

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

To accompany: FULL PLANNING APPLICATION (retrospective)

RDC CASE NUMBER: 14/00059/UD

Proposal: ERECTION OF 4 AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS and EXTENSION TO EXISTING BUILDING.

At: WOLD FARM, EAST LUTTON. OS GRID REF: SE954686.

For: Mr ANDREW THORNTON

BACKGROUND. Manor House Farm, East Lutton has been in the Thornton family for two generations. The farm extends to just over 500 acres and, like many of the neighbouring farms, is very long and thin, only two fields wide east-west but over a mile in length north-south. In earlier days when horses worked the land these long thin farms had a main farmhouse by the road and a subsidiary cluster of buildings and stables further down the length of the holding to make working the land more practical.

Manor House Farm is within the Village Development Limits for East Lutton on the main highway and Wold Buildings have always been the southern base of the farm and are located about a mile to the south set remote from any other settlement. With modern machinery and the economies of scale it is now desirable to work the land from one centre and Manor House Farm has become the hub for the arable operation and therefore the centre of the farm where Mr Thornton lives with his family.

As the arable crops from the Wold have all been processed at the Manor House Farm hub the traditional buildings at the Wold have gradually fallen into disrepair. In addition there has never been mains water or electricity at the Wold - its remote location makes it expensive to install this infrastructure. There has been a water bore hole at Wold Buildings but the replenishment rate has never been sufficiently rapid to permit its use commercially for potato irrigation and it has now been abandoned.

In addition to the 500 owned acres of arable land Mr Thornton has developed a potato growing operation mainly on adjacent rented land, up to 200 acres in some years. The potato processing and storage is again focused on Manor House Farm. The availability of suitable land to rent is becoming harder to find and therefore the future of this aspect of the enterprise is uncertain. Growing potatoes commercially requires irrigation in most years and a system of distribution pipes has been installed across the farm served by a bore hole at Manor House Farm. This private supply also serves Wold Buildings.

INTRODUCTION. Running a farm of this size based predominantly on one type of product is very risky being at the mercy of variable unpredictable input charges and market prices based on world demand neither in the direct control of the farmer. Clearly to level out the risk profile a more diverse farming system results in a more secure and predictable income stream. In recognition of this fact the emphasis on farm diversification is backed by government and local policy.

The whole Manor House Farm enterprise is run by 3 full time and 1 part time staff along with seasonal staff at key periods in the farming year. Building maintenance and has been part of the skill set of the farm hands.

About 10 years ago planning permission was granted for the conversion of the stack yard at Manor House Farm to become dwellings and as part of that consent two agricultural buildings were carefully taken down and stored.

Given the need to diversify the various elements were all now in place:

- The need to ensure the future prosperity of the whole enterprise by diversifying into familiar but related integrated activities
- Staff on the payroll with little work at certain times of year
- Two dismantled but serviceable buildings in storage
- Good vehicular access to the remote site at the Wold
- Existing but underused buildings on levelled ground in need of attention.

The decision was taken in 2010 to re-erect the dismantled farm buildings from Manor House Farm stack yard at the Wold and start a beef rearing operation there. Grain, fodder beet and potatoes grown on the farm could be used to feed cattle together with straw for bedding, and straw based muck could be spread back on the arable land.

The Wold location had the added benefits from a biodiversity, animal welfare and disturbance point of view being very remote from the village and indeed all habitation. This remote location proved not to be problematic from the practical point of view as there is little traffic generated by the enterprise and the lack of mains services has no significant bearing on the straw based wet feed husbandry system employed. This integrated system lowered the input costs and soon the beef enterprise, started in 2011, was in a position to expand. In 2012 150 head of cattle were housed in the existing buildings and the relocated buildings at the Wold. Since that time with new and replacement buildings the number has risen to 330 cattle today. Cattle aged between 18 and 24 months old are brought to the Wold from breeders in the north of England in September and October and stay on the farm until the flowing spring/summer when they go direct to slaughter and onwards to supermarkets in the UK. During this time at the Wold between 80% and 90% of all their food is produced on the farm and all the straw muck is returned to the land reducing the dependence on external fertilizer inputs by about a third. In addition the self-contained nature of the whole farming method has drastically cut the traffic generated by the farm despite a significant increase in overall turnover. Water stored from roof run-off is also used in the wet feed process.

In the three years since inception the beef business has come to represent about 40% of the farms turnover with potatoes making a further 40%. Arable whilst taking the most acreage represent only 20% of overall turnover. This represents an increase in turnover of 70% and a more stable business better able to weather the differing fates of the trading areas it now operates in. Mr Thornton is a family man and hopes, through this diversification, to be able to leave a thriving and more secure enterprise to the next generation.

PROPOSAL. Retrospective planning approval is sought for the erection of 2236 square metres of agricultural buildings. The tightly grouped cluster of buildings are located in the open countryside in the Wolds Area of High Landscape Value in a sheltered depression in the undulating terrain where historically a range of farm building has always been located. Of these former farm building only one Dutch barn remains. The rest have been demolished over the last few years.

PLANNING HISTORY & POLICY BACKGROUND, PRE APPLICATION ADVICE

A letter from Helen Bloomer, Development Management Officer, alerted the applicant that work had been done at Wold Farm without planning permission. As the buildings are less than 4 years old the only way of regularizing the development is to submit a retrospective planning application for the works.

There is no planning history on the site.

The relevant policies are -

NPPF:

Chapter 3 Prosperous Rural Economy (promoting the development and diversification of agricultural business)

Chapter 11 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Ryedale Local Plan Strategy:

Policies SP9 Land-Based and Rural Economy (New and replacement buildings necessary to support land based activities, farm diversification)

SP13 Landscape (protecting sensitive skylines)

SP16 Design (Respecting the context provided by the former farmstead)

SP20 Generic Issues (Amenity and Safety)

USE. The use of the new and replacement buildings are general agricultural building which are currently used as housing for raising beef cattle and storage of bedding materials in association with this enterprise.

AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT. Referring to the previous 2012 layout plan there were 3 buildings on the site:

Building A - 1,020 square meter brick and stone built 'U' shaped stack-yard with pole barn building covering the enclosed area removed in 2014 to make way for 4 (below)

Building B - 220 square meter Nissan hut removed in 2012 to make way for 2 (below)

Building C - 200 square metre Dutch barn. Still existing on the site extended by 135 square metres in 2012. There is no historical photographic evidence of these three buildings but they can be clearly seen on the Google Earth images of the area. The total area of covered space on site (A + B + C) was 1,440 square metres in 2010.

Of this total part of A (the pole barn area) and all of C were initially used for the cattle operation.

Referring to the current layout plan there are 4 new buildings on site:

Building 1 - 388 square meter general purpose shed used for housing cattle with a 53 square meter canopy. Relocated from Manor House Farm in 2012

Building 2 - 836 square meter general purpose shed used for housing cattle and feed store with a 152 square meter canopy. Erected in 2013.

Building 3 - 500 square meter general purpose shed used for storing straw. Relocated from Manor House Farm in 2013 and extended with a lean-to increasing straw storage capacity.

Building 4 - 377 square meter general purpose shed used for housing cattle with a 70 square meter canopy. Erected in 2014

In addition there is also a 135 square meter extension to Building C.

The total area of new buildings on site (C[extended] + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4) is now 2,436 square metres of which 2,236 square metres in new building, an increase of 996 square metres on the 2010 position.

All the development is on the site of the Wolds farmstead with the exception of Buildings 1 and 3 are sited which are on a 1,450 square metre area which was formally field land. The RPA were made aware of this change in 2013 and the single farm payment adjusted accordingly. In addition grants have been received to concrete the roadways between the buildings in 2013 as part of the CSF initiative to limit water run-off.

SCALE PERAMETERS & APPEARANCE. All the new farm buildings range in height from 4.1 metres to 6.1 metres to eaves and from 6.2 metres to 7.5 metres to the apex. They are all clad in timber boarding to the rear and sides above 1.8 metre concrete crush walls, are open fronted and roofs are clad in grey fibre cement sheeting.

LAYOUT & DESIGN. The development forms a tightly grouped, inward looking and self-contained cluster around narrow avenues set on the site of the former Wolds buildings.

CONTEXT & LANDSCAPE. The site is in a sheltered hollow in the high wold landscape. There has been a cluster of building on the current site for more than 200 years. The natural lay of the land affords a degree of shelter from the worst of the weather. Over the last 20 years two blocks of native landscape planting have been established, 1.5 acres to the immediate north of the site and 0.5 acres to the immediate south. This has now grown to a height of 2 m. The site is not visible from any public thoroughfare set in a natural hollow.

ACCESS. The means of access to the site remains unaltered. It has always been used for agricultural purposes and is in good repair. Park Lane is used as the natural highway link between the two farming centres and good access and on site turning for other vehicles was already established prior to the development.

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL. There are no ecology or flooding issues associated with the proposed development. On site percolation is excellent and the integrated nature of the husbandry system employed results in no effluent leaving the farm. The recent case of bird flu in East Yorkshire has emphasised the importance of discrete locations for single species livestock production. Farms in the affected area are being prevented from moving any livestock from production farmsteads which raise chickens. Remote single species production units help avoid this problem.