
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2025

by **J Symmons BSc (Hons) CEng MICE**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X1355/W/25/3365988

Land southeast of High Cold Knott Farm, Mown Meadows Road, Crook DL15 9QF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England), Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr Valks against the decision of Durham County Council.
 - The application Ref is DM/24/02561/PA56.
 - The development proposed is an agricultural building pursuant to application DN/24/02004/PNA (amended plans and information received 8th November).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and prior approval is granted under the provisions of Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for an agricultural building pursuant to application DN/24/02004/PNA (amended plans and information received 8th November) at the land southeast of High Cold Knott Farm, Mown Meadows Road, Crook DL15 9QF in accordance with the application Ref DM/24/02561/PA56 and the details submitted with it.

Preliminary Matters

2. Based on the provided planning application documentation and confirmation given in the appellant's appeal questionnaire, I have used the development description shown on the Council's Delegated Report and Prior Approval Refusal notice.
3. Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) sets out that on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more, the erection of a building reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit is permitted development, subject to limitations and conditions.
4. Paragraph A.2 requires, amongst other things, that where the erection of a building is proposed, development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development, the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether prior approval of the authority will be required in relation to the siting, design and external appearance of the building.
5. The Council refused prior approval on the grounds that the proposal was not reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, and that its siting, design and external appearance would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area.

6. The provisions of Class A do not require regard to be had to the development plan or the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework). I have therefore had regard to the policies referred to in the evidence only in so far as they are material to the prior approval matters.

Main Issues

7. The main issues in the determination of the appeal are:
- whether the building would be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture; and
 - the effect of the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether reasonably necessary for the purpose of agriculture

8. High Cold Knott Farm is an agricultural holding of approximately 101 hectares (ha). The holding is split over three separate areas consisting of the 80ha main farmstead (Area 1) located to the south of Howden-le-Wear, a 10ha field area to the west (Area 2) and a 11ha field area to the north (Area 3). Ewes with followers, cattle and goats are farmed on the holding and an established equestrian enterprise also exists on Area 1. It is noted that Area 1 has a variety of agricultural buildings, and the cattle are housed here. Area 2 is used for the grazing of sheep and for hay production.
9. The appeal site is located towards the northeastern corner of Area 2, and the proposal would comprise the construction of a new agricultural storage building, accessed via an existing track from Mown Meadow Road.
10. The proposal would be used to support the farming of Areas 2 and 3. It is detailed that by locating the storage of such things as farm machinery, equipment, hay, fertiliser, livestock emergency medications, and by offering shelter for livestock during adverse weather conditions on Area 2 rather than the current Area 1, a reduction in agricultural vehicle movements across the farm would be achieved. It is further detailed that this would, in turn, provide financial and environmental benefits by reducing travel time between the areas, fuel consumption and associated carbon emissions.
11. The Council does not dispute the appeal site is in agricultural use or that it forms part of the farm's agricultural unit. Nor does the Council provide any compelling evidence to dispute the appellant's storage calculation provided to justify the proposed building's size and scale or that it would not be used for the purpose of agriculture.
12. Notwithstanding this, the Council questions whether the proposal is reasonably required for the efficient long-term operation of the farm, noting that Areas 1 and 2 are only an approximate five-minute drive apart. However, based on the appellant's route maps and my observations during the site visit, the travel time by car between Area 1 and both Areas 2 and 3 is closer to seven and ten minutes respectively, with journeys between Areas 2 and 3 taking around seven minutes. When accounting for the typically larger and slower-moving agricultural vehicles, these times are likely to be longer. With the movements between Areas 2 and 3, the proposal would

deliver a meaningful reduction in travel times and vehicle movements compared to the existing arrangement. Over the longer term, it is likely that the anticipated reductions would amount to a worthwhile improvement in the efficiency of the farm's operation.

13. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable for the appellant to seek to improve the farm's cost efficiency and environmental performance. The proposal would assist in achieving these through the delivery of the financial and environmental benefits identified. Even though the proposal would involve some duplication of storage for items such as plant and machinery, and would be located on a smaller, less frequently used part of the holding than Area 1, it would still deliver a worthwhile improvement in the operational efficiency of the farm. As such, there is little to suggest it is not reasonably necessary.
14. Consequently, the proposed building would be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, in accordance with Paragraph A of Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the GPDO.

Siting, design and external appearance

15. Area 2 lies within a predominantly rural and agricultural landscape characterised by open countryside with fields, hedgerows and scattered trees. The pattern of development is sparse, comprising a mix of farmsteads, occasional small clusters of buildings and some isolated structures. It is also in proximity to an Area of High Landscape Value. As previously noted, the appeal site lies in the north-eastern corner of Area 2, which is characterised by predominantly open fields bounded by mature hedgerows and areas of woodland. It is set well back from the surrounding roads, although some public rights of way pass nearby. There are no existing buildings within this part of the area.
16. The proposal would have a clear functional relationship with the rural and agricultural character of the surrounding area, and a justified reason has been provided for its siting away from existing buildings. Its style and form would not appear out of keeping with this context. Although the building would be isolated and of notable size, its position towards the corner of the field, its separation from nearby roads, and the partial screening afforded by existing hedgerows and trees would ensure that it would not appear unduly intrusive or incongruous. Even when viewed at close range from the adjacent field or public rights of way, it would not be an unexpected or unusual feature within the farming landscape. Furthermore, given the overall scale of the area and the filtering effect of the hedgerow on views across the field, the proposal would have only a very limited effect on openness and would not undermine the rural and agricultural character of the locality.
17. On the basis of these findings, the proposal would also not harm the nearby Area of High Landscape Value, which would be conserved.
18. Further to this, the surrounding area is not devoid of isolated buildings, and I observed a number of examples during my visit. While these varied in form, scale and siting compared with the proposal, they nonetheless illustrate that isolated structures can be accommodated within the landscape without causing unacceptable harm to its character and appearance.
19. Based on the above, the siting, design, and external appearance of the proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and

appearance of the area. It would also not conflict with Policies 10, 29 and 39 of the County Durham Plan 2020 and Parts 12 and 15 of the Framework insofar as they relate to matters of character and appearance.

Other Matters

20. Concern has been expressed regarding the potential risk of crime and theft arising from the building's relatively isolated location. The appellant states that the building would be secured, machinery stored on site would be tagged, and cameras could be installed to provide additional protection. While some degree of risk cannot be discounted, there is no substantive evidence to indicate that this would be so significant as to make the proposal unacceptable. Accordingly, this does not change my view regarding the proposal.
21. A further concern raised was that external storage might occur at the appeal site, thereby increasing the proposal's intrusion into the landscape. However, no substantive evidence has been provided to support this assertion. The building has been designed with sufficient internal capacity to accommodate the intended storage, and the proposed external gravelled surfaced areas are very limited in extent. On this basis, there is little reason to conclude that external storage would be required or likely to occur. This therefore does not change my view regarding the proposal.

Conditions

22. The GPDO does not provide any general authority to impose conditions beyond those deemed to apply under Paragraph A.2(2). Moreover, the Council has not suggested any additional conditions. Accordingly, the conditions set out in Paragraph A.2(2) apply, and there is no justification for others.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed and prior approval should be granted.

J Symmons

INSPECTOR