

Bank Top Farm – Proposed Farm Shop and Car Park Application



Bank Top Farm *Better Taste, Less Miles!*
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We pride ourselves on being totally independent from outside advice and decisions made on our own farms.

Farm Shop Location Considerations Review

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A lot of time and consideration has been given to the most suitable site for the Farm shop/café at our farm.

The key points as to why the site directly on the Hollingworth Road frontage has been selected are covered in the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement. It has also been informed by a landscape and visual appraisal. This also sets out reasons why the proposal cannot be sited directly at the farm itself.

This additional document has been produced following the Planning Officers request for more evidence of the reasons for the proposed farm shop location. Specifically why a location adjacent to the farm buildings or within an existing building at the farm is not achievable.

Further planning, highways and landscape and visual information has also now been prepared to support the information already submitted and confirm why a siting at the farm is not possible in technical, visual and sustainable access/policy terms.

This document provides consideration and photographs to confirm such siting is not possible in respect of:

- the nature and topography of the access lane,
- all existing buildings are in operational farm use,
- health and safety and farm operational implications preventing siting of a building and car park other than to the south of the existing buildings which has significant topographical, access and visual implications, and
- land quality and low usage potential of the land where the farm shop is proposed compared to other parts of the farm.

Access up the Farm Lane

The picture above shows the current layout of the farm buildings at the top of the farm access lane. Access is a single track leading to the farm with no through road. The lane is not fully hard surfaced. The initial part of the lane is steep and cannot be accessed without 4 wheel drive vehicle in winter when ice or snow is present.

The fields adjacent to the lane are steeply sloping and largely unfenced to the lane thus there is no easy opportunity to widen the lane and it would require full stock-proofing of all field boundaries for additional commercial traffic movements.

See photographs 1-4 in the Photographs Appendix.

At approx 200 meters from the bottom of the lane to the start of the existing farm buildings, due to the gradient of the lane it is hard work walking up to the farm and difficult to cycle unless an accomplished cyclist. This is considered a significant barrier to movement and for sustainable access/ so off putting for walking passing trade, customers who could arrive by bus via the bus stops immediately located on Hollingworth Road and cyclists compared to the proposed location of the farm shop being immediately on the road frontage.

Current Buildings and Adjacent Yard Area

All current buildings are occupied and yard areas of the farm complex are operationally used. A plan of the farm is provided at Appendix 1.

The farm includes three main buildings comprising an animal shed, machinery shed and animal/materials store as well as the farmhouse and garage with a yard area to the rear of the farmhouse where there are feed silos, storage of haylage bales, and parking of tractors and vehicles. The yard is also used as a route for providing access to fields to the north and east of the farm for vehicles and animals. As such there are no locations for the potential siting of a farm shop building and car park area to the north of the machinery shed (the southern building on farm site).

All existing buildings are utilised throughout the year. The animal shed is wholly used by different stock animals, depending upon the time of year, it is used eg. for finishing lambs Jan/Feb, lambing of pregnant ewes March-May, rearing young calves June-August and rearing turkeys mid Aug-Christmas. A small extension to the rear is also used for animals. The machinery store is fully utilised for equipment and the animal/materials building is utilised for animal provisions and seed/other storage.

Photographs 5 to 17 of the main buildings and yard are provided in the Appendix.

Health and safety in close proximity to working areas of the farm

The arrangement of the farm complex is of buildings and yard accessed from the lane. The lane is single vehicle width and the access to the rear yard is also via a single vehicle width between the house and buildings. There is requirement to move between the buildings, yard and field accesses on a daily basis including by tractors and with other machinery. For example using tractors to bring large bales round from the yard at the back of the farmhouse to feed the cattle and ewes. Tractors are also required to manoeuvre and bring large bales of straw for bedding as required into the animal building.

There is also movement of animals from and between fields and to the buildings which can be required on a daily basis.

A sheep and cattle handling system between the animal and machinery shed is also a key area for working with the animals.

It is considered that to have customer vehicles (and other associated shop vehicles) passing beyond the southern building and into the operational areas of the farm would be inappropriate. It would be a health and safety concern to have a farm shop and café amongst buildings housing farm animals and machinery on a working farm.

It was suggested by the planning officer that we consider utilising an existing building and erect a further building for agricultural use as this would be more acceptable. Given the arrangement and size of existing buildings and the layout and operations of the farm, only the southern machinery shed could be an option. However this would not be of size necessary without extension and remodelling, it would still need creation of a car park to the south with levels and visual impact/visibility concerns and would then need a replacement agricultural building, which, due to the lack of availability of space north of the existing buildings, would then result in a further building southwards along the access lane and beyond a car park area and more divorced from the operational farm areas, requiring machines to have to be drawn past the shop and car park to gain access to the yard and fields accessed therefrom.

It is also a struggle to understand how a further more divorced agricultural building at this high level on the farm site has any less impact on visual openness when the farm shop/café as is proposed by Hollingworth Road has been designed to blend into the hillside and use build materials in keeping with the area.

Land quality

It was also decided against proposing a farm shop/café and car park in the field to the east of the access lane and south of the existing buildings as this is a good grazing field with better grass value than the lower hillside area proposed. This field is used for grazing by sheep and cattle and also the production of haylage at times of the year. The land where the building is proposed is only able to be used for rough grazing by sheep as the soil is very low in nutrients and therefore grows poor quality grass which means that the nutrient uptake by the sheep from this grass is very low. This is because it is too steep to be able to either spread manure on or sow high sugar grass and clover.

The upper level field is also significantly closer to the existing farm complex and buildings for more direct animal movements and care.

As such, the statement that the application land area is poorer quality land on the farm is considered correct.