

Planning Statement

Hillside Farm
Willington
Malpas
SY14 7LY

Construction of a Replacement Milking Parlour Building and all associated works

RJ & ZS Hockenhull

February 2025

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Ref: 80190

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the construction of a replacement milking parlour building (and all associated works) at Hillside Farm, Willington, Malpas, SY14 7LY.

1.2 The proposed development would involve the demolition of a mid-20th Century farm building and the erection of a new steel-portal framed building in its place. The existing building has formerly been used as a milking parlour and as a sheep shed, however due to its age and design, it now lays redundant and not fit for purpose.

1.3 The proposed development would provide a modern steel-portal framed milking parlour building which would improve animal welfare on the holding at Hillside Farm and would provide improved functionality for the agricultural enterprise.

1.4 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the other documents submitted as part of the planning application, principally comprising:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 001 – Site Location Plan
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 002 – Existing Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 003 – Proposed Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 004 – NBB Plan
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 100 – Proposed Floor Plan
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 101 – Proposed Elevations
- Dwg No: 80190 / GH / 102 – Drainage Plan

1.5 This Planning Statement provides a balanced overview of the planning issues associated with the proposed development and is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendation.

1.6 The information set-out within this statement confirms that the proposal can be delivered on-site without giving rise to any unacceptable or adverse impacts in planning-terms.

2.0 The Application Site & Background

2.1 The application site comprises an existing mid-20th Century farm building lying at the centre of the developed agricultural complex at Hillside Farm.

2.2 Hillside Farm hosts a dairy farming enterprise operated by RJ & ZS Hockenhull; extending to approximately 150 acres of owner-occupied land.

2.3 The current stock on the holding comprises:

- 100 dairy cows

2.4 The cows are all housed during the winter months and graze outdoors during the remainder of the year.

2.5 The Applicants are currently investing heavily in the future of the farm complex in an attempt to improve animal welfare on the holding and to meet the requirements of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Welsh Government with regards the surrounding water environment and slurry storage. This can be demonstrated by the proposed development itself and the development subject of a separate planning application currently pending a decision from the Local Planning Authority for a new slurry store on the farm (planning application reference: P/2025/0086).

2.6 The site is located within a rural location approximately 0.9km to the north-east of Horseman's Green and approximately 2km south-east of Tallarn Green. The area is primarily comprised of existing farmsteads of varying scales interspersed with isolated dwellings and the immediate area is dominated by the A525 public highway between Wrexham and Whitchurch.

2.7 The site is located outside of any defined settlement/development boundary and therefore is located within the open countryside in planning terms.

2.8 The location and context of the application site is indicated below within Figure 1, with the site location being denoted by the red circle:

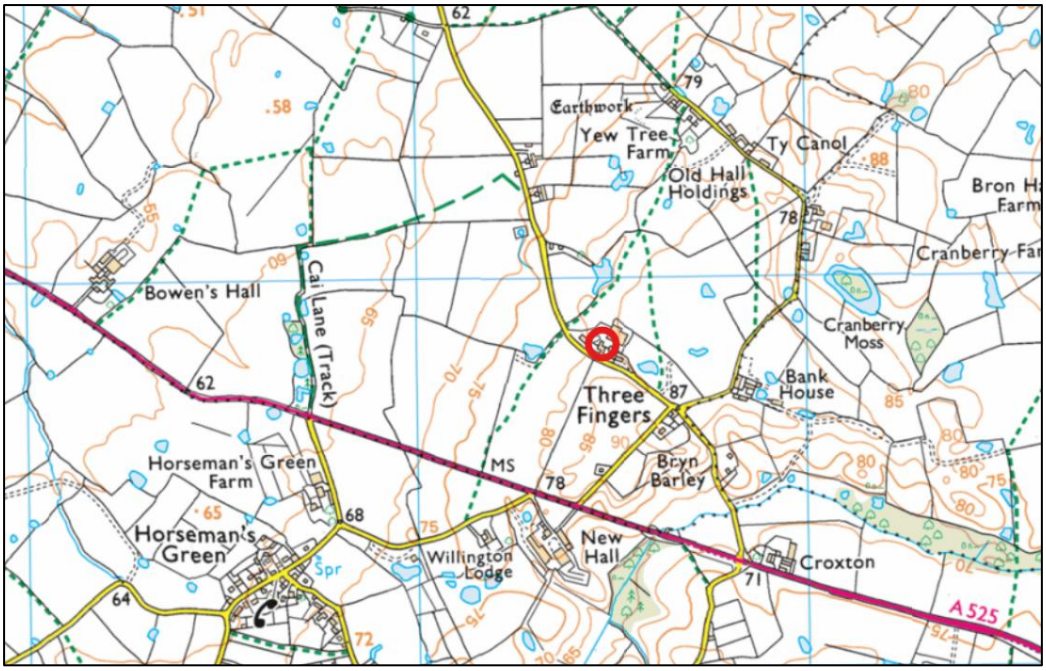


Figure 1: Application Site Location (source: Bing Maps)

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing redundant building on-site and the construction of a replacement building in its place, to provide a modern milking parlour.

3.2 As noted, the existing mid-20th Century building, to be demolished, currently lies redundant owing to its age, design and condition, and is not fit for purpose as part of modern agriculture. It was originally used as a milking parlour, however upon the construction of a new milking parlour on the farm several decades ago, its use transferred to more of a general-purpose agricultural building; often being used as a sheep shed. In recent years, the building has become redundant on the farm; often being used to store rubbish – with the building no longer being an efficient use of the land.

3.3 The proposed development comprises the complete demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a new steel-portal framed agricultural building broadly the same footprint, to house the farm's new milking parlour.

3.4 The proposed building would be attached to the existing buildings to the east, and will have a lean-to roof.

3.5 It will measure 29.5m in length and 10m in width; having a similar footprint to the existing building. It will have an eaves height of 3.8m above ground level.

3.6 The proposed building will be finished externally with concrete lower walls and with 'slate blue' box profile cladding above. The roof will be finished with grey fibre cement sheeting. The north-eastern (end) elevation will remain open-sided to facilitate access, and on the south-eastern elevation the building will be 'open' to the existing adjacent buildings.

3.7 Clean rainwater from the roof will be directed to a new clean water tank on the building's exterior whilst dirty water drainage will be directed to the farm's existing slurry reception pit. This would ensure clean and dirty waters would not interact or mix. The slurry storage capacity calculations submitted as part of planning application reference: P/2025/0086 have taken into account the proposed new milking parlour.

3.8 Importantly, stock numbers on the holding will not change as a consequence of the proposed development. Instead, the development is primarily proposed in order to provide enhanced standards of animal welfare on the farm, to align the farming operations with the requirements of NRW and the Welsh Government, and to improve the overall functionality of the farming business.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024) advises at Paragraph 5.6.8 that ***"Planning authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are designed to meet the needs of changing farming practices or are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or welfare legislation".***

4.2 Technical Advice Note 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities) also sets out the Welsh Government's support for agricultural development proposals owing to the positive impact they can have upon the rural economy and rural communities.

4.3 In terms of the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013-2028), Policy EM4 (Employment Development Outside of Settlement Limits) is noted to be of primary relevance. It reads:

"New employment development outside of settlement limits will only be permitted through:

ii. New development required in connection with a rural enterprise, including proposals for farm diversification where:

a) The development is located within or forms a logical extension to the complex of buildings on an existing rural enterprise; or

b) In the case of buildings located away from an established rural enterprise complex, where a clear need for the development has been demonstrated and where there is no reasonable alternative location for the development".

4.4 LDP Paragraph 4.57 (within the supporting text for Policy EM4) states:

"New developments required by existing rural enterprises such as additional farm buildings, as well as development that facilitates farm diversification, will be supported subject to the development being sensitively located within or adjacent to the complex of existing buildings. It is recognised that isolated buildings located away from established farm or other rural enterprise complexes may sometimes be needed, particularly when new rural enterprises are being established. In such cases, a planning application will need to be accompanied by a supporting statement that sets out why the development is required and why there are no reasonable alternatives".

4.5 Also of relevance is LDP Policy DM1, which is a general 'development management policy' which seeks to address a wide range of planning issues.

5.0 Review of Main Material Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

5.1 The proposal relates to the provision of a new milking parlour building, to replace an existing building on the same footprint, at Hillside Farm. The proposed building will be sited at the centre of the existing farm complex on-site.

5.2 New agricultural development proposals are acceptable in-principle within open-countryside locations and the development is proposed in order to enhance animal welfare standards on the farm.

5.3 The proposal will provide a modern milking parlour building for use by the existing rural enterprise, and will replace the existing milking parlour facility on the holding.

5.4 Given the appropriate siting of the development within the centre of the farm complex, the requirements of LDP Policy EM4 (Criterion ii) are met and the proposal is therefore acceptable in-principle.

Design & Visual/Landscape Impact

5.5 As noted, the proposed building will be sited at the centre of the exist8ign farm complex on-site and as a result, it will be viewed wholly within the context of the existing built development on-site from within the surrounding landscape.

5.6 The proposal will be of standard modern agricultural appearance and design and will be of a similar design to the surrounding buildings forming part of the agricultural complex at Hillside Farm.

5.7 Given the above, and the fact that the proposal will replace an existing building on the same footprint, it is considered there would be no adverse visual or landscape impacts associated with the development in this instance.

5.8 Taking the above into account, the proposed design, scale, siting and landscape visual impact of the development would be acceptable in accordance with LDP Policy DM1.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

5.9 The proposed replacement building will be sited within the centre of the agricultural complex at Hillside Farm. The closest non-associated residential property to the application site lies approximately 250m to the south-east.

5.10 Owing to this distance, the intervening agricultural built development, and the fact the proposed development simply comprises the erection of a replacement agricultural building to provide a new milking parlour on the farm, there is no potential for the development as submitted to impact negatively upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring residents on this occasion. Thus, the requirements of LDP Policy DM1 are met.

Ecology, Biodiversity & NBB

5.11 The application site currently hosts an existing redundant mid-20th Century agricultural building lying at the centre of the farm complex.

5.12 Owing to its age, design and siting at the centre of the existing farm complex, the existing building to be demolished does not have the potential to be in use by any priority or protected species.

5.13 In light of the above, the application site is considered to be of no ecological value in its current form.

5.14 The proposed building will be sited on the same broad footprint as the existing building, and would only impact upon areas of existing hardstanding – no land of any ecological value will be taken-up by the proposal.

5.15 As noted, stock numbers on the holding will not change as a consequence of the proposed development, and therefore the volume/amount of slurry/manure and dirty water produced on the holding will not increase.

5.16 It is acknowledged that the site does lie within the freshwater catchment of the Bala Lake and River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore

NRW's *Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting nutrient sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation (July 2024)* is of relevance. However, the development as proposed is unlikely to be a source of additional phosphorus or a pathway for additional impacts. The development can therefore be screened out as not likely to have cause significant effect upon the integrity of the River Wye SAC as it falls within the following criterion in the published advice:

- *Any development that does not increase the volume and phosphorus concentration of wastewater.*

5.17 Given the above, it is noted that no compensatory or mitigation measures would be required as a result of the proposals.

5.18 In addition, a scheme of measures to ensure a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB) accompanies the planning application along with a Green Infrastructure Statement.

5.19 In light of the above, the development is acceptable with regards its ecological impacts and is in accordance with the requirements of PPW, TAN 5, and LDP Policies SP14 and NE1.

Highways

5.20 The vehicular movements associated with the site will remain unchanged as a consequence of the proposal.

5.21 Indeed, the development simply provides a replacement milking parlour on the farm and no increased vehicular movements to/from the farm are therefore anticipated as a result of the proposals.

5.22 Therefore, the development as submitted will not cause any adverse or additional impacts upon highway safety along the surrounding highway network.

Drainage

5.23 Surface water from the building's roof would be directed into a new clean water storage tank situated adjacent to the building.

5.24 Dirty water from parlour washings would be directed to the farm's existing slurry reception pit – ensuring that clean and dirty water from the building will not mix and interact.

5.25 The slurry storage capacity calculations submitted as part of planning application reference: P/2025/0086 have taken into account the proposed new milking parlour. In any case, given that stock numbers on the farm will not

increase as a consequence of the proposed development, the amount of dirty water produced will not change.

Public Right of Way

5.26 Given the siting of the proposed replacement building, there will be no impacts upon the surrounding Public Right of Way (PRoW) network.

Historic Environment

5.27 The application site is located within the Maelor Registered Historic Landscape.

5.28 Notwithstanding this, as noted within the *Design & Visual/Landscape Impact* section of this statement, the development does not have the potential to cause any adverse landscape or visual impact owing to its suitable design and siting at the centre of the existing farm complex. As such, there would not be any harmful effects upon the character of the historic landscape.

5.29 It is also noted there are no archaeological implications for the proposed development in this location.

Flooding

5.30 The application site is located within Zone 1 of the Flood Map for Planning (for both fluvial and surface water flooding) and as such flood risk does not comprise a constraint in this instance in accordance with the provisions of Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed development is needed for legitimate agricultural purposes and to enhance animal welfare standards at Hillside Farm. The proposed development would also see an effective re-use of land, to replace an existing redundant agricultural building with a modern milking parlour.

6.2 The proposed building is of an overall modest scale, and would be of an acceptable appearance within the host rural landscape. The development would not cause any adverse impacts upon the natural environment, neighbouring residential amenity nor upon highway safety, the historic environment and flood risks.

6.3 Therefore, the proposal is fully compliant with both national and local planning policy requirements, and it is respectfully requested that full planning permission be granted for the development without delay.