.
- Formation of a hardstanding area totalling 3,246 sq m, constructed from compacted hardcore and road planings.
- Installation of lego block walls to form storage bays for organic manure (sludge from urban wastewater treatment) supplied by United Utilities.

- Creation of a new agricultural access from Woodhouse Lane.

A swept path analysis has been undertaken and submitted with the application to demonstrate that the layout allows for the safe turning and manoeuvring of articulated vehicles, tractors, and trailers delivering hay, straw, and feed.

3. Existing Agricultural Enterprise

The overall holding extends to 65 acres (approximately 26.3 hectares), comprising this site and land at Woodhouse Fold Farm.

Livestock kept on the holding include:

- 50 fattening sheep
- 11 Belted Galloway beef cattle
- 8 Hereford beef cattle
- 3 alpacas

The agricultural operations include grass cropping for hay and silage, livestock grazing, and manure management to support soil fertility. Approximately 450 tonnes of organic manure (sludge) supplied by United Utilities is stored on site and spread on the land twice annually—after haymaking—to provide a sustainable nutrient source.

4. Justification for the Development

4.1 Need for the Building

The building provides essential covered storage for tractors and machinery used on the holding, and for hay and straw produced from the 20-acre hay crop.

The dimensions of the building have been dictated by the size and manoeuvring requirements of such equipment, with the eaves height allowing sufficient clearance for tractor access (3m).

Storing hay under cover is essential to maintain feed quality and animal welfare. Hay left uncovered deteriorates rapidly due to exposure, losing nutritional value and becoming susceptible to mold and mycotoxins, which can pose a risk to livestock health. Covered storage also prevents the risk of spontaneous combustion from wet hay.

4.2 Need for Hardstanding and Access

The 3,246 sq m hardstanding is essential for the safe turning, loading, and manoeuvring of large vehicles, including articulated lorries and tractors with trailers. The area provides a durable, all-weather surface that prevents rutting and compaction of adjacent agricultural land.

The new access from Woodhouse Lane provides a safe and direct entry point to the site, designed to accommodate agricultural and delivery vehicles without impeding highway safety.

4.3 Need for Manure Storage Bays

The lego block bays provide controlled, environmentally sound storage for organic manure in the form of treated sludge. This product is applied twice annually, in line with nutrient management best practice, to improve soil fertility and organic matter content.

The design prevents runoff and ensures the material can be handled and spread in accordance with DEFRA regulations and good agricultural practice.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 147–151 of the NPPF recognise that new buildings within the Green Belt are generally considered inappropriate unless they fall within specific exceptions. One such exception is the provision of buildings for agriculture and forestry.

The development clearly falls within this exception as it supports a bona fide agricultural operation, including livestock housing, feed and machinery storage, and manure management.

5.2 Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted 2016)

The proposal accords with the following Core Strategy policies:

- Policy G/D/2 (Green Belt): The development is for agricultural purposes and maintains openness insofar as possible.
- Policy P3 (Improving Design of New Development): The materials—timber boarding, concrete panels, and cement fibre sheeting—are typical of rural buildings and visually compatible with the setting.
- Policy G6 (Enhancing Green Infrastructure): The proposal contributes to sustainable agricultural management and local biodiversity through nutrient recycling.
- Policy T2 (Highways): The new access is designed to ensure safety and efficiency for agricultural vehicles.

6. Design and Appearance

Roof: Natural grey profile 6 cement fibre sheeting.

Walls: Tanalised Yorkshire boarding with pre-cast concrete panels to lower walls.

Form: Dual-pitched roof with lean-to and open-fronted bays for flexibility.

Landscaping: Limited excavation required to level the site; existing boundary walls and hedgerows provide natural screening.

7. Impact on the Green Belt

The building and associated hardstanding are modest in scale and clearly related to agriculture. The works do not harm the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt, being low in height and constructed in muted materials typical of the rural environment.

The development constitutes appropriate development under NPPF paragraph 149(a), as it is for the purposes of agriculture. The operational need for the structure and yard is directly linked to the functioning and viability of the holding.

8. Conclusion

This retrospective application seeks to regularise the construction of an agricultural building, hardstanding, manure storage bays, and access track that are essential to the operation and sustainability of a 65-acre agricultural holding.

The development:

- Supports the efficient operation of a legitimate agricultural enterprise;
- Complies with Green Belt policy as an appropriate agricultural use;
- Enhances animal welfare and feed quality; and
- Improves farm safety and environmental management.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that retrospective planning permission be granted.