



November 2022

Application for the Erection of Mixed Use Livestock Housing and Storage Building

Supporting Agricultural Statement

At
Agricultural Holding attached to Flint Cottage
Andersons Lane
Great Hormead
Buntingford
Hertfordshire
SG9 0PA

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) is instructed by Mr John Brereton (the applicant) to provide a supporting statement for the erection of a mixed use livestock housing and storage building to support an existing agricultural use at Flint Cottage, Andersons Lane, Great Horstead, Buntingford.
- 1.2 In responding to these instructions RAC has:
- Visited the site in September 2022; and
 - Discussed with the applicant the need for the mixed use 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.
- 1.3 RAC would request that the Council disregard the previous Agent's Planning Statement (dated January 2021) submitted as part of 3/21/0255/FUL when determining this application as it contains incorrect facts and misunderstandings.

2 Background

- 2.1 The application site extends to 3.3 hectares (8.15 acres) of grassland divided into four fields which are used for grazing by the applicant's breeding ewe flock and a hay cut is taken.
- 2.2 The application site comprises Flint Cottage, the applicant's dwellinghouse, an agricultural barn with equestrian stabling and a sheep housing area of about 5 m x 7m (35m²), and a sand school.
- 2.3 The applicant and his late wife previously kept three horses of her own on the site and they have all gone and there now remain two non paying horses of a friend Mr Brereton previously worked with using the stables which can go without grazing once the sheep enterprise is up and running. However, Mr. Brereton now intends to have a flock of 40 breeding sheep instead of a few stores and there are two horses remaining on the site.
- 2.4 The applicant was previously Farm Manager of 1,000 acres in Brent Pelham on a dairy farm and he continues to own four acres of agricultural land in Brent Pelham which falls under County Parish Holding number CPH 18/002/0009. Since he worked in the neighbouring village on a farm for V.H.Rowe & Son where we kept a flock of over 200 breeding ewes lambing indoors in the

winter. He previously owned SPS Entitlements for CPH 18/002/0009 and CPH 18/024/0032 now archived and changed to CPH 18/024/0148 for the land however as the transition to Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) no longer allowed smallholding claimants, he transferred the entitlements to his sister who owns farmland in Aylsham.

- 2.5 The existing agricultural building on site is currently used for hay bale storage, workshop and stabling in the lean-to however it is the applicant's intention that hay bales will be stored within the proposed new building as the existing shed does not provide adequate ventilation for storage.

RAC Photograph 1 – Existing shed and lean to with some machinery stored outside



RAC Photograph 2 – Internal of shed



- 2.6 The application site is registered with DEFRA and the RPA with a CPH 18/024/0148 and the Single Business Identifier (SBI) 108841994. For reference an SBI number is a unique number given to a farmer or business that is involved in an agricultural activity.
- 2.7 The Council have commented previously in their Report for application 3/21/0255/FUL on the two different CPH numbers. RAC have discussed this matter in further detail with Mr Brereton and it was detailed that DEFRA had previously archived the applicant's CPH 18/024/0032 but this had not been communicated to him by DEFRA. However, DEFRA have confirmed the land at Flint Cottage has currently got the CPH 18/024/0148.
- 2.8 The applicant established having a few store sheep on the holding before 2005 to keep the grassland tidy for his wife's horses. This grew and he kept them longer into the autumn so housing them in the lean to some autumns for a while till 2016 when his wife's Alzheimer's deteriorated. She died 3rd. February 2019.
- 2.9 He now has a breeding flock of Cheviots ewes (24) due to lamb from March to mid April 2023 and increase to 40 ewes lambing indoors in the proposed building during the autumn/winter period in the proposed building to enable the lambs to be finished in time for the Easter English lamb market where they can achieve premium prices per kg.

RAC Photograph 3 – Ewes grazing in front field in September 2022



- 2.10 Due to the lands heavy clay soil type and worsening weather conditions over this period the applicant intends to house the ewes from October/November to March each year to enable the lambs to fatten indoors. Housing pregnant ewes due to lamb in the autumn/winter period is an accepted livestock practice with which he is experienced in as that is what he did while working for several years at Clavering for V.H.Rowe & Son.
- 2.11 The applicant will buy in hay and straw bales which will be stored in the proposed building.
- 2.12 At the site visit, I discussed the unsuitability of the existing storage building for the housing of livestock and storage of bales as it has limited ventilation which would lead to health issues with the livestock and could lead to damp and mould growth in the bales. The existing building is fully enclosed with solid side and end walls which is ideal for protection from the weather and security with workshop equipment, tractor and some implements such as a sprayer.
- 2.13 In addition, the lean to (approved under 3/05/0045/FP) to provide an area for sheep pens was suitable at that time for the number of sheep on the holding for short term housing, however this provides only 35m² which will not accommodate the whole sheep flock and progeny to be kept at Flint Cottage for winter lambing. In addition, it has proved difficult to muck out with modern equipment and no bedding or forage close to hand and the feed trough on the front elevation exposed at times due to the prevailing winds.

3 Planning History

3.1 The application site has been subject to the following planning applications:

- 3/05/0045/FP - Stables and sheep pen. Approved 8 March 2005
- 3/19/2140/FUL - Agricultural shed to house livestock and keep machinery and fodder under cover. Refused 4 February 2020
- 3/21/0255/FUL - Erection of agricultural building and any associated infrastructure. Refused 31 March 2021

4 Relevant Policies

4.1 National planning policy guidance for development in the countryside is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in July 2021.

4.2 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.

4.3 Paragraph 38 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;
- seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

4.4 Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Building a strong, competitive economy' and at paragraph 81 it notes:

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

4.5 At paragraph 84 '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;..."*

4.6 Section 13 is concerned with 'Protecting Green Belt Land' and at paragraph 149 the exceptions to inappropriate development are listed as:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) limited infilling in villages;*
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

4.7 Policy GBR1 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 relates to Green Belt and states:

- 1. "Planning applications within the Green Belt, as defined on the Policies Map, will be considered in line with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework."*

4.8 Policy ED2 relates to the Rural Economy and states:

"1. In order to support sustainable economic growth in rural areas and to prevent the loss of vital sources of rural employment, proposals that create new employment generating uses or support

the sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses in the rural area will be supported in principle where they are appropriately and sustainably located and do not conflict with other policies within this Plan...

5 Appraisal

- 5.1 The building proposed as part of this application will measure 20m x 10m (total area 200m²). The shed has an eaves height of 3.7m and ridge height of 4.9m. The building comprises four bays (each 5m wide) and is open fronted with a gale break with box profile cladding on the sides and rear under a box profile roof.
- 5.2 The applicant has altered the proposed size and design following the previous refusal to be lower eaves and ridge height and a reduced floor space to a more conventional rectangular shape.
- 5.3 As detailed above, the applicant intends to house the Cheviot ewes in the proposed building to allow autumn/winter lambing with the lambs being finished in time for the Easter markets.
- 5.4 The DEFRA Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Sheep (2003) provides the following guidance for the housing of sheep based on the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000:

“Winter housing of sheep can improve welfare, but problems of both disease and welfare can arise when large numbers are kept together. Advice should be sought on the design, construction or modification of buildings. Adequate ventilation without draughts is of particular importance, as also is the provision of sufficient trough space and lying area...

...Dry, clean, comfortable conditions under foot should be provided to minimise footrot and hygiene problems. Regular provision of fresh bedding is particularly important at lambing time.”

- 5.5 The guidance continues with the following information regarding ventilation:

“Effective ventilation of buildings (to avoid high humidity, condensation and draughts) is essential, as sheep are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Properly designed ventilation will permit the free circulation of air above sheep height and avoid draughts at sheep level.”

- 5.6 The document also provides space allowance requirements for housed sheep which are in a building with adequate ventilation and well-bedded on straw. For lowland ewes (60-90 kg) they require 1.2 – 1.4m² per ewe during pregnancy, after lambing with lambs at foot up to six weeks they require 2-2.2m² per ewe and lamb, lambs up to 12 weeks old require 0.5 - 0.6 m² each and lambs and sheep 12 weeks to 12 months old require 0.75 - 0.9 m² each.

- 5.7 For the applicant’s intend increased flock size of 40 ewes there will be the following space requirement:

Age	Space per animal (m ²)	Number	Floorspace requirement (m ²)
Lowland ewes (60-90 kg) during pregnancy	1.4	40	56
After lambing with lambs at foot up to six weeks	2.2	40	88
Lambs up to 12 weeks old	0.6	40	24

- 5.8 As shown above in the calculation, the floor area for sheep housing would be for ewes after lambing which require 88m² floorspace of the proposed building. However, this could increase to 124m² if a lambing rate of 150% is achieved and there is a late spring.
- 5.9 The applicant will buy in hay and straw bales for use during the winter housing and lambing period which will be stored within the proposed building.
- 5.10 As detailed above, the existing building at Flint Cottage does not provide adequate ventilation for the housing of livestock or storage of hay bales and so it is proposed the applicant will store the agricultural machinery (currently stored outside) and equipment within the existing building together with bags of concentrate sheep feed and used as a farm workshop. The lean-to stables will provide isolation facilities for housing any sheep requiring veterinary or medical attention or new breeding stock before being introduced into the main flock.

RAC Photograph 4 – machinery currently stored outside



- 5.11 The applicant owns a tractor, hay turner, topper, sprayer and harrow which he will continue to use for grassland management but may cut less hay as the increase in sheep numbers will require additional sheep grazing over the land holding.
- 5.12 It is advisable to store agricultural machinery and equipment under cover to protect it from the elements of the weather. It protects them from frost and corrosion and in particular damage to any moving parts and therefore minimises maintenance requirements and periods of downtime.
- 5.13 Less than half the proposed building will be used to store hay and straw bales up to 4m high (eaves height lower at rear of building). The applicant will use a line of straw bales within the building (1.2m wide) across the front of the sheep housing area to provide additional shelter from any draughts and driving rain.
- 5.14 Using space requirements as set out in the Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book (94th Edition May 2022) each tonne of small conventional baled hay requires 6-7m³ of space and each tonne of conventional wheat straw bales requires 11-16m³ per tonne. If the applicant is able to purchase larger square straw bales the space requirement will decrease to 6.5-7.5m³ per tonne.
- 5.15 The applicant will utilise between one to two bays of the proposed building for bale storage which will each provide 70m² of storage space, or 280m³ of volume if stored to 4m high. Each bay could accommodate up to 40 tonnes of hay or 9.3-17.5 tonnes of straw (depending on size

of bale) which will be sufficient storage provision for most of the annual requirement for the sheep on site.

- 5.16 It is well accepted that the storage of hay and straw undercover protects the bales from the elements and prevents mould growth from wet and damp conditions when stored out in the open. Storage under cover maintains the hays nutrient value.
- 5.17 As can be noted from the calculations above, the proposed agricultural building will meet the housing requirements for the over wintering of 40 ewes and their 60 lambs and storage requirements of hay and straw bales to be used in the applicant's sheep enterprise.
- 5.18 The proposed agricultural building is well designed to provide suitable ventilation without draughts, with open fronted bays which also assist in the safe movement of the sheep and the loading and unloading of bales and convenient removal of farm yard manure which will be cleared at the end of each housing period.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed livestock and storage building is of a size and design that is commensurate with the agricultural activities on the application site and is considered necessary to provide the appropriate minimum space requirements for housing the applicant's sheep flock and storage of hay and straw required for feed and bedding.
- 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 Council have previously accepted 35m² of sheep housing at the application site in the 2005 permission. The area of the approved sheep housing no longer provides the minimum floor space required as per the DEFRA Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Farmed Sheep for the increased number of sheep and intention to develop a breeding flock at Flint Cottage.
- 6.4 The external design of the building is typical of modern agricultural buildings seen in the rural area.
- 6.5 The building is compliant with National and Local Planning Policy.