

Planning Statement

Proposed Agricultural Building

Ducks Hill Farm, Ducks Hill Road, Northwood, HA6 2SP

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Hillingdon

Agricultural Holding: Ducks Hill Farm

Holding Area: Approximately 153 acres (62 hectares)

1. Introduction

This Agricultural Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a prior approval submission for the erection of a new agricultural building at Ducks Hill Farm, Ducks Hill Road, Northwood.

The proposed building is required to support the existing and expanding agricultural enterprise at Ducks Hill Farm. It will provide additional accommodation for the storage of agricultural machinery, animal feed, bedding and agricultural equipment, together with dedicated accommodation for the initial storage, grading, sorting, packing, labelling and temperature-controlled storage of eggs produced by the farm's laying poultry enterprise as well as storage of frozen meat products produced on the farm.

Ducks Hill Farm is an established commercial mixed livestock holding extending to approximately 153 acres (approximately 62 hectares). The farm has grown considerably in recent years, and its existing buildings and storage areas are increasingly constrained.

Additional purpose-built accommodation is therefore required to allow the agricultural enterprise to operate efficiently and provide appropriate facilities for the handling and storage of agricultural produce generated by the holding.

The proposal is made under the agricultural permitted development provisions contained within Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended, insofar as the development satisfies the applicable limitations and conditions.

2. Ducks Hill Farm and the Agricultural Enterprise

The holding is predominantly grassland, with approximately 133 acres maintained as pasture. This land forms an integral part of the livestock enterprise and requires regular agricultural management.

The farm operates as a substantial mixed livestock enterprise and currently has approximately:

- 50 cattle
- 10-20 pigs
- 5,000 laying hens
- 500 laying ducks

- Approximately 750 broiler chickens produced annually

The holding produces a range of agricultural products including beef, pork, chicken meat, chicken eggs and duck eggs.

Produce from the holding is sold locally, mostly through the farm's on-site vending machine.

The farm therefore represents a diverse and active agricultural enterprise involving the management of livestock, poultry, pasture and the agricultural produce generated by those activities.

3. Agricultural Land Management

Approximately 133 acres of the holding are maintained as pasture.

The management of this area requires the regular use of tractors and associated agricultural machinery and implements for operations including pasture maintenance, topping, mowing, livestock management and general land management.

In addition to machinery associated with the management of the land, the scale of the livestock enterprise creates a significant requirement for the storage of animal feed, bedding, poultry equipment, livestock equipment and other agricultural materials.

Secure and weatherproof storage is important both for protecting agricultural machinery and equipment and for maintaining feed and bedding in suitable conditions.

The proposed building will therefore serve several complementary functions associated directly with the agricultural operation of the holding.

4. Description of the Proposed Building

The proposal comprises the erection of a purpose-built agricultural building measuring approximately 100 feet by 50 feet, providing approximately 5,000 square feet (464.5 square metres) of floor area.

The building will be of conventional agricultural construction comprising a steel portal frame with profiled metal roof and wall cladding.

The proposed dimensions are approximately:

- **Length:** 100 ft (30.48 metres)
- **Width:** 50 ft (15.24 metres)
- **Floor area:** 5,000 sq ft (approximately 464.5 m²)
- **Height to eaves:** 5.0 metres
- **Height to ridge:** 7.04 metres

The proposed height is necessary to provide suitable internal clearance for the storage and movement of agricultural machinery and equipment and to provide a practical internal working and storage environment.

The use of a steel portal frame and profiled metal cladding is characteristic of modern agricultural buildings and provides a practical, durable and efficient structure suitable for the intended agricultural purposes.

5. Intended Agricultural Uses

The proposed building will provide approximately 5,000 square feet of agricultural accommodation divided broadly between three principal functions.

5.1 Egg Handling, Grading, Packing and Storage – Approximately 1,000 sq ft

Approximately 1,000 square feet of the building will provide a dedicated egg handling, grading, packing and storage area for eggs produced by the laying poultry enterprise at Ducks Hill Farm as well as temperature-controlled storage for frozen meat. The farm currently maintains approximately 5,000 laying hens and 500 laying ducks producing over 4,000 eggs per day. The eggs produced by these birds require appropriate handling and storage between collection and their subsequent sale and distribution. Approximately 50,000 egg boxes and 20,000 egg trays will also need to be stored at any one time.

Following collection from the laying poultry units, eggs are transferred to this dedicated area for:

- initial storage following collection;
- grading;
- sorting;
- packing;
- labelling; and
- ambient temperature-controlled storage prior to sale and distribution.

These activities are directly associated with preparing the eggs produced on the agricultural holding for sale. A dedicated facility is required to enable these operations to be undertaken efficiently and in suitable environmental conditions. In particular eggs need to be maintained at a temperature below 20°C. The proposed egg processing area will therefore provide a controlled environment capable of maintaining the appropriate storage temperature and protecting the eggs from unsuitable temperature fluctuations prior to sale and distribution. The facility will provide an appropriate transition between egg production within the existing poultry units and the subsequent sale and distribution of the farm's own produce. The location of the proposed building close to the existing poultry sheds is particularly beneficial in this respect, allowing eggs to be transferred efficiently from the laying units to the handling and storage area.

5.2 Poultry Feed and Equipment Storage – Approximately 1,000 sq ft

A further 1,000 square feet will principally be used for the storage of bagged poultry feed and agricultural equipment associated with the laying poultry enterprise such as feeders, drinkers, nest boxes, lines, perches etc. The approximately 5,500 laying birds maintained at the holding create a substantial and continuous requirement for feed and associated poultry equipment. Feed requires appropriate dry and secure storage to protect it from weather, contamination and

pests. Locating this storage close to the existing poultry sheds will improve the operational efficiency of the farm by allowing feed and equipment to be stored close to the livestock enterprise they serve.

5.3 Machinery, Feed, Equipment and Bedding Storage – Approximately 3,000 sq ft

The remaining approximately 3,000 square feet will be used for the storage of agricultural machinery, feed, equipment and bedding associated with the wider mixed livestock and grassland enterprise. The farm requires machinery and implements to manage approximately 153 acres of agricultural land, including approximately 133 acres of pasture. The holding currently has 4 tractors, 2 ATVs, quad bikes, excavators and lots of equipment and attachments to support the diverse amount of livestock present on the farm. Covered and secure accommodation protects valuable agricultural machinery from deterioration caused by prolonged exposure to the weather and provides secure storage for equipment required for the day-to-day management of the farm. The space will also accommodate feed, straw and shaving bedding and other materials required for the cattle, pigs and poultry kept on the holding.

6. Siting of the Building

Careful consideration has been given to the siting of the proposed building. The barn will be located close to the existing poultry sheds and the area where agricultural machinery is currently stored. The proposal therefore consolidates related agricultural activities rather than introducing machinery and storage operations into an unrelated part of the holding. Importantly, the proposed site comprises land that is not currently in productive agricultural use. The siting therefore avoids the unnecessary loss of productive pasture. The proposed location consequently represents a practical and efficient position for the building and allows its different functions to relate closely to the agricultural activities they serve.

7. Relationship with Nearby Residential Property

The proposed building is located within 400 metres of a dwelling. No livestock will be housed within the proposed building. Its uses will comprise machinery, equipment, feed and bedding storage together with the egg handling, grading, packing, labelling and storage facilities described above. The proposal has therefore been designed to accommodate the operational requirements of the agricultural holding without introducing livestock accommodation within the building.

8. Design and Visual Appearance

The building has been designed as a straightforward and functional agricultural structure. A steel portal frame provides the clear internal spans required for agricultural machinery and storage while allowing flexible use of the internal floor area. The proposed 5.0 metres eaves height and 7.04 metres ridge height provide the clearance necessary for agricultural machinery and the practical operation of the building. Profiled metal roof and wall cladding is a conventional material for modern agricultural buildings and will provide a durable and low-

maintenance finish appropriate to an agricultural setting. The building will be clad in juniper green metal panels to reduce its visual impact on the surrounding landscape. The building's location alongside established agricultural activity will further assist in integrating it with the existing farm enterprise.

9. Access

The holding already benefits from existing vehicular access from Ducks Hill Road as well as existing farm tracks. There is no new vehicular access proposed as part of the development.

10. Conclusion

Ducks Hill Farm is an established and actively managed commercial agricultural holding extending to approximately 153 acres (62 hectares), of which approximately 133 acres are maintained as pasture. The farm supports a substantial and diverse livestock enterprise comprising approximately 50 cattle, 10-20 pigs, 5,000 laying hens and 500 laying ducks, together with the production of approximately 750 broiler chickens each year. The holding produces beef, pork, chicken meat, chicken eggs and duck eggs for sale locally, including direct sales from the farm. The scale and continued growth of this agricultural enterprise has created a genuine operational requirement for additional covered accommodation. The proposed building meets all the planning considerations within Class A. No livestock will be housed within the proposed building and the building will be more than 25m from Ducks Hill Road.

The building is of conventional agricultural design and construction, comprising a steel portal frame with profiled metal roof and walls. Its proposed eaves height of 5.0 metres and ridge height of 7.04 metres reflect its functional agricultural requirements. The development will consolidate related agricultural functions, improve working conditions and operational efficiency, provide appropriate storage conditions for the farm's egg production and provide much-needed additional accommodation for the machinery, feed, bedding and equipment necessary to operate the holding. For these reasons, the proposed building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the agricultural unit and represents an appropriate addition to the infrastructure required for the continued efficient operation of Ducks Hill Farm.