

Full planning application for the construction of a slurry lagoon

Low Ground Farm
Elslack
Skipton
BD23 3AR

Planning Statement

Prepared by:
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1. Site Description and Development Proposal

- 1.1 Low Ground Farm comprises 405 acres (163.89 hectares) of land along with a complex of modern agricultural buildings. The applicants have two sons, both of whom work on the farm. 155 acres of their land is rented through an Agricultural Holdings Tenancy for three generations and the third generation is still to come into force at Elslack.
- 1.2 The development proposal is for the construction of a slurry lagoon. The development would take place to the north west of the existing modern farm buildings, close to the existing slurry storage facilities to make the most efficient use of the infrastructure. The existing storage will be utilised as a reception tank for the proposed store.



Figure 1: Proposed Site of slurry lagoon at Low Ground Farm (approximate please see submitted plans)

- 1.3 Low Ground Farm is a productive grassland unit, the holding is equipped with modern farm buildings and supports 180 dairy cattle; 156 in milk with 78 in calf. The milk is sold on contract to Dales Dairies.

- 1.4 The location of the lagoon has been chosen to take advantage of the topography of the land and it will have a minimal visual impact on the surrounding area, with only a grass banking and shrubs being visible.
- 1.5 The lagoon will be constructed in the ground, dug out with a tracked digger, lined with a sand blinding layer and finished with an impermeable membrane liner. The lagoon will be constructed using the existing earth banking, it would have a bunded embankment surrounding it, the newly constructed part will measure 2.6m in height, this will be finished with soil and allow grass to grow to bind the embankment. A perimeter fence of sheep netting, and two strands of barbed wire minimum will be erected around the lagoon with the required signs erected.
- 1.6 The store will be erected according to 'The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations 2010 and according to the British Standard BS5502 1989 Buildings and Structures for agricultural and will be signed off by the Environment Agency prior to use.

2. Need for the Development

- 2.1 Following the introduction of The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018 the farm needs to provide additional slurry storage. The current legislation requires a minimum of 4 months storage with a recommendation (to be brought in as legislation) of 6 months storage. The applicants currently have a shortfall in storage requirements.
- 2.2 The proposal is to store the slurry over the winter and then apply it in spring when the grass is growing and can make full utilisation of the available nutrients. The slurry will be applied using an umbilical system and dribble bar. This will be good for soil health as it reduces compaction and will reduce ammonia emissions by adopting low trajectory spreading technology
- 2.3 The proposed slurry storage facility will alleviate the need to spread slurry when the conditions are less than ideal, safeguarding the best up-take of nitrates and reducing the risk of ground water pollution.
- 2.4 A slurry separator has recently been installed at Low Ground Farm, reducing the volume of liquid slurry required to be stored on the farm and consequently the lagoon that would be constructed is required to be as big as it would have been. The applicants have taken considered all options available to them to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.
- 2.5 The development area will measure 3192sqm including the bunding, with the lagoon having a top 'face' of 50m x 32.50m. Where not constructed in the existing banking, the bunding will have a height above ground level of 2.6m which will be grassed and screened where necessary to reduce the visual impact. The scale of the excavation is commensurate with the storage requirements for the farm.

- 2.6 The lagoon will be utilised solely for the storage of cattle slurry produced at Low Ground Farm and will be spread directly onto the surrounding land owned and managed by the applicant.
- 2.7 The Catchment Sensitive Farming officer for the area will be consulted concerning the floating membrane cover to be installed in due course on top of the store.

3. Access

- 3.1 Access to the lagoon will be gained from the existing access track to the farm.

4. Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.1 The application site lies outside any international, national or local designated sites of importance for biodiversity.
- 4.2 Internationally Designated Sites: A Habitats Regulations Assessment is not required because the proposal does not affect either a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area. The application site is not within a Ramsar Site.
- 4.3 Nationally Designated Sites: Land farmed and owned by the applicants at Low Ground Farm is not within a designated site.
- 4.4 The applicants already maintain the dry stone field boundary walls and the hedgerows that contribute to the high quality visual appearance of the landscape. The applicants are keen to achieve biodiversity net gain and to farm in a wildlife-friendly manner.
- 4.5 Grass and small shrubs will be allowed to develop on the bunding, and this will aid with the screening of the development.
- 4.6 It is not envisaged that extensive landscaping is required for this development as the lagoon will be bunded and fenced and planting trees too close to the bunding may compromise the walls and bases of the lagoon. The lagoon does not result in detriment to the landscape of the area and it is considered that additional planting is not required. However, the applicants propose to install 2 no. wild bird nesting boxes on the traditional stone barn (labelled number 2 on the existing farm buildings schedule submitted).
- 4.7 The proposal will not have an adverse effect on any international, national or locally designated site. Adopted Local Plan Policy ENV4: Biodiversity requires that wherever possible, development will make a positive contribution towards achieving

a net gain in biodiversity and as stated above, 2 no. wild bird nesting boxes are to be installed.

5. Assessment of Impact

- 5.1 In principle the construction of a slurry lagoon to serve a farm business is acceptable within an open countryside location. The development is essential to allow the proper functioning of this farm business.
- 5.2 There are no close by neighbours that would be unacceptably impacted upon by the proposed development. The development would not give rise to any unacceptable highway safety concerns.
- 5.3 In summary it is not considered that there are any unacceptable adverse impacts arising from the development.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In conclusion, the proposed slurry lagoon is appropriately designed, located, and justifiably required in connection with the Applicants' agricultural business on the land under their control. It is therefore respectfully requested that the authority support this submission.