



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2025

by **M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0940/W/25/3373240

Barn, Caton Lane, Flookburgh

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Trevor Wilson [Guides Farm] against the decision of Westmorland and Furness Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/1102/FPA.
 - The development proposed is an agricultural stone and slate barn for the storage of agricultural feed, implements and machinery.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the Council's decision notice as it more accurately describes the development carried out, with the exception of the reference to retrospective as it is not an act of development. During my visit I observed a partially completed building in situ at the appeal site. It differs from the submitted plans in that it has been constructed forward of the adjoining dry-stone walls to either side and has a lintel and block work to the upper section of the front gable wall. Despite these discrepancies, the submitted plans provide sufficient detail to assess the proposal, and my decision is based on those plans, rather than the building as constructed.
3. The appellant has provided plans showing the whole holding with the appeal statement to which I have had regard and the Council was provided opportunity to comment on via its appeal statement. It would not prejudice any parties in taking them into account in the determination of the appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are i) whether there is an essential need for the proposed development in this location and ii) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

5. The need to support the development of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses is strongly supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, the Framework also requires that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising

the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and ensuring that economic development in rural areas is sensitive to its surroundings.

6. To this end, Policy DM25 of the South Lakeland Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) 2019, permits new agricultural buildings where there is a demonstrable essential need in relation to an existing farm business. Such buildings are expected to be located within or adjacent to the existing farm complex, unless it is demonstrated that such a location is not available or suitable.
7. The appellant states that Guides Farm is a 700+ hectare farm which raises sheep and cattle. Animals are grazed on the open farmland as well as on the foreshore under a grazing licence. Despite the submission of holding plans which are unannotated and without detail, there is no accompanying information to explain how this specific enterprise operates, how the livestock is handled or the land is managed.
8. The appellant indicates that the proposed building would store expensive machinery and goods. There is no evidence as to why such unspecified machinery is needed in this area of the farm, how often it would be used and why storage needs could not be met at the main complex or in the recently approved building in the same field¹. Expensive farm machinery is typically kept within the main farm complex for security, so storage in an isolated, open-sided building would be unusual.
9. It is also unclear why moving larger agricultural machinery via the surrounding public highways would be particularly problematic, given that planning permission was granted in 2019 for a track through the fields connecting the appeal site to the main farm complex approximately 800m to the south-west². Thus, it has not been evidenced why such storage is required in this specific location for the benefit of the farming enterprise.
10. The appeal site previously contained a stone-built field shelter but this appears to have been a historic structure predating modern farming practices and buildings. Its presence does not automatically render a new building that requires planning permission acceptable. The former field shelter was in a dilapidated condition from at least 2018 and by 2022 it was considered unusable³. It is not clear how the inability to use the shelter from at least 2022 has affected the operation of the farming enterprise. The proposal is for a larger building than the original one, but there is no indication of why a building of this size is required in this location. The Council suggests that sites adjacent to the farm complex could accommodate a storage building, and the appellant concedes a cheaper more functional building could have been located close to the main farm complex.
11. Neither is it evident how the development would assist in securing the economic future of the farming enterprise given its limited size. The appellant's desire for an adaptable building that could accommodate potential future uses is understood. Nonetheless, the justification text to Policy DM25 is clear that to ensure the natural environment is conserved and enhanced, new buildings in rural locations have to

¹ Application reference 2025/0273/FPA as set out in the appellant's response to the Council's statement of case.

² As set out in paragraph 2 of the appellant's response to the Council's statement of case.

³ Paragraph 2-3 of the appellant's appeal statement.

be justified on the basis of the need of the agricultural enterprise in the location proposed.

12. In light of the above, it has not been demonstrated that there is an essential need for the proposed development in this location. The proposed development would be contrary to Policy DM25 of the DPD as set out above.

Character and Appearance

13. The appeal site forms part of a larger agricultural field. It is set within a predominantly rural landscape that fringes the coast where built development is limited and sporadic. As part of a wider field, the appeal site contributes positively to the pastoral character and appearance of the area.
14. I recognise that field barns are often a feature of rural landscapes. However, the proposed building due to its width, lowered ridge and eaves height, would have a squat, domestic appearance akin to a garage. Even if I could consider the proposed building to be only marginally larger than the original shelter, its scale and form would not reproduce the form and character of the former structure such that it could be perceived to have positive landscape benefits⁴.
15. Partially set into the slope, the building would occupy a high point within the landscape such that it would stand out conspicuously without any mitigation in terms of topography, tree cover or other buildings to help it assimilate into its context. Despite the appellant's claim that the development would preserve and enhance the existing landscape and views across Morecambe Bay, the proposed building would appear visually isolated and prominent in views from the adjacent public right of way and Caton Lane. Being a building of an untypical scale and form for a field barn, it would harm the contribution that the site makes to the bucolic scene.
16. Even if the proposed barn was clad in local natural stonework, I am not satisfied that it would mitigate the scale and form of the proposed building, particularly its width and the ratio of wall height to roof. Moreover, removing Class Q permitted development rights by planning condition would control future development, rather than address the fundamental concerns of form and scale⁵.
17. Reference is made to 2 cattle sheds permitted by the Council to the west of the appeal site that are suggested to have had an acceptable landscape impact. The building that has been constructed is at a lower land level and has a typically modern agricultural appearance such that I do not find it comparable to the context or form of the proposal. Likewise, the caravan site to the south is a different form of development that is well contained by established landscaping such that whilst its presence was noted, it was not particularly conspicuous. In any event the presence of these developments does not justify permitting a proposal I have found would be visually harmful.
18. There is nothing in the evidence before me to indicate that the proposed building could not be constructed with a double skin, damp proof course or internal lintels for future windows, although it would be excessive for its intended purpose. It would however, need to comply with the size and external appearance of the

⁴ As shown in the photographs contained in the appellant's appeal statement.

⁵ Class Q, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 for the changes of buildings on agricultural units and former agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses.

building shown on the submitted plans and the use would need to be consistent with the description of development. Permitting a track within the fields on the holding does not automatically justify the construction of an unsympathetic building that fails to have regard to the sensitive rural setting in which it would be sited.

19. The proposed development would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policies DM1 and DM2 of the DPD and Policy CS1.1 of the South Lakeland Local Development Framework; Core Strategy (CS) 2010. Together these policies seek to protect the countryside for its intrinsic beauty and to ensure that new development is of a high quality, localised and appropriate design.

Other Matters

20. Prior approval was granted in 2023⁶ for the erection of a stone and slate barn for animal feed and implements, to replace the former field shelter. The appellant states that this approval remains extant and could be implemented if the appeal were to fail. With no evidence to the contrary, this would constitute a fallback position. There may be a realistic prospect of the prior approval scheme being implemented but such development would not be permitted if the building was not *designed for agricultural purposes* [my emphasis].
21. Even with 3 small windows, the form of the approved building would be more akin to a traditional barn than that proposed. Its smaller scale and typical field barn proportions would render it less conspicuous than the proposed building. The fallback position would therefore be different and the degree of harm to the character and appearance of the area would be less, than the proposal before me. This attracts no more than limited weight.
22. I recognise the need for farms to plan for the future which may involve diversification proposals to supplement agricultural activity and income. However, I must determine the appeal on the basis of what has been applied for. Any future proposals are a matter for the parties at that time, depending on whether planning permission would be required.

Conclusion

23. The appellant has failed to demonstrate that there is an agricultural need for the proposed building in this location, and the limited weight ascribed to the fallback position would not outweigh the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with it. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR

⁶ Application reference PN/2023/0017 as set out in the Council's officer report.