Planning Statement

Erection of roof over existing silage clamp at Caeaugwynion Farm, Chirk, Wrexham

Mr Tom Hughes **17th June 2024**

Contents

1. The Proposal
2. The Application Site
3. Planning Policy
4. Sustainability
5. Design
6. Visual Impact
7. Drainage Arrangements
8. Access Issues
9. Residential Amenity
10. Ecology
11. Summary

1. The Proposal

1.1 The proposal is to erect a roof covering over an existing silage clamp at Caeaugwynion Farm to prevent rainwater falling onto the silage and running into the lagoon which is built to receive and contain slurry from the livestock.

1.2 There is no intention to increase the number of livestock.

1.3 The project is part of the Welsh Government's "Yard Covering Capital Scheme" designed to encourage farmers in Wales to improve on farm infrastructure and improve the water environment by separating water and silage effluent.

1.4 This will help the applicant to better comply with the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution)(Wales) Regulations 2021 and ensure that waste is disposed of effectively, in accordance with the farm's Business Nutrient Management Plan.





The silage clamp is generally below the level of the adjoining land and the new roof will have minimal visual impact as it will stand alongside existing tall agricultural sheds

1.5 Preventing the silage run off entering the slurry lagoons will increase the capacity of the lagoons thereby reducing the potential for pollution and making the farm more environmentally sustainable.

1.6 The clamp is located alongside existing livestock sheds on the northern edge of the farm yard and measures some 27.5m long by 12m wide and is approximately 2m deep. It has plastic lined walls and a concrete floor and the majority of it is concealed in the ground.

1.7 The new roof will be built onto steel posts which will raise the walls to 8m at the eaves with a double pitched roof bringing the overall height up by a further 1.645m to the ridge.

1.8 The southern side will be obscured by the adjoining shed and the eastern gable will be open to enable silage to be removed for stock. The western gable and the northern side will be open above 2m so that the clamp can be filled by tractor and trailer.

1.9 Water from the roof will be directed into a storage tank outside the western end of the building and will be fed to the livestock. Any excess water will go into an existing soakaway in the adjoining field.

2. The Application Site

2.1 Caeaugwynion Farm stands in an elevated position within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, overlooking Chirk. It is a mixed dairy and sheep farm with some 320 acres of owned and rented land.

2.2 It has a significant herd of milking cattle and followers and some 300 lambing ewes.

2.3 Two full time and one part time member of staff are employed.

2.4 The buildings are grouped tightly, of modern contemporary design and they are well maintained.

2.5 A public footpath runs through the yard and Offa's Dykes runs past the farm in the field below. Neither are affected the farming activities.

2.6 The applicant lives in a modern bungalow some 150m to the north of the farm yard and there is another dwelling to the south of the yard. It is otherwise a rural location with few other dwellings.

3. Planning Policy

3.1 The proposals comply with national and local adopted planning policy.

(a) Planning Policy Wales states;

"Legislation establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise to ensure that social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced"

"Planning Authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are designed to meet the needs of changing farming practices or are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or welfare legislation."

(b) The Welsh Government Advice Note on sustainable drainage for agricultural buildings and coverings indicates;

"SUDS features take different shapes and forms. In agricultural development the following types of drainage feature are generally best suited….rainwater harvesting for animal drinking water, washing down equipment or for irrigation, filter drains, sediment traps, infiltration basins, wetlands, ponds etc"

(c) The following Policies in the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan are all satisfied by the proposal:-

Policy DM1- Development Management Considerationss
Policy SP12 – Design Principles
Policy SP14 – The Natural Environment
Policy SP18 - Climate Change
Policy SP19 – Green Infrastructure
Policy NE3 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
Policy NE4 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beaauty
Policy NE6 – Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality

(d) Wrexham Unitary Development Plan states:-

Policy EC4 – Agricultural Buildings – The construction of new agricultural buildings will be permitted unless the development is materially detrimental in terms of its impact on the environment and surrounding landscape. The development should form part of an existing farm complex and take advantage of topography and other landscape features for screening.

(e) TAN 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities

Tan 6 states – "The overall goal for the planning system is to support living and working rural communities in order that they are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable."

(f) Natural Resources Wales advice to local authorities regarding surface water and phosphorous within a river SAC states:-

***"Any development that reduces the frequency or volume of irregular phosphorous discharges within a SAC river catchment …such as the erection of agricultural structures and drainage schemes to separate rainwater from manures and slurries by covering yards and existing manure / slurry stores….can be screened out as not likely to have a significant effect on the SAC*.** Any such development must not be linked to an increase in livestock numbers or the capacity for an increase in livestock numbers through the provision of additional infrastructure"

4. Sustainability

4.1 One of the main aims of the Welsh Government's Yard Coverings Scheme is to make farming more sustainable by controlling surface water run off thus reducing the amount of pollution generated by the industry.

4.2 The roof that the applicant wants to erect will prevent most of the rain washing through the silage thereby ensuring that the run off is not diluted and that it does not flow out of the store and into the slurry lagoon.

4.3 In all other respects the project is sustainable. Roof water will be harvested, no habitat will be destroyed, no traffic will be generated, no pollution or flooding will be created, the materials will be acquired locally and a local contractor will be employed to carry out the work.

5. Design

5.1 The proposed roof structure will be of contemporary design and it will be similar in materials and appearance to surrounding farm buildings. It will have a conventional dual pitched roof

5.2 The walls and roof will be constructed of 130mm by 300mm H profile steel posts clad as recommended in slate blue box profile sheeting.

5.3 The existing 2m high plastic lined walls forming three sides of the clamp will remain in situ but they are located below the level of the adjacent field and are barely visible. When the clamp is in use the silage and black plastic sheeting conceals it even further.

6. Visual Impact

6.1 The silage clamp has minimal visual impact because it is of modest size, it is screened by trees on the road side and most of it is below ground level.

6.2 It has no adverse impact on the qualities of the AONB or the resources and ecosystem services on which the local economy and the well being of the area depends. On the contrary the applicant's farming activities are a fundamental component of the character of the AONB and his business is a major contributor to the social, economic and well being of the community.

6.3 The new roof has been designed to an appropriately high standard and once work is complete the clamp will be completely compatible with its surroundings.

6.4 The building is located alongside a large agricultural shed which helps it to blend in, the lower 2m are below adjacent ground level and it has a backdrop of tall hedges, bushes and trees on the western side.

6.5 The harvested silage will obscure views from any distance and the clamp will readily blend into the landscape.

7. Drainage

7.1 The clamp only houses silage and it will not contain or produce foul waste.

7.2 During periods of very bad weather rainwater can wash over the exposed silage and some liquid can run off into the adjacent slurry lagoon. This is a very common occurrence throughout Wales but it is not good practice and the applicant is working with the Welsh Government to prevent it by building the new roof over the clamp. The Welsh Office welcomes the initiative and is funding much of it.

7.3 Rainwater from the roof will be harvested in a new 10,000 litre tank positioned alongside the western gable of the clamp and it will be fed to the cattle in the adjoining shed. An overflow will be installed directing unused water into the existing surface water soakaway in the adjacent field.

8. Access Issues

8.1 The development proposed will not create any access or highway problems at all.

8.2 The silage clamp is filled by agricultural tractor and trailer which approaches the site over the adjacent farmland and rarely has call to use the surrounding roads.

8.3 It is emptied in small quantities over the winter months when silage is removed to feed the livestock in the adjacent sheds.

9. Residential Amenity

9.1 The silage clamp has been in use for several years and has never generated complaints of any sort. Building a roof over it as proposed will not increase its storage capacity or create an additional / alternative use. It will remain as a silage clamp.

9.2 There are two residential properties in the vicinity but they will not be affected and both are linked to Caeaugwynion Farm.

10. Ecology

10.1 The development will not destroy any habitat and it will not harm any protected species.

10.2 The clamp has a concrete floor and apron and the walls are plastic lined timber. It is surrounded by existing modern buildings, a slurry lagoon, a hedge with a highway beyond the western gable and a grazed paddock at the side. Neither the structure nor its immediate environs have ecological merit.

10.3 The new roof will be similarly unsuitable and unattractive to wildlife. It will be bolted to the clamp and constructed of profiled metal sheeting fixed to metal stanchions.

10.4 A Green Infrastructure Statement can be supplied if required but appears unnecessary as minimal excavation is proposed and the applicant is happy to erect bat and bird boxes on the roof by agreement.

11. Summary

11.1 In summary:-

- The planning application is submitted under the Welsh Government's Yard Covering Capital Scheme and seeks permission to erect a roof over an existing silage clamp to prevent rainwater washing silage into the farm slurry lagoon and thereby significantly reducing the chances of a pollution event.

- The proposal satisfies national and local planning policy.

- No foul waste will be produced and no additional livestock will be kept as a result of the improvements. Natural Resources Wales accepts that this type of project will not have a detrimental effect on the River Dee SAC.

- The project is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

- The new roof will have no visual impact locally or in the wider landscape and it will be completely compatible with its surroundings and the character of the AONB.

- Water from the roof of the silage clamp will be harvested and used to water livestock and any overflow will be directed to an existing soakway.

- No pollution or flooding will be caused by the project.

- The nearest dwellings are located within the farm and they will not be affected by the proposals.

- The project has no highway implications of any sort.

- No habitat or wildlife will be harmed by the proposed works.

- Once completed the covered clamp will significantly reduce the potential for pollution at the farm, it will easily blend into the landscape and it will enhance the viability of the business.