

Officer Report

Case Reference: NOT/2026/0543
Location: CASTLE BUNGALOW, SWAINDROD LANE,
LITTLEBOROUGH, OL15 0LE
Proposal: Prior notification for a proposed agricultural barn
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE

The application relates to Castle Farm, Swaindrod Lane, Littleborough. Castle Farm comprises an agricultural holding extending to approximately 12.1 hectares (30 acres). The applicant has provided a holding plan identifying the extent of the agricultural unit and has confirmed that the holding is registered under County Parish Holding Number 44/623/1069. The site lies within the Green Belt and comprises agricultural land and a traditional farmstead centred upon Castle Farmhouse and associated buildings.

Castle Farmhouse and Adjoining Barn is a Grade II listed building. The listed building is situated approximately 195 metres east of the proposed agricultural building. The application site is located within an agricultural field west of the existing farmstead and is accessed from Swaindrod Lane, a narrow un-adopted Bridleway. The site occupies a relatively level area of land within the wider holding and benefits from screening provided by the surrounding landform.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks prior approval for the erection of an agricultural building. The proposed building would measure approximately 30 metres in length by 18 metres in width, resulting in a floor area of approximately 540 square metres. The building would comprise a steel-framed agricultural structure with a pitched roof. It would have a height to eaves of 4.5 metres and a maximum height of 5.75 metres. The submitted plans indicate the building would be finished in dark grey standing seam/profiled metal wall and roof cladding with stone-faced lower wall sections.

The submitted Agricultural Need Statement and subsequent supporting information state that the building would be used for the storage of agricultural machinery, implements, trailers, feed, hay, straw, sheep handling equipment, fencing materials and associated agricultural equipment. The applicant has also confirmed that agricultural machinery is currently stored away from the holding due to the absence of suitable agricultural storage facilities within the unit.

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

PL/2026/0059: Section 73 application to vary condition 2 (Plans) of planning permission D55193 (Erection Of Replacement Bungalow) for alterations to design of the approved dwelling. Approved April 2026.

24/01259/CPE: Application for a certificate of lawfulness (Existing) relating to the lawful commencement of development under planning permission 12/D55193 relating to the erection of a replacement bungalow. Approved February 2025.

14/00051/DOC: Submission of details to comply with conditions 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 on planning permission 12/D55193. Request completed March 2014.

12/D55193: Erection Of Replacement Bungalow. Approved March 2012.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

National Legislation

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Part 6, Class A of Schedule 2 relates to units of more than 5 hectares.

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

N/A

REPRESENTATIONS

There is no statutory requirement for the publicity of prior approval applications relating to agricultural development undertaken pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 6 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Therefore, the application has not been publicised by the Local Planning Authority. No representations have been received.

ANALYSIS

Compliance under Part 6 Class A of the GPDO

Development is permitted under Class A for the carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of—

(a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or

(b) any excavation or engineering operations,

which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

In order to benefit from the prior approval process under Part 6 Class A, the proposed development must be carried out on agricultural land comprising an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area and must be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

The application is supported by a location plan, site plan, floor plans, elevations, Agricultural Need Statement and additional information provided in response to the Local Planning Authority's requests for further information. The applicant has provided a plan showing the extent of the agricultural holding and has confirmed that the holding extends to approximately 12.1 hectares (30 acres). The applicant has also provided details of County Parish Holding (CPH) Number 44/623/1069. The Local Planning Authority is therefore satisfied that the agricultural unit exceeds the minimum 5-hectare threshold required by Part 6 Class A.

"Agriculture" is defined by Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and includes the use of land as grazing land together with the breeding and keeping of livestock. The GPDO further defines agricultural land as land which, before development permitted by Part 6 is carried out, is land in use for agriculture and which is so used for the purposes of a trade or business.

The applicant has confirmed that the holding is currently subject to an agricultural grazing arrangement with Higher Swainrod Farm and that the land remains in active agricultural use. Additional information has been provided regarding the management of the holding, agricultural improvement works undertaken, agricultural machinery owned by the applicant and forage production undertaken on the land. The applicant has also submitted photographic evidence showing agricultural field operations, agricultural machinery and livestock associated with the wider holding. Furthermore, a site visit was undertaken by the Case Officer.

The Local Planning Authority acknowledges that recent appeal decisions have emphasised the requirement for sufficient evidence demonstrating that agricultural land is being used for the purposes of a trade or business before development may benefit from the provisions of Part 6 Class A. In the present case, the applicant has provided details of the agricultural holding, CPH registration, grazing arrangements, agricultural machinery and equipment, land management activities and forage production associated with the holding. Having regard to the totality of the information submitted, together with observations made during the site visit, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the land comprises agricultural land forming part of an agricultural unit used for the purposes of agriculture and that the proposal relates to that agricultural use.

In respect of agricultural need, the applicant has provided details and photographs of agricultural machinery and equipment owned and operated in connection with the holding. The submitted information identifies, amongst other equipment, an agricultural tractor, telehandler, excavator, site dumper, agricultural trailers, ATV, sheep handling equipment, fencing materials and associated agricultural

implements. The applicant has confirmed that this equipment is currently stored away from the holding due to the absence of suitable storage facilities within the agricultural unit.

The applicant has additionally provided photographs of the existing buildings within the holding and explained why these buildings are unsuitable for modern agricultural storage purposes. The site visit and submitted photographs demonstrate that the existing historic farm buildings are constrained by their age, form, layout and access arrangements and are not capable of accommodating modern agricultural machinery and equipment of the scale identified within the supporting information.

The submitted information further identifies that the proposed building would be used for the storage of agricultural machinery, implements, feed, hay, straw, fencing materials, livestock handling equipment and associated agricultural consumables and maintenance equipment. These activities are agricultural in nature and directly related to the operation and management of the holding.

Whilst the proposed building is substantial in scale, the applicant has provided detailed information regarding the agricultural machinery, forage, feed and equipment intended to be stored within the building, together with evidence demonstrating the absence of suitable existing storage facilities within the holding. Having regard to the information submitted and observations made during the site visit, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposed building would provide agricultural storage directly associated with the operation of the agricultural unit and is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered capable of benefiting from the provisions of Schedule 2 Part 6 Class A of the GPDO.

A.1 Development is not permitted by Class A if—

(a) the development would be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area;

The development would not be carried on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1ha in area.

(b) it would consist of the erection or extension of any agricultural building on an established agricultural unit (as defined in paragraph X of Part 3 of this Schedule) where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use) of this Schedule has been carried out within a period of 10 years ending with the date on which development under Class A(a) begins;

There is no planning evidence available that suggests an application for the change of use has been made under the above legislation within a period of 10 years ending with the date on which development under Class A(a) begins.

(c) it would consist of, or include the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling;

The application does not propose the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling.

(d) it would involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes;

The proposed building is designed for agricultural purposes.

(e) the ground area which would be covered by—

(i) any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations would exceed 1,000 square metres; or

(ii) any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A would exceed 1,500 square metres,

calculated as described in paragraph D.1(2)(a) of this Part;

The proposed building would have a floor area of approximately 540 square metres. The applicant has confirmed that no agricultural buildings, structures or works have been erected on the agricultural unit under Part 6 rights within the previous two years. The proposal therefore falls below the relevant floorspace limitations.

(f) the height of any part of any building, structure or works within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 3 metres;

The site is not within 3 kilometres of an aerodrome.

(g) the height of any part of any building, structure or works not within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 12 metres;

The building would not be within 3 kilometres of an aerodrome. Nonetheless, the height of the building would not exceed 12 metres.

(h) any part of the development would be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road;

The development would not be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road.

(i) it would consist of, or include, the erection or construction of, or the carrying out of any works to, a building, structure or an excavation used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge where the building, structure or excavation is, or would be, within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building;

The submitted information identifies the primary purpose of the building as the storage of agricultural machinery, implements, feed, hay, straw, livestock handling equipment and associated agricultural materials. The applicant has additionally advised that the building could provide flexibility for the temporary accommodation of livestock during periods of severe weather or for short-term agricultural management purposes. However, the building is not proposed as a dedicated livestock building

and the plans do not indicate the provision of fixed livestock pens, slurry storage, feeding systems or other infrastructure typically associated with permanent livestock accommodation. Any temporary accommodation of livestock would be ancillary to the primary agricultural storage function of the building.

(j) it would involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2(4) land which are connected with fish farming;

The development would not be on or over article 2(4) land and is not connected with fish farming.

(k) any building for storing fuel for or waste from a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system—

(i) would be used for storing waste not produced by that boiler or system or for storing fuel not produced on land within the unit; or

(ii) is or would be within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building; or

The development does not include provision for storing fuel for or waste from a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system.

(l) the erection or extension of a building would be carried out on land or a building that is, or is within the curtilage of, a scheduled monument.

The building is not within the curtilage of a scheduled monument.

In summary, the development would comply with the limitations set out in paragraph A.1.

Sitting and Design

Under Part 6 Class A, the developer must apply to the Local Planning Authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority will be required for the siting, design and external appearance of the building.

In assessing the siting, design and external appearance, Policies DM1 and P3 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy require development proposals to demonstrate high quality design. Policies JP-P1 (Sustainable Places), JP-P2 (Heritage) and JP-P4 (Landscape Character) of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan seek to ensure development responds positively to its surroundings, conserves heritage assets and their settings, and protects landscape character. In addition, paragraphs 135 and 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) state that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that planning decisions should ensure developments function well, are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and landscape setting.

Policy P2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, including taking consideration of their wider settings. The NPPF states that when considering the

impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Castle Farmhouse and Adjoining Barn is a Grade II listed building situated approximately 195 metres east of the application site. The listed building is identified by Historic England as a late seventeenth century/early eighteenth century laithouse of historic and architectural interest.

Whilst the proposed building would be located within the wider rural setting of the listed building, there would be a significant degree of separation between the heritage asset and the proposed development. The proposed building would be separated from the listed building by intervening agricultural land, field boundaries, the access track and changes in topography. The proposal comprises an agricultural building associated with the continued agricultural use of the wider holding and would therefore be consistent with the historic agricultural character of the site. Having regard to the separation distance, intervening landform and agricultural context, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building and would have a neutral impact upon its significance. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policy P2 of the Core Strategy, Policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone and the heritage provisions of the NPPF.

The proposed building would be situated within the western part of the agricultural holding on a relatively level area of land. Whilst the building would not be physically grouped with the existing farmstead, the applicant has explained that the location has been selected to provide efficient access to the wider holding and to take advantage of the surrounding landform. The site visit confirmed that the proposed building would occupy a position within a fold in the landscape and would sit below the surrounding ridgelines.

The wider landscape is characterised by agricultural land, drystone walls, farm tracks, scattered agricultural buildings and utility infrastructure. The proposed building would be viewed within the context of this wider agricultural landscape. The nearest public views would primarily be from Swaindrod Lane and more distant viewpoints within the surrounding countryside. Whilst the building would be visible from certain locations, the site benefits from screening provided by the surrounding topography and would not occupy a prominent skyline position.

The elevations indicate a simple agricultural structure with dark grey wall and roof cladding and stone-faced lower wall sections. The design is functional and reflective of a modern agricultural building. The proposed materials are considered appropriate to the rural setting, and the darker colour palette would assist in reducing the visual prominence of the development within the landscape. The scale of the proposed building is substantial; however, it would clearly read as an agricultural structure and would not appear domestic, industrial or commercial in character. The submitted information demonstrates that the building would be used to accommodate agricultural machinery, implements, forage, feed and associated agricultural equipment.

Having regard to the siting, scale, design and external appearance of the proposal, it is considered that the development would be acceptable within its rural setting and

would preserve the setting of the nearby Grade II listed building. In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1, JP-P2 and JP-P4 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Prior approval is therefore required and granted in respect of siting, design and external appearance.

RECOMMENDATION

Prior Approval Required and Granted.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (2)

- 1 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents hereby approved:

- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL01 rev A
- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL02 rev A
- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL03 rev A
- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL04 rev A
- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL05 rev B

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 2 The materials used in the construction of the exterior of the development hereby permitted shall match those detailed on the following drawing:

- Proposed Barn. Dwg no. PL03 rev A

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.