

Planning, Design, Access and Agricultural Justification Statement

Tillinghurst Farm,
Ardingly
East Sussex

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Prepared By
Jonathan Morris
BSc (Hons) MRICS



CLM

Sackville House, Sackville Lane, Hartfield, East Sussex, TN7 4AW
Tel. 01892 770339 Fax. 01892 770931
Email. info@c-l-m.co.uk
www.c-l-m.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

This statement forms part of an application for the construction of a new steel portal framed agricultural storage building on land south of Tillinghurst Farm, Ardingly. This statement describes the site, the proposed building and the materials to be used.

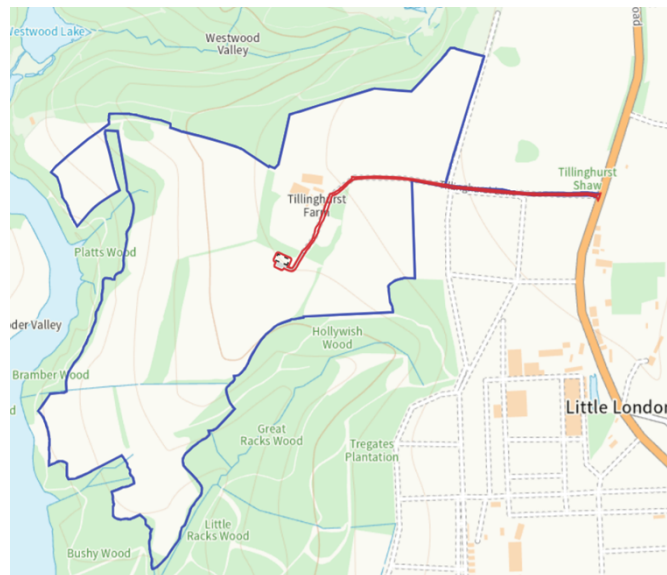
The application comprises:

1. The Application Form
2. Planning, Design, Access and Agricultural Justification Statement
3. Site Plan (JM/WG/SP/01) at scale 1:1,500
4. Location Plan (JM/WG/LP/01) at scale 1:25,000
5. Holding Plan (JM/WG/HP/01) at scale 1:7,500
6. Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations

The salient fact is that the proposal benefits from permitted development rights outlined in Part 6A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) however for sake of completeness, the proposal's consistency with other local and national planning policies is also discussed.

2. THE SITE

Tillinghurst Farm is located within the High Weald National Landscape (the NL), formerly known as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, approximately 1 mile North of Ardingly, 1.6 miles east of Balcombe and 3 miles south of Turners Hill. The farm is bounded by Ardingly reservoir to the west and the South of England Events Centre to the east, with woodland to the north and south. The farm itself comprises a range of aged steel portal framed buildings, a pole barn and former stabling, all in varying states of repair, together with the farmhouse. The wider site is mainly set to grass, having been used grazing for livestock and forage production.



Plan 1 – The extent of the site

The location of the development is shown on the attached plan JM/WG/HP/01.

3. THE SITUATION AND NEED

Tillinghurst Farm, operates as a pasture and livestock farm. However, with various fences in need of repair, livestock can only seasonally graze the land at present and the main use remains forage production. The applicant is continuing that farming operation/model and is in the process of undertaking the various repairs and replacement works to make the holding secure so that livestock can be present on the land permanently as an addition. The land is registered with the Rural Payments Agency under SBI 201151*** and is subject to an extant invitation to enter the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Alongside the agricultural uses, the farm also includes a range of cross country jumps for equestrian events operating at the adjacent South of England Events Centre which are used from time to time when a larger distance course is needed and which cannot be accommodated within the grounds of the Centre.

It is the intention of the applicant to continue to keep the farm land in agricultural production, taking two seasonal cuts of forage, either in the form of wrapped silage or hay before grazing the aftermath with cattle and sheep.

The farm is serviced by a range of existing buildings, in various states of repair. Importantly, none of these buildings are fully enclosed and there is no secure agricultural storage on the farm. Having assessed the buildings, it is our opinion that given their age and condition, it is not economical to re-clad these and install access doors to meet the secure storage needs of the farm. Moreover, given the productive capacity of the farm, it is likely all of the usable space within the buildings will be required to store the baled forage that the land will yield.

In terms of the productivity of the land, the primary use of the land is forage production with aftermath/winter grazing. An assessment of the productive capacity of the holding and storage need is set out below:

Production	Hectares	Yield (bales)
Hay 1st Cut (approx. 18 bales/Ha)	30	540
Hay 2nd Cut (approx. 12 bales/Ha)	30	360
Hay 3rd Cut (approx. 8 bales/Ha)	30	240

<u>Bale Size</u>	<u>Storage (m3/bale)</u>	<u>Required Storage (m3)</u>
4ft rounds (1.2m/1.2m)	2.2	1980
<u>Layer 1</u>	<u>No of Bales</u>	<u>Surplus</u>
	486	654
<u>Layer 2</u>	<u>No of Bales</u>	<u>Surplus</u>
	388	266
<u>Layer 3</u>	<u>No of Bales</u>	<u>Surplus</u>
	310	0

Based on the above assessment, all of the forage produced on the holding could be stored within the existing range of buildings on the holding, subject to it being stacked in three layers. However, this assumes the whole ground floor area is available, leaving no space for the storage of agricultural machinery or other stores. While some low key storage is available within a pole barn, they are considered unsuitable for modern farming machinery due to their low eaves height making access impossible.

A further limitation in respect of the use of the existing buildings is their general arrangement. As they stand, the steel portal framed buildings are arranged together to form one single unit. However, as the unit is not a true portal design, but rather several smaller buildings assembled together, it results in steel stanchions being present within the working area, reducing vehicle turning space and increasing collision risks. In addition, externally there are buildings in close proximity with some buildings standing less than 4m off the gable ends, in turn reducing safe access and egress points for machinery. The cumulative effects of these are likely to result in a reduction in storage capacity as it becomes virtually impossible to stack any forage produced in an even layout or in a way that enables them to be extracted from different points as and when they are called upon. As such, it is not possible to rule out the buildings being at full capacity following the baling of the final cut of forage from the farm. Consequently, there is the need for further storage space on the holding and it follows that this is designed to provide secure storage in the absence of any being available.

Further considering the need for secure storage, it is widely acknowledged that the storage of machinery and equipment outside, which is uncovered and exposed to all weather conditions results in an increased level of machinery depreciation and ultimately a reduced lifespan of high value machinery. Similarly, inputs such as soil nutrients, fuels and chemicals, are now required to be securely stored, particularly under farm assurance schemes and importantly protected from water ingress. Soil inputs and seeds for example, are both absorbent and if improperly store, become unusable. With values associated with inputs increasing, it is now common for businesses to afford them a higher degree of care and for such items to be stored within well designed and weather tight buildings.

The National Farmers Union reported that in 2025 rural crime in the UK cost an estimated £41.5 million. Although this represents a slight drop from 2024, vehicle theft rose by 18% and ATV theft rose by 31% with one of the most affected areas continuing to be the south east. This reinforces the need for secure storage on the farm for both higher value items as well as ancillary items such as hand tools, which when collectively combined make for valuable assets. In addition, although input theft is rare, with the cost of fertilisers now exceeding £500 per tonne, it is entirely reasonable for a business to seek to store these within a secure building opposed to within one that can be freely accessed by unauthorised persons or subject to exposure from the elements.

The development proposed in this application would provide a modest, circa 3,100ft² of secure storage space. The building would be fully enclosed with a single set of sliding doors on the southern elevation to provide access. The building is considered to be similar in style to a grain store albeit with lower eaves which reduces the level of perceived impact to the settings. The development is explored in more detail below.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT

We have considered the agricultural need set out above which is clear. The applicant has a secure storage need. The development is reasonably necessary to meet that agricultural need and it has been designed for the purposes of agriculture while remaining within the limits outlined in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). The development will comprise:

A steel portal framed storage building enclosed on all sides by concrete panels and corrugated sheet under a steel profile cladding roof. These materials are widely used in agriculture, provide an adequate level of weather protection and are similar to those used in existing buildings in the locality.

The building will provide for circa 288m² (3,100ft²) of usable floor space. The concrete panelling will rise to 2 metres internally and externally the box profile sheet cladding will extend to ground level. The building will stand at 7.55m at the ridge and 5m at the eaves. Access will be via a 10m wide set of sliding doors in the southern gable end.

5. SITING DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

In assessing the impacts of the proposed development, the siting, design and appearance of the proposal should be considered. The proposed building will be sited immediately adjacent to the south of the farm yard and adjacent an existing access track servicing the bulk of the land on the holding.

The location takes into consideration the need for direct access to the farm land, without equipment and machinery posing an increase in visual impact to the surrounding area. The proposed location benefits from natural screening provided by the mature hedging and wooded boundaries. Given features of the localised setting, we consider that the development will have negligible wider visual impacts.

The accompanying drawings demonstrate the design and appearance of the building has been for the use as an agricultural building and for no other means. We consider the materials used and the appearance of the building to be concordant with other agricultural buildings throughout the south-east.

6. THE GPDO

It is considered that the proposal is permitted under Schedule 2, Part 6 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). In this instance we have set out the criteria and the extent to which the development complies with that below:

Permitted development is expressed as (A) the carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of:

- (a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or
- (b) any excavation or engineering operations, which are for any excavations or engineering operations,

which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit.

Paragraph A.1 Development is not permitted by Class A if:

- a). the development would be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area;

The development is proposed on a parcel greater than 1 hectare in area.

- b). it would consist of the erection or extension of any agricultural building on an established agricultural unit (as defined in paragraph X of Part 3 of this Schedule) where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use) of this Schedule has been carried out within a period of 10 years ending with the date on which development under Class A(a) begins;

Development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use) has not been carried out within a period of 10 years.

- c). it would consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling;

The development would not include the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling.

- d). it would involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes;

The development consists of a building with an agricultural appearance on an agricultural unit for the storage inputs, agricultural goods and machinery. No other uses are proposed.

- e). the ground area which would be covered by:
 - (i) any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations; or
 - (ii) any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A, would exceed 1,000 square metres, calculated as described in paragraph D.1(2)(a) of this Part;

The development does not exceed 1,000 sqm.

- f). the height of any part of any building, structure or works within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 3 metres;

The development would be greater than 3km from the nearest aerodrome.

- g). the height of any part of any building, structure or works not within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 12 metres;

No part of the building will exceed 12 metres.

- h). any part of the development would be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road;

The development is in excess of 25 metres from the nearest road.

- i). it would consist of, or include, the erection or construction of, or the carrying out of any works to, a building, structure or an excavation used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge where the building, structure or excavation is, or would be, within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building;

The buildings will be used for the storage of agricultural machinery, inputs, stores and also as functional space to meet the needs of the farming business.

- j). it would involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2(4) land which are connected with fish farming;

The development does not propose any fish farming.

- k). any building for storing fuel for or waste from a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system:

- i) would be used for storing waste not produced by that boiler or system or for storing fuel not produced on land within the unit; or
- ii) is or would be within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building.

The buildings will not be used any purposes set out within criteria (k).

7. PLANNING POLICY

It is proposed that the development benefits from permitted development rights outlined above therefore, following the ruling in *Murrell v Secretary of State [2010] EWCA Civ 1367*, the principle of development has already been confirmed and is not in question. Nevertheless, for sake of completeness we have considered if and how the proposal concords with all relevant local planning policy and national material considerations; we have outlined these below.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with a development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of this planning application, the development plan comprises policies from the Mid Sussex District Plan and saved policies from the Local plan, collectively forming the Council's Local Development Framework.

In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (the NPPF) sets out the Government's requirements/policies for England and this must be treated as a material consideration.

The following section therefore highlights the aspects of both local and National planning policies relevant to the application and the degree of weight that can be applied to them.

The NPPF

Achieving the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level and in broad terms this can be summarised as meeting current needs without compromising those that might come in the future.

In the case of the development, it is to support an established agricultural business, a sector that has been in existence for a significant period of history and it therefore, stands that it will continue in the future. Considering the development as a whole, it would meet the needs of the business and it is submitted that it is unlikely to impact any needs in the future.

Paragraph 11 explains that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 explains that for the purposes of decision-making means, inter-alia, approving development proposals which accord with an up-to-date plan and where there are no relevant development plan policies, or said policies are out of date, granting permission unless the policies in the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing the development or the impacts significantly outweigh the benefits.

While there are local policies to consider which are outlined below, development for agriculture is supported by the NPPF by virtue of Paragraph 88 and so clearly benefits from presumption in favour of sustainable development and is not considered inappropriate in the open countryside.

Paragraph 39 explains that planning authorities should approach decision making in a positive and creative way. In the case of the proposed development, it is a simple function design that is largely based on the functional needs of the rural business and otherwise a typical form of development.

With regards to applications within the National Character Area the NPPF applies weight to enhancing the land and environment, subsequently applying the highest level of protection to National Landscape Areas. Taking this into consideration it is accepted that the scale and extent of any development should be limited and it is submitted that the bulk, mass and volume of the development is not so great as to cause harm to the

setting of the National Landscape or Character Area, particularly given the change in construction design. Furthermore, we submit that the needs of the agricultural business which the development will serve makes a substantial contribution to the character and outweighs any perceived harm thus tilting the planning balance in favour of the development.

Local Planning Policy

As outlined above, the Council's Local Development Framework provides strategic planning principles and wider view as to the form/distribution of development of the district on which decisions are taken.

Having reviewed the saved policies within the Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) the development benefits from support from a priority which aims to deliver a strong and diverse rural economy. This is emphasised again at policy DP3 which supports a "prosperous rural economy".

The development is considered fully compliant with policy DP12 which supports the provision of new agricultural buildings that are considered necessary, similar to the rights set out in the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended).

Policy DP14 offers further support for development that delivers a stronger rural economy provided there is no conflict with DP12 – which we submit is the case.

The Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) also supports the provision of buildings that deliver productive economics, subject to the development not harming the local character. As the local character is predominantly rural and agricultural, we do not consider there to be a conflict with that criteria.

Policy C1 limits development in the countryside to specific forms, one of which being agricultural developments that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agricultural. With Policy C4 applying a similar criteria for development within the AONB. In this case the need has been proven and we do not consider there to be an appreciable impact to the AONB.

8. CONCLUSIONS

During a period of continued uncertainty for the agricultural industry following widespread change and market volatility, a farm business is seeking to make best use of its assets and meet its storage needs on the holding.

We consider the proposal is necessary for the purposes of agriculture which is an essential contributor to the landscape and the rural economy. The salient point is the development clearly accords with the requirements of the rights granted in Part 6A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Notwithstanding that, we believe the development accords with both National and Local planning policies/material considerations and we respectfully request that the notification is permitted.