

PROPOSED FARM YARD MANURE STORAGE BUILDING

**HEWELSFIELD COURT, HEWELSFIELD, LYDNEY,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE, GL15 6UL**



**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
(to include Statement of Heritage Significance)
March 2024**

Introduction

The Applicant is the second generation of farmers at Hewelsfield Court. In recent years, the farming activities and practices have significantly changed, with the Applicant purchasing, renting and contract farming additional arable land. The core enterprise at the holding continues to be the rearing of beef cattle.

In order to ensure continued compliance with current water and soil quality regulations, the holding requires a purpose built storage building for the storage of farm yard manure. In addition, the farmyard has Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) status.

Site Description

The building is to be located to the north east of existing agricultural buildings in the farmyard. The site is currently laid partly with compacted hardcore which has been used for outside bale storage in the past and partly arable production.

Agricultural Activities

The farm extends to 1200 acres, of which 400 acres is owned, 600 acres are rented and 200 acres are contract farmed. All of the land is managed under an arable rotation growing, wheat, barley, rape, maize and temporary grass. All of the produce from the owned and rented land is stored at Hewelsfield Court as there are insufficient storage facilities at the other farms.

At any one time, there can be a maximum of 400 head of beef cattle housed on the farm. The farm produces the feed and bedding for the cattle, selling any surplus on the agricultural commodity market.

The Applicant is aware that the impact of agricultural production on the environment must be considered in the wake of climate change. In addition, regulations are encouraging farmers to store the farm yard manure in a more responsible way. The Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) status of the farmyard means that there is an obligation to be able to store the farm yard manure produced by the cattle within the AFU boundary for a minimum of 3 weeks. The Applicant would like to erect a building that has sufficient capacity to store the farm yard manure that is generated on the holding.

Farm yard manure heaps & Need for the farm yard manure store

Farm yard manure is an essential part of this mixed farming system. The farm yard manure is spread onto farmland to return nutrients to the soil and improve soil structure. This reduces the reliance upon manufactured fertilisers, which has been identified as a more sustainable way of farming, which is being encouraged by Government.

An assessment of the quantity of farm yard manure produced on the holding is at Appendix A. This demonstrates that the minimum storage requirement for 3 weeks is 118m². However, during the winter months when it is not possible to store the farm yard manure in field heaps due to the access and risk of run off, the storage requirement increases to 946m². The winter months have been classed as a 6 months period due to the inclement weather conditions that can be prolonged in this geographical location.

If the Applicant was seeking to store the farm yard manure for 12 months in order to compost the manure for the optimum period of time, the storage requirement would be 1,893m². Clearly a building of this size would not be feasible in this location so the Applicant will still utilise field heaps in the summer months when field access is more achievable and the risk of run off is reduced. The farm yard manure would still need to be stored for at least 3 weeks before being moved to outdoor heaps, so the building will never be empty.

At present, manure is transported to the fields across the holding and stored in a farm yard manure heap. The manure is stored for up to 12 months whilst the composting process breaks down the fibrous material (straw) in the farm yard manure and improves the organic matter content which is vital for soil health.

The issues that have been identified in this practice are:

- a) The potential for nutrient leaching – uncovered farm yard manure heaps in fields are exposed to rainwater. This causes the nutrients to leach into ground. Whilst leaching does not cause a major pollution incident as the nutrients are captured in the soils before reaching water courses, this nutrient loss creates an inefficiency in the farming system. In incidents of prolonged heavy rainfall and if the soil is already saturated, the effluent does not soak into the ground and instead runs off, thus creating a higher risk of water pollution. Farmers are under a legal obligation not to cause water pollution. Diffuse pollution of water from agriculture and rural land use is directly attributed to 28% of failures to meet Water Framework Directive standards (*Environment Agency Challenges & Choices Consultation & Progressing Towards WFD Objectives, March 2014*).

It would not be viable to cover a farm yard manure heap as this would require a plastic sheet which would not last a season, thus creating unnecessary plastic waste. A sheet would also create runoff and localised soil erosion;

- b) Soil Damage – farm yard manure has to be transported to the fields via tractor and trailer. Whilst every effort is made to transport farm yard manure in more favourable ground conditions, i.e. in dry weather, this is not possible in the winter. Tractors and trailers full of farm yard manure are very heavy and sink into soft ground. This causes tracking in the fields and damages the soil structure. There are no hard-based storage areas on the farm that manure can be located on;
- c) Highway Safety - transporting the farm yard manure to fields in the winter creates a hazard on the road in the form of mud deposits. If the manure was to be stored at the buildings where it is produced, the only transportation of the manure would be directly to the fields at farm yard manure spreading. Whilst there may still be some farm yard manure on the road, the additional hazard created by mud on the road will be minimised.

Proposed Building

The proposed building will look very similar to the existing farm buildings and is located in the position which is the most natural evolution of the farmyard. It will be constructed of typical agricultural barn materials, being grey concrete panel walls to 2.4m with a grey fibre cement roof. The south west and north east elevations will be open from the top of the panels to the eaves to allow air circulation. The south east and north west elevations will be Yorkshire boarded to the eaves to protect from inclement weather. An underground storage tank will be installed to capture any effluent. The building will be erected in accordance with the Storing Silage, Slurry and Fuel Oils (SSAFO) Regulations.

The building will measure 60m x 15m and has an eaves height of 6.09m and ridge height of 9m.

Planning Policy & Assessment

The development plan consists of the Core Strategy (2012) and the Allocations Plan which was adopted in June 2018.

The most relevant policies within the Core Strategy applicable to this application are considered to be policies CSP.1; CSP.2; CSP.4; and CSP.7, with relevant policies from the Allocations Plan considered to be AP1; AP4; and AP7.

Policy CSP.1: 'Design and environmental protection' sets out that **"development must take into account important characteristics of the environment and conserve, preserve or otherwise respect them in a manner that maintains or enhances their contribution to the environment, including their wider context."** To achieve this, many factors will need to be considered, including the impact on the AONB, protected sites, existing infrastructure, risk of flooding, land contamination, potential pollution, the provision of water supplies, sterilisation of mineral resources and minimising of waste.

The site is not located within an AONB, but is located adjacent to the Hewelsfield Conservation Area boundary. The design and finish of the proposed manure storage building has been carefully chosen to limit the impact on the surrounding landscape, whilst ensuring the functionality of the building for the required agricultural purposes. There are no protected or designated sites or species on the site. The existing farm access and utilities will serve the building. No waste will be generated by the use of the building and there are no mineral resources in this location.

There is not a policy which is specific to agricultural buildings. However, the explanatory text which accompanies Policy CSP1 states that new agricultural buildings are usually **"justified on the basis that they are appropriate in the landscape, are necessary and are of an appropriate (often functional) design. A structure's relationship with it's landscape, any landscaping and possible mitigation should be fully evaluated"**

In addition, paragraph 2.30 of the Core Strategy confirms that **"development expected to take place in the countryside, most notably that associated with agriculture, will continue"**.

Policy CSP.2: 'Climate Change' deals with water management; heating and cooling; and biodiversity. The proposals would not generate any significant water generation. The site's existing drainage systems would be utilised. The purpose of the building is to improve water quality by storing farm yard manure undercover and this directing rainwater off muck heaps. The composting of the farm yard manure will also ensure the optimum nutrient capacity can be achieved. Composted farm yard manure also improves soil structure. Healthy soil has been demonstrated to be a major asset in the deceleration of climate change.

There are no requirements to control the temperature within the building. The site is adjacent to an existing farmyard and is currently laid to hardcore and arable land, thus there is no effect on biodiversity in this location.

Policy CSP.4: 'Development at Settlements' requires that new development must contribute to reinforcing the existing settlement pattern in a manner which emphasises the importance of towns, and states that all proposals, whether at settlements or not, should be resource efficient and make the best use of available infrastructure.

The proposed building is not located within a defined settlement. The supporting text of the policy confirms that there will be cases where development is not located at settlements because of its nature (for example agricultural development is appropriate away from settlements). The proposed building is located within the site of the existing farm, on the edge of the hamlet of Hewelsfield, and as such complies with Policy CSP.4.

Policy CSP.7: 'Economy' seeks to encourage new and more diverse types of employment and the Core Strategy strongly supports economic development in rural areas as a means of achieving its objectives. The proposed development would support the existing farming enterprise.

Policy AP1: 'Sustainable Development' confirms that in assessing planning applications, the primary consideration will be whether or not the development proposed is sustainable, with the overall aim of improving the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The proposal contributes to the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainable development as set out below: -

- Economic role – as with any built development, the construction works would contribute to the economy by providing local jobs in association with the trades necessary to ensure the efficient and sustainable development of the scheme. The agricultural building would support the Applicant's ongoing local farming enterprise;
- Social role – the provision of a suitable agricultural storage building on site would help concentrate the Applicant's farming enterprise. Furthermore, the proposals would provide a high quality built environment through sympathetic and typical agricultural design;
- Environmental role – the proposed development would preserve and enhance the surrounding built and natural environment by storing potentially polluting material in a safe way to ensure that the impact on the natural environment is minimised.

Policy AP4: 'Design of Development' expects new development to be of a high quality design, making a positive contribution to the design quality of the area in which it is proposed. The finish of the proposed building has been carefully chosen in order to reflect the rural nature of the site in addition to being a functional material for this type of building.

Policy AP7: 'Biodiversity' highlights the importance and context of biodiversity in the District. The site has not been subject to any biodiversity assessments, but is part of the wider farmyard and has been laid with compacted hardcore. It is not considered that there will be a detrimental impact on the local biodiversity.

Paragraph 2.30 confirms that development expected to take place in the countryside, i.e. agricultural buildings, will continue. The proposals represent a well-designed agricultural building in order to develop and support the existing farming enterprise. The building is located adjacent to existing buildings and will form part of the wider farmyard. It has been sited and designed to serve the agricultural requirements of the holding.

As highlighted above, the proposals would accord with both the adopted Core Strategy as well as the Allocation Plan. Paragraph 11 c) of the NPPF confirms that in such cases, development should be approved without delay, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Principle of Development

This building is proposed to enable the safe and secure storage of farm yard manure that is produced by the beef cattle on the holding. The building will ensure that the manure is stored in a way that minimises diffuse water pollution whilst allowing the natural composting process to continue to take place. Other benefits to the storage of manure in a building includes the reduction in soil damage and an increase in Highway safety.

Agricultural buildings are generally considered as an acceptable form of development in the countryside and this building has been located so that it is considered as part of the wider farm yard, thus ensuring that it is not inappropriate development.

Development of this kind is currently being actively supported by the Government in an attempt to meet net zero targets.

Landscape Impact

The building will be constructed of materials which are typically used on farms across the country. The colour of the concrete panel walls and grey fibre cement roof have been specifically chosen to ensure minimal impact on the local environment and minimal visual disturbance. The location of the building has been chosen to ensure that there is minimal visual impact on the landscape.

Design

The walls, roof and yard are to be constructed of typical materials used in agricultural buildings for practicality and functionality. The colour of these materials has been carefully considered to ensure

that the design of the building is in-keeping with the existing buildings on the holding and to minimise the impact on the wider locality.

Neighbour Amenity

It is not considered that there will be a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties. The building is located behind existing agricultural buildings and designed of similar materials. There will not be any external lighting installed and the building will not generate any noise pollution once constructed.

Highway Safety

The vehicular and pedestrian access to the building will be via the existing farm drives. The yard around the building will remain to ensure adequate access and turning around the building so no vehicles need to reverse onto the highway.

Statement of Heritage Significance

The Forest Of Dean District Council Hewelsfield Character Appraisal (January 2007) describes the features of the Conservation Area and sets out the planning policy and proposals for the Hewelsfield Conservation Area.

The site of the proposed building lies to the North East and outside the Hewelsfield Conservation Area boundary which was designated on 31st January 1990. There are a range of agricultural buildings within the boundary which are described as “negative buildings” immediately adjacent to the site of the proposed building. The agricultural buildings are described as:

“large and unattractive prefabricated buildings. These buildings however, are necessary for modern farming practices and the continuation of a functional farm within the settlement, is an important characteristic of Hewelsfield.”

As outlined above, **Policy CSP.1: ‘Design and environmental protection’** sets out that **“development must take into account important characteristics of the environment and conserve, preserve or otherwise respect them in a manner that maintains or enhances their contribution to the environment, including their wider context.”**

The site is not located within an AONB, but is located adjacent to the Hewelsfield Conservation Area boundary. The design and finish of the proposed manure storage building has been carefully chosen to limit the impact on the surrounding landscape, whilst ensuring the functionality of the building for the required agricultural purposes.

Therefore, as stated in the Hewelsfield Character Appraisal, this building is necessary for modern farming practices and has been designed to meet the needs of the agricultural business in addition to the requirements to protect the local environment. Whilst it might not be designed using historic materials, the building is functional and practical. Such buildings are expected to be found in the Countryside. The Forest of Dean District Council has recognised in the Hewelsfield Character

Appraisal that the agricultural use of the land surrounding the Hamlet needs to be supported in order to ensure that the features of the Conservation Area are preserved.

Conclusion

This application is for the erection of a new farm yard manure store in order for the Applicant to meet the storage needs of the holding. The erection of such buildings is currently being supported by Government as a vehicle to meet net zero targets. The erection of this building will reduce the potential for diffuse water pollution, reduce soil damage and improve Highway safety.

The building has been sited, designed and will be constructed of materials which are typical of agricultural buildings. The proposals accord with the local and national planning policy and will enable the preservation of the agricultural nature of the adjacent Conservation Area.

Appendix A – Storage Requirement Assessment

Number of Cattle and Volume of FYM produced

(DEFRA NVZ Guidance – Standard Values Table 30)

50 cattle @ 0.6m ³ per month	30m ³ /month
325 cattle @ 0.78m ³ per month	254m ³ /month
Total Monthly FYM Output	284m³/month

3 weeks storage: $284\text{m}^3 \times 75\% = 213\text{m}^3$ **minimum storage required**

6 months storage: $284\text{m}^3 \times 6 = 1,704\text{m}^3$

12 months storage: $284\text{m}^3 \times 12 = 3,408\text{m}^3$ **maximum storage required**

Stored at an average of 1.8m high:

3 weeks	$213/1.8$	118m ²
6 months	$1704/1.8$	946m ²
12 months	$3408/1.8$	1,893m ²

Storage area applied for: 900m²

On this basis, the store would be at capacity and need to be emptied every 6 months. Once the farm yard manure has composted for 6 months it will be moved into field heaps for spreading later in the year as required by the crops. It is intended that as a result of storing the farm yard manure under cover during inclement weather, many of the issues identified in the field manure heaps can be mitigated as the farm yard manure can be stored and later moved during dry weather.