



March 2025

Application for the Erection of Livestock Building

Supporting Agricultural Statement

At

**Agricultural Land North-East of Cleggswood Farm
Higher Lakewood
Hollingworth Road
Littleborough
OL15 0AZ**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) is instructed by Mr Harvey Ashworth (the applicant) to provide a Supporting Agricultural Statement for the erection of a livestock building to support an existing agricultural use at Agricultural Land North-East of Cleggswood Farm, Higher Lakewood, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough OL15 0AZ.
- 1.2 In responding to these instructions RAC has:
- visited the site in November 2024; and
 - discussed with the applicant the need for the agricultural building and details of the current use of the land; and had regard to:
 - the previous planning history of the farm;
 - the applicant's agricultural use of the site; and
 - sources of published information and correspondence relevant to the activities being undertaken by the applicant.

2 Background

- 2.1 The application site extends to 22.2 hectares (54.85 acres) of grassland which is used for mixed agricultural and hay conservation.
- 2.2 In addition, the applicant farms an additional 51.05 hectares (126.14 acres) of land at Ashfold Farm, Tunshill Lane, Milnrow. The applicant and his father, Gilbert Ashworth, currently house their cattle over winter in buildings at Ashfold Farm and calve indoors. However, access into the buildings with machinery is limited as they have low eave heights. In addition, the site at Ashfold Farm is limited by the topography and therefore any replacement or additional agricultural sheds would be restricted and costly.
- 2.3 The applicant gained approval under a Prior Notification application (ref: 23/00705/AGR) in July 2023 for the erection of an agricultural storage building at the application site.
- 2.4 As detailed in the Supporting Statement submitted with the Prior Notification application, the applicant farms under the holding number CPH 44/623/0622, and the Single Business Identifier (SBI) is 1083607660. For reference an SBI number is a unique number given to a farmer or business that is involved in an agricultural activity.

- 2.5 At the time of the 2023 application the applicants had the following livestock:
- 50 suckler cows plus calves;
 - 30 breeding ewes plus lambs; and
 - 20 breeding goats plus progeny.
- 2.6 The applicant, alongside his father, also operates a successful meat processing and packing business at Ashfold Farm, trading as Ashfold Quality Meats Ltd, and have identified an area of the market to process more of their own homebred beef cattle for sale to local butchers.
- 2.7 As part of this increase in livestock, Gilbert Ashworth will be taking steps towards retiring and transferring control of the livestock business to the applicant.
- 2.8 The applicant currently breeds their own suckler cows and rears progeny to finishing, however as part of the developing livestock enterprise, the applicant will also purchase store cattle for finishing which will be housed year round in the proposed building.
- 2.9 The store cattle will be intensively finished on cereals within the building and the applicant is proposing to finish 15 cattle per month, with 180 cattle housed within the proposed livestock shed at any one time.

3 Planning History

- 3.1 The application site has been subject to the following planning applications:
- 23/00705/AGR – Prior approval for the erection of an agricultural barn. Prior Approval Not Required 27 July 2023;

4 Relevant Policies

National Planning Policy

- 4.1 National planning policy is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was updated in December 2024. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should be adopted and these expressly include:
- a presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
 - provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses;

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and,
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission.

4.2 Paragraph 39 requires that decision makers:

- should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way;
- work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area; and
- seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

4.3 Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Building a strong, competitive economy' and at paragraph 85 it notes:

"planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt..."

4.4 At paragraph 88 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' it notes:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;..."*

4.5 Section 13 is concerned with 'Protecting Green Belt land' and at paragraph 152 notes:

"Inappropriate development is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances".

4.6 And at paragraph 154:

"A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;; ..."*

Local Planning Policy

- 4.7 Local planning policy can be found in the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006. Policy D/4 of the Rochdale UDP relates to Control of Development in the Green Belt - General and states:

“Within the Green Belt approval will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the erection of new buildings unless it is for the following purposes:

a) agriculture and forestry;...”

- 4.8 Policy G/RE/1 relates to Countryside and the Rural Economy and states:

“The council will safeguard and enhance the economic vitality and environmental quality of the countryside. Activities and development which help to regenerate or diversify the rural economy, support the well being of rural communities, or increase the recreational and tourism potential of rural areas will be permitted, in particular:

A) agricultural development and appropriate farm diversification enterprises;

B) the establishment or expansion of rural businesses and activities;

C) outdoor recreational pursuits and proposals which facilitate improved access to and within the countryside; and

D) facilities for tourists or visitors.

Proposals will be expected to respect and where possible enhance the natural, cultural and visual qualities of the landscape and the character of the countryside.”

5 Appraisal

- 5.1 The building proposed as part of this application will measure 36m x 24m (total area 864m²) and have an overhanging roof providing a covered feed area of each side of 2m. The shed has an eaves height of 4.55m and ridge height of 7.6m.
- 5.2 The DEFRA Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Cattle (2003) provides the following guidance for the housing of cattle based on the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000:

“The more you limit the space that cattle have in the housing system you provide, the less choice the animal has to avoid unfavourable conditions. Housed cattle need constant care and

attention from staff who are well trained in the nutritional and environmental needs of cattle....

... No matter how long you house the animals, their accommodation should give them shelter and enough room to move around and interact with each other. The accommodation should provide enough space for a subordinate animal to move away from a dominant one. It is important to provide as comfortable an area as possible, so that the animals can lie down for as long as they want and have enough space to stand up again."

5.3 The guidance continues with the following information regarding ventilation:

"All new buildings should be designed with the animals' comfort in mind, and with the aim of preventing respiratory diseases. The buildings should provide enough ventilation throughout the year for the type, size and number of stock to be housed in them. Where appropriate, roofs should be insulated to reduce solar penetration."

5.4 The Agricultural Budgeting & Costing Book (November 2024) provides guidelines on the space allowances for cattle and using these minimum space allowances and taking account of the applicant's herd size of 180 store cattle there will be the following space requirement for housing the cattle:

Table 1: Calculation of required floorspace

Age	Space per animal (m ²)	Number	Floorspace requirement (m ²)
6 months - 17 months old finishing (housed full time)	4.8	180	864

5.5 For comparison, the AHDB Better Cattle Housing Design Guide¹ recommends 2-4m² for calves weighing up to 150kg and 5m² for calves up to 200kg, and for cattle weighing 200-600kg a space requirement of between 3m² to 6.8m² per animal which includes feeding and loafing areas.

5.6 This is based on all youngstock being finished at 17 months of age, and does not consider that stock may remain on site longer for finishing or that the herd has to be closed with movement

¹ Available online at:

<https://projectblue.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Imported%20Publication%20Docs/BRP-plus-Better-cattle-housing-design.pdf>

on or off site restricted due to a suspected or confirmed bovine tuberculosis (bTB) infection or other notifiable diseases such as Bluetongue.

- 5.7 As shown in Table 1 above, the minimum floor area based on 180 store cattle aged 6 months to finishing at 17 months old would be 864m².
- 5.8 The building as designed allows safe handling and movement of cattle and machinery for cleaning out and bedding down and separation of age groups within the single building.
- 5.9 Policy G/RE/1 of the Rochdale UDP allows for activities and development which will help to regenerate or diversify the rural economy through agricultural development and the expansion of rural businesses. This proposal will enable the applicant to further develop the existing agricultural business, by establishing a store cattle rearing and finishing enterprise at the application site.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed livestock building is of a size and design that is commensurate with the needs of the agricultural activities at the application site and is considered necessary to provide the appropriate minimum space requirements for housing the applicant's cattle herd.
- 6.2 From the calculations above it is clear that the proposed agricultural building will be fully utilised for the purposes of agriculture on the applicant's holding.
- 6.3 The external design of the building is typical of modern agricultural buildings seen in the rural area.
- 6.4 The building is compliant with National and Local Planning Policy.