

North York Moors National Park Authority

Borough: Scarborough Borough Council Parish:
Harwood Dale

Application No. NYM/2016/0201/AGRP

Proposal: erection of grain store building

Location: Murkhead Farm, Harwood Dale

Decision Date: 01 June 2016

Consultations

Site Notice Expiry Date - 18 May 2016.

Director of Planning's Recommendation

Refusal for the following reason:

1.	The siting of the proposed building, remote from the main farmstead and any neighbouring farmsteads or other buildings would represent sporadic development which would be detrimental to the landscape character and appearance of this part of the National Park. The building would be clearly seen from the road network and by reason of its isolated nature, in a prominent location, the proposed building would have a harmful impact on this landscape which is not characterised by isolated or small groups of buildings.
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M. G. W.
23. May. 2016.

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Background

This prior notification proposes the erection of a grain store building to serve Murkhead Farm. The application site lies to the west of the small settlement of Harwood Dale at the junction between Gatela Road and the road to Harwood Dale. The private access road to Murkhead Farm also leads from this junction. The application site is some 350 metres from the Murkhead Farm and lies to the immediate south east of the junction and comprises an open and flat field currently under arable production.

As stated above, the proposed building is proposed to be sited a significant distance from both the host farm and any neighbouring farms/properties. Being adjacent to the main route to Harwood Dale, the field is visually prominent and the development site is clearly visible in both long and short distance views from the road. The field boundary is mainly post and wire fencing but there is a short stretch of mature hedge along the northernmost boundary which partially restricts views when travelling from east to west. The land is relatively flat and the building is proposed to occupy an area closest to the road where the existing field access can be utilised. The proposed building measures approximately 31 metres by 14 metres, 5 metres to eaves and 8 metres to ridge.

The building is required as a safe, secure and dry crop store to serve the predominantly arable enterprise. The applicant has explained that the existing farm buildings and access for the farmstead are inadequate and prevent the business from acting as equal competitor. The main problems encountered by the applicant are:

- The narrow access bridge prevents commercial delivery wagons from accessing the main farm yard so all seed and fertilizer deliveries must be off-loaded at the bottom of the farm track and transported in smaller quantities. This is time consuming and creates a safety issue.
- When grain is sold we are restricted in marketing due to the 20 tonne limit for trucks. These vehicles are reducing in availability and therefore charge a premium of £4 per tonne. This increases our costs and increases traffic by 30%.
- We only have short-term crop storage until the end of October which severely impacts our competitiveness and ability to adapt to volatile global markets.

The applicant has described the benefits of the proposed building as follows:

- Safe, secure and accredited storage to accommodate all deliveries (including liquid fertilizer as opposed to bagged fertilizer).
- Improvements to crop marketing by reduced vehicular movements (therefore reduction in added value to crops).
- Accredited store would improve flexibility and enable the business to adapt to changing markets.
- Would allow the farm to diversify crop options.

Main Issues

The main issues to consider are siting and design. The building has certainly been designed for the purposes of agriculture and would generally be in-keeping with existing, modern agricultural buildings in the surrounding area.

Although the field has some existing hedgerow screening along the northern boundary this is only a small part of the boundary with the majority of the boundary being marked by a post and wire fence. The building would be very prominent and isolated which is very uncharacteristic for this National Park.

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Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed site offers operational benefits for the applicant's agricultural business, it is considered that the adverse visual impact and increased level of activity that would ensue in this exposed location is sufficient to justify refusal in this case. The National Park benefits from the highest level of landscape protection and the first statutory purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park. The siting of a large grain store in this location is considered to represent harmful development in the open countryside.

It is acknowledged that the existing access is restricted by reason of a narrow brick built bridge over the beck. It is considered that an alternative site within the existing farmyard would be more favourable (and practical on the basis the new building would be close to existing buildings serving the farm) and the operational issues regarding restricted access cited by the applicant could be overcome by works to improve/widen the bridge.

On the basis that a building in this location is considered to have a significant and adverse landscape impact in public views, refusal of the prior notification is recommended.

