

Planning Application for Covered Earth Bank Slurry Lagoon

Nabbs Farm
Rowlands Road
Bury
BL9 5LJ

Planning Statement

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1 Introduction

This planning statement is in support of an application for an earth bank slurry lagoon to serve the farming activities at Falshaws Farm, the lagoon is to be located directly adjacent to the existing farm building complex.

Following the introduction of The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018 the farm needs to provide additional compliant slurry storage.

2 Farming Policy

Falshaws Farm is managed by the Falshaw Family with Mark and his sons being the principal workforce working full-time on the holding together. The family business has invested heavily in improving the farm infrastructure in recent years and is committed to producing high quality milk under high health and welfare standards.

The farm holding comprises over 133 ha (328 acres) of grassland being both grazed and cut for silage and fed directly to the dairy herd at the farmstead.

The livestock enterprise comprises around 180 head of adult milking cattle and around 300 head of young stock and replacements. The farm breeds and rears all its own replacements and the milk is sold on contract to Muller Co-op.

The holding has an existing slurry lagoon within the existing yard complex. It is required under The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018 that farmers must provide 4 months slurry storage with additional regulations coming in requiring 6 months storage. The existing facilities fall short of this requirement.

An application to the Slurry Infrastructure Grant under the Rural Payments Agency funding has been submitted and the business has been invited to make a fully application under the process.

3 The Proposed Development

The proposed development is to construct a lined earth bank slurry lagoon with an impermeable fixed floating cover to provide 6 months slurry storage capacity for the slurry produced at Falshaws Farm.

The proposed location is sited adjacent to the farmstead directly to the northwest of the existing cattle housing where the slurry will be produced. The applicant intends to erect a slurry separator alongside the proposed lagoon to reduce the volume of liquid slurry required to be stored and capitalise on the nutrient value of the manure produced on farm.

The proposal is to store the slurry over winter and then it will be applied in spring when the grass is growing and can make full utilisation of the available nutrients.

The business has applied for the Slurry Infrastructure Grant (run by the Rural Payments Agency) and the site has been reviewed and approved by the Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer. The site falls within a Medium Priority water catchment area for Phosphates and the CSFO will support this proposal alongside the impermeable fixed floating cover which will

negate ammonia loss into the atmosphere, the proposed site in flood zone 1 with a low probability of flooding.

The proposal will solve the current storage deficit and put in place a permanent system. This will achieve compliance with environmental legislation and improve the efficiency of nutrient utilisation.

4 Location

The proposed development is sited directly adjacent to the farmstead in close proximity to the existing slurry store on level agricultural land which will aid in the construction and access thereafter. The site would provide the applicant with sufficient storage of slurry to serve the farm throughout the year.

5 Scale

The proposed slurry lagoon will be 29.5m in width, 49.2m in length and a depth of 4m with approximately 2m above ground earth bunding. The lagoon will provide storage to meet the capacity requirements across the holding.

6 Appearance

The slurry store will be earth banked and lined using a 2mm HDPE liner. The earth banks will extend to 2m above existing ground level and a secure fence around the perimeter will be erected. The banks will be sown with a low maintenance grass mix. The lagoon will be covered with an integrated impermeable fixed floating cover.

7 Landscaping

The proposed development will be built into the ground. The earth bunding extends 2m above ground level. No landscaping is proposed at this stage of the application as the proposed bunds will screen it from view.

8 Access

Access is taken directly from Rowlands Road via existing field gateways and the existing farmyard used daily by the applicant.

9 Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2024 and amended on 7th February 2025.

Places for Everyone Joint Local Plan was adopted on 21st March 2024. Relevant policies are: -

- JP-G9: Green Belt
- JP-G8: A New Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in August 1997. In 2007, most policies were saved and until the new Local Plan is adopted the UDP will be used in decision making where it is in accordance with the NPPF. Relevant policies are:-

- OL4/5: Agricultural Development
- OL5/2: Development in River Valleys

The draft Bury Local Plan sets out a framework to manage future growth and development up to 2043 and has recently been subject of a consultation, ending on 12th May 2025. Once adopted this Local Plan will replace the saved policies of the UDP referred to above.

10 Assessment against Planning Policy

The application site is an agricultural field sited to the west of the complex of farm buildings that make up the farmstead at Nabbs Farm and is sited within the Green Belt.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However, certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, this includes, as set out in paragraph 154 (h), other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

ii) engineering operations.

The construction of the earth bank slurry lagoon is an engineering operation. A bund will be constructed around the lagoon, and this will be grown with grass afterwards giving a natural appearance. The development will preserve the openness of the Green Belt and will not conflict with the five purposes that the Green Belt serves that are set out in paragraph 143 a) to e) of the NPPF. Of particular relevance to this case is (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The slurry lagoon has been carefully designed and located in a sensible location in terms of the farming operations taking place and being closely related to the existing complex of farm buildings.

The proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt as the lagoon will preserve the openness of the Green Belt. However, there are very special circumstances in this case. As set out above the development is necessary for the farm to solve its current slurry storage

deficit and meet the requirements of environmental legislation. The proposal will improve the efficiency of nutrient utilisation and is supported by the applicants' Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer. The development is subject to funding through a Slurry Infrastructure Grant application operated by the Rural Payments Agency.

The proposal meets the requirements of 'Policy JP-G9: The Green Belt of Places for Everyone' that mirror paragraph 143 a) to e) of the NPPF, referred to above.

When considered against UDP Policy OL5/2: Development in River Valleys the proposal is not a new building or change of use of the existing agricultural land. As set out in section 3 above the engineering operations proposed to form the slurry lagoon have been designed after consultation with the Applicants' Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer and will improve the environmental performance of the farm.

The proposal meets the requirements of Local Plan Policy OL4/5 as it is sited and designed to minimise its visual impact on the landscape and relates well to existing farm buildings.

The submission includes a Biodiversity Net Gain, with the small sites metric and relevant plans being included. The proposal meets the requirements of Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity of Places for Everyone.

11 Conclusion

The proposed earth bank lagoon is a major capital investment. The combination of Farm Assurance and Environment Agency regulations necessitate the provision of increased slurry storage. The provision of this facility will provide the applicant with sufficient capacity and will improve the utilisation of nutrients and reduce the risk of pollution. The site for the proposed store is strategically located to achieve several operational efficiencies.

The proposal is compliant with the requirements of National and Local Planning Policy and would result in a well-designed slurry storage solution for the existing farming operations.