

Standalone Farm

Letchworth Garden City

Design & Access Statement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by Louis de Soissons Ltd, on behalf of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, to support the application for Prior Approval for the construction of a new manure store within the grounds of Standalone Farm in Letchworth Garden City.

The submission is accompanied by drawings of the proposed site together with plans and elevations of the proposed building by S&A Fabricators.

Standalone Farm is located on the outskirts of the north-west of Letchworth Garden City, in Hertfordshire and is accessed from Wilbury Road. The image below shows the site outlined in red, the extent of the existing farm buildings and car park on site, and the access from Wilbury Road.



Google Earth extract

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2.0 THE SITE

2.1 Site Background

The farm has been open to the public for over 40 years as a small, traditional working farm while entertaining families and schoolchildren with events and activities centred around the farm activities.

Standalone Farm has a rich history dating back to the medieval era when it was part of a predominantly rural landscape surrounded by farmland. This changed in the early 20th century with the development of Letchworth Garden City. In 1980, the 69-hectare farm was converted into a visitor attraction and has since grown into a popular destination for events and educational experiences catering to all ages.

Visitors can view a diverse range of animals, from small pets like guinea pigs and rabbits to larger farm animals such as goats, donkeys, horses, and alpacas. The farm also offers countryside walks, trails, play areas, and a year-round calendar of events. Additional amenities include a café and a gift shop.

Traditionally, the farm operated during the spring and summer months, but over the past decade, its season has expanded, currently running from February half-term through to the end of October. The number of visitors has risen to 100,000 per year and the farm's popularity continues to grow which will extend the operating months in future. While the farm's operations have had to adapt over the years, it has remained a vital leisure destination for the local community and the wider region, with visitor numbers continuing to grow year on year. The farm also regularly hosts educational visits for schools, local clubs, and organizations.



Standalone Farm: aerial view of farm buildings

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2.2 Site Context

The farm features a Grade II Listed farmhouse alongside a variety of agricultural buildings, which serve for both farming and storage purposes, as well as supporting leisure activities connected to the site's main use. The surrounding land is mostly open and gently sloping, with connections to the surrounding Greenway.

The whole of the site is swathed in the North Herts Green Belt outside of the settlement boundary of Letchworth Garden City. The farmland is bounded to the east by a residential development, with open fields to the west and north.

The riparian watercourse Pix Brook, a chalk stream, runs through the site. As a result, various parts of the farm are deemed to be within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. Due to problems of pollutants related to farm activities entering the watercourse, a grant has been sought to assist with the rectification of these issues in order to decrease the impact on the stream and the wider environment. Information taken from the grant application includes:

- The farmyard and livestock housing sits immediately adjacent to the Pix Brook which is liable to flooding following periods of high rainfall. To maintain year-round use, and to reduce risk of pollutants including manures/slurry being washed out of the buildings during periods of flood, the farm buildings, layout etc are being reviewed by the applicant and improvements are being made."*

A number of improvements have been agreed as being necessary to alleviate the environmental issues at the farm including the proposed new manure store, enhancements to existing buildings, installation of foul water collection with new drains including silt traps, sediment traps, plus the introduction of new hand washing facilities within the public areas.

Due to overall funding issues, these enhancements will be phased over the next few years. However, the manure store is considered essential as an initial remediation effort, hence the submission of this application.



Standalone Farm: Google Earth view of the farm buildings

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2.2 Site Photographs



VIEW 1



VIEW 2



VIEW 3



VIEW 4



VIEW 5

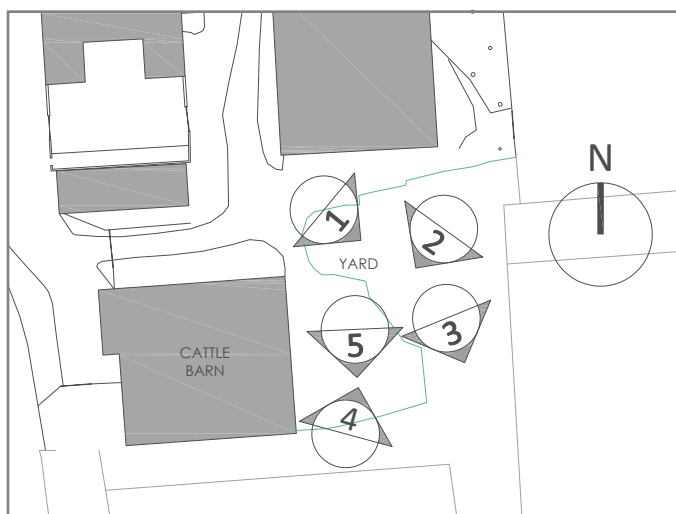


PHOTO KEY

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3.0 PLANNING

Below is a list of the planning applications over the last 10 years which have been submitted relating to the farm and its current use.

3.1 Recent Planning History (10 years)

- 21/03510/FP Installation of car park and pedestrian/cycle path: Permission 07/04/2022
- 21/03169/FP Erection of temporary events enclosure for a period of 3 years: Permission 10/03/2022
- 14/00857/1AD Replacement non-illuminated entrance sign: Permission 16/06/2014
- 08/02928/1 Installation of children's adventure playground: Permission 21/01/2009
- 08/00152/1 Installation of children's electric vehicle track: Permission 12/05/2008
- 06/00200/1 Side extension to existing building to provide additional accommodation for Model Railway Club: Permission 03/04/2006

Last year, pre-application advice was sought for the erection of an animal shelter and manure store on the site. Due to funding for the project being limited, the landowner wishes to proceed with the manure store as an essential contribution to the farm's agricultural use and to the important environmental remediation.

3.2 Planning Policy Context

We believe that this proposed development is considered permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015: Schedule 2 Part 6 - Agricultural and Forestry

Class A – agricultural development on units of 5 hectares or more

Permitted development

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

Whilst the site is within the Green Belt, the proposed building is to be within the boundary of the confines of the non-public areas at Standalone Farm, on an existing hardstanding area used for manure storage, and will serve to improve the environmental issues of storing the manure in the open air with the constant risk of contamination of Pix Brook during heavy periods of rainfall.

An application for Government funding was submitted by ADAS on behalf of LGCHF which has been granted, no. 1850512 (Countryside Stewardship Agreement Document). This funding is to be put towards the cost of the new building and the infrastructure surrounding it.

The pre-application advice, ref: 25/01340/PRE dated 18th July 2025, written by Planning Officer Alex Howard states:

"In respect of the proposed manure store building, this is considered to be an agricultural building under Paragraph 154 a), sited in an appropriate location which will improve the current manure storage conditions and benefit the enhancements to the site which are seeking to reduce the contamination issues from the farm processes into the watercourse. Therefore, this would not be inappropriate development in my view."

The advice continues to state: *"Funding has been secured to implement these measures and whilst they do not appear to require planning permission, the covered manure store is vital for the continued use of the farm as this will cease the contaminated run-off from the manure piles within the yard which, during heavy rainfall, currently leaches into the existing drainage and the stream, Pix Brook. This as a solution carries weight in planning terms given its improvement to existing biodiversity and is acceptable in my view."*

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4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This proposal is for a purpose designed and built manure store within the grounds of Standalone Farm. This building is essential for the current and future operation of the farm and will form part of the overall environmental remediation strategy for the farm.

4.1 Use & Amount

The proposed building is a new purpose-built covered manure store.

The current arrangement for storing manure is inadequate and open to the elements. This causes many issues, particularly in wet weather in terms of contamination leakage into the drains and the potential for contamination of Pix Brook. By having a new purpose-built covered manure store with specialist-designed drainage and lighting, the store can be used throughout the year without the current problems which are encountered on a daily basis.

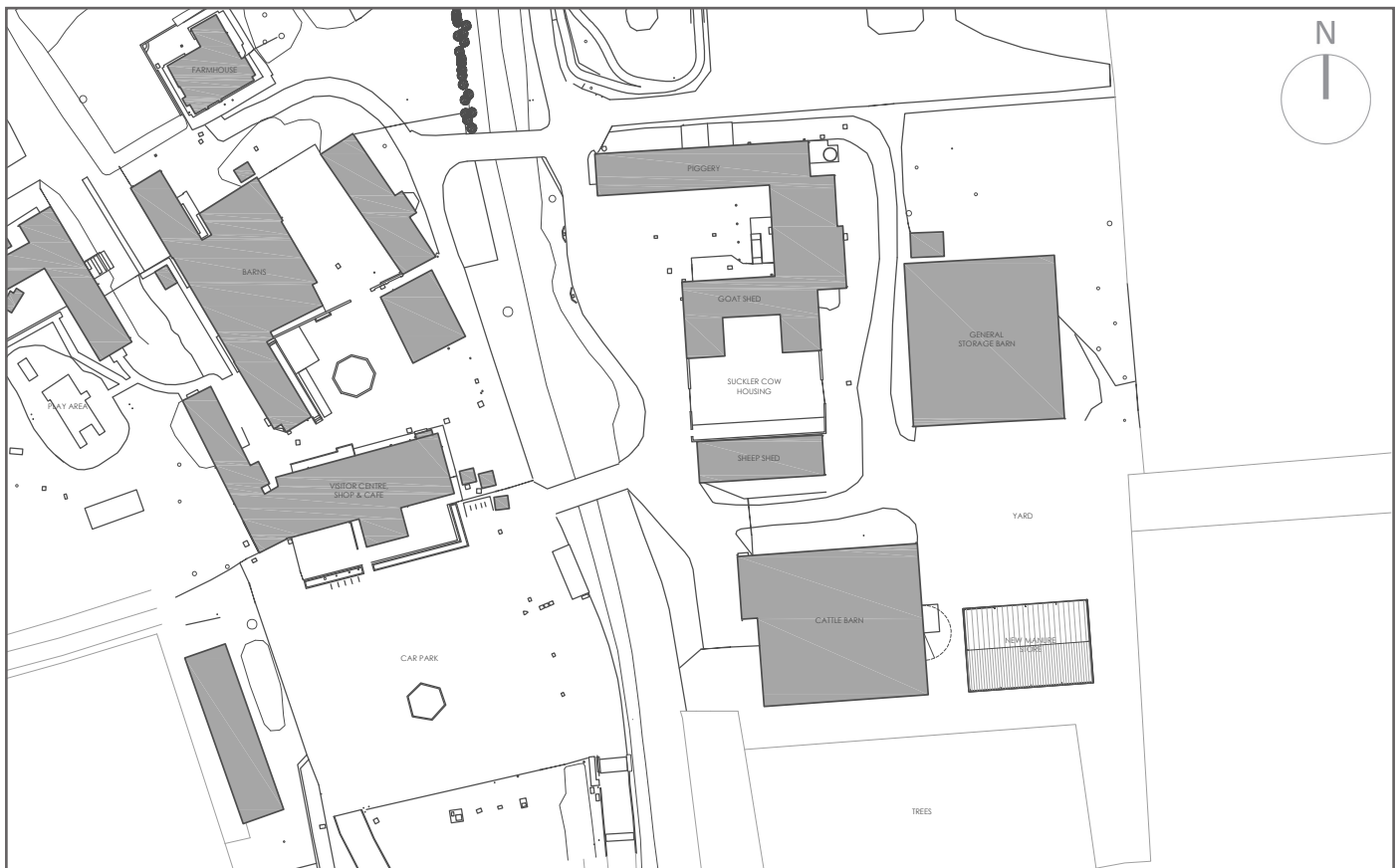
The proposed gross external floor area of the manure store is 223m².

4.2 Layout

The layout below shows the proposed location of the building in relation to the other facilities on site.

The manure store is to be located to the rear (east) of the existing cattle barn, within the farm yard and not open to the general public. The open frontage is to face the existing yard and accessed from the northern side. The proposed location for this building is in the optimum position for both the existing cattle barn, and all other animal sheds and shelters on site.

The manure store will stand on an impermeable base, and with a collection drain to collect runoff slurry.



Proposed Site Plan

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4.3 Scale & Massing

The proposed building is purpose-designed for its use on the farm. This is a suitable size, being of a similar scale and mass to the other agricultural buildings on the farm, which will ensure its continued use now and in the future.

The proposed manure store is 18.3m x 12.2m, a ridge height of 6.6m (with roof pitch of 15 degrees) and eaves at 5.0m.

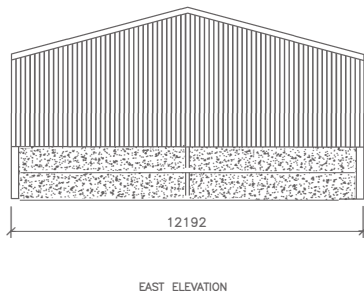
4.4 Character & Appearance

As shown in the elevation drawings of the building (below), the proposed character and appearance is of general steel-framed agricultural buildings.

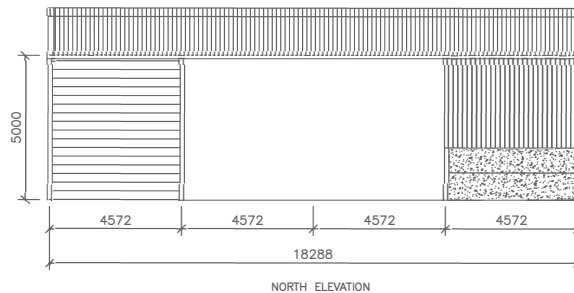
The proposed 'flood resilient' materials to be used are:

- Roof: Profile 6 Fibre Cement
- Walls: Timber boarding above 2no. 1.0m concrete panels

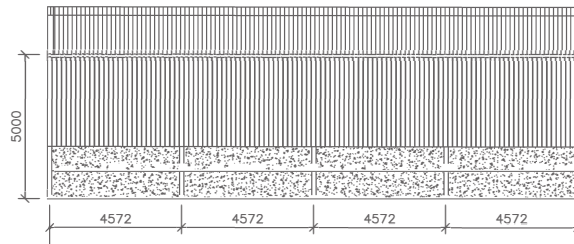
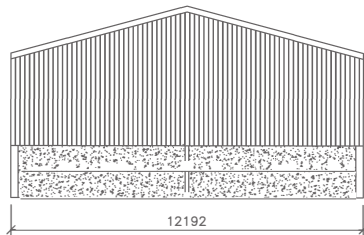
This proposed style is all in accordance with the use of the site, the proposed use of the building, and with the other agricultural style of buildings around the farm.



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



Manure Store: proposed elevations (NTS)

5.0 ACCESS

There is no access for the public to the rear of the cattle barn and to the manure store. As with the existing level ground within the yard, level access to the building will be provided for the farm staff and machinery.

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6.0 SUMMARY

The proposed covered manure store is an essential part of the much-needed environmental and biodiversity improvements proposed for the farm.

The building is an important and much needed addition within the farm so as to resolve the problems of contamination flowing into the drains and into the stream. This combined with the site-wide improvements for the farm will improve the environmental issues currently experienced and will contribute more widely to the ResilientTogether project for Pix Brook through the North Herts and Central Beds regions and beyond.

Being purely to improve and enhance the agricultural use of the farm, we believe the proposed manure store is considered to be within the permitted development rights of Standalone Farm and therefore meets the criteria for a Prior Approval under Schedule 2 Part 6 of the GPDO.