

Planning Statement

Land off Bronwylfa Road
Aberoer
Wrexham
LL14 4LG

Construction of an agricultural building and laying of stone surface

Mark & Laura Roberts

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Roger Parry & Partners LLP
www.rogerparry.net
planning@rogerparry.net
Tel: 01691 655334

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Author:	Gwyn Humphreys BSc (Hons) AssocRTPI
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Roger Parry & Partners LLP
Mercian House
9 Darwin Court
Oxon Business Park
Shrewsbury
SY3 5AL

Tel: 01691 655334
01743 791336

gwyn@rogerparry.net

www.rogerparry.net

Ref: 80168

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the construction of an agricultural storage building and all associated works on land off Bronwylfa Road, Aberoer, Wrexham, LL14 4LG.

1.2 The proposed development would see the construction of a new agricultural storage building within the site, to replace an existing storage container which has recently been sited on the land. The application also seeks consent for the laying of a stone/gravel surface on the site, which has already taken place. As such, the application is submitted part-retrospectively.

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the other documentation submitted as part of the application, listed below:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 001 – Site Location Plan
- Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 002 – Existing Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 003 – Proposed Block Plan
- Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 004 – Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
- Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 100 – Proposed Floor Plan & Elevations

1.4 This Planning Statement provides a balanced overview of the planning issues associated with the development and is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendation.

1.5 The information set-out within this statement confirms the development can be delivered on-site without giving rise to any unacceptable or adverse impacts in planning-terms.

2.0 The Application Site & Background

2.1 The application site comprises a triangular parcel of agricultural land measuring approximately 0.08 hectares in area, located at the junction of the B5426 public highway (Bronwylfa Road) and an unclassified public highway. The site is bound on all three sides by existing mature native species hedgerows.

2.2 As can be noted from the submitted Site Location Plan, the Applicant also owns an adjacent agricultural field parcel on the opposite side of the unclassified public highway, which contains an agricultural building and yard area. The existing building on the adjacent field parcel was granted planning

permission at appeal (appeal reference: APP/H6955/A/21/3269296) in May 2021. It is considered appeal reference: APP/H6955/A/21/3269296 comprises a material planning consideration in this case.

2.3 As noted, there is an existing storage container on the land at present, sited within the south-eastern corner of the application site, which is used for agricultural storage purposes.

2.4 A new vehicular access into the land has also recently been created off the unclassified public highway. However, this does not require the benefit of planning permission, and does not, therefore, form part of the planning application.

2.5 The application site is located within a broadly rural area of Wrexham County Borough, lying in-between Pentrebychan and Minera. The area is primarily agricultural in nature, with several surrounding farmsteads as well as small clusters of rural residential properties.

2.6 The site is located outside of any defined settlement/development boundary as per the Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) and therefore is located within the open countryside in planning-terms.

2.7 An aerial view of the application site is provided below within Figure 1, with application site being identified by the red star:



Figure 1: Application site location and context

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The application relates to the proposed erection of a small-scale agricultural storage building on the land, for use by the Applicants in the upkeep of the agricultural land forming part of their holding.

3.2 The proposed building will measure 9.15m in length and 6.1m in width. It will have a height to the eaves of 3.05m and a height to the ridge of 3.65m to the ridge. Its internal floor area would be approximately 55.8m2. The building will be finished externally with slate blue box profile cladding. An access door will be provided within the south-eastern gable end.

3.3 As noted, the proposed building will replace the existing shipping container which is present on the land. The proposed building will be used for the storage of agricultural equipment, machinery and implements used in the upkeep of the Applicants' agricultural land.

3.4 The development will not lead to an increase in stock numbers on the Applicants' agricultural holding.

3.5 The application also seeks consent in retrospect for the laying of a stone/gravel surface within the application site. The laying of the stone surface allows access into the site during the entirety of the year.

3.6 As noted on Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 004, it is proposed that three new native species hedgerow trees be planted along the application site's southern boundary in the event that planning permission is granted.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024) advises at Paragraph 5.6.8 that ***"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"***.

4.2 Technical Advice Note 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities) also sets out the Welsh Government's support for agricultural development proposals owing to the positive impact they can have upon the rural economy and rural communities.

4.3 There are no directly applicable policies contained within the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan relating to proposals for new agricultural development. However, general support for new agricultural development and farm diversification proposals is expressed throughout the plan.

4.4 Of some relevance is LDP Policy EM4, which reads:

"New employment development outside of settlement limits will only be permitted through:

ii. New development required in connection with a rural enterprise, including proposals for farm diversification where:

(a) The development is located within or forms a logical extension to the complex of buildings on an existing rural enterprise; or
(b) In the case of buildings located away from an established rural enterprise complex, where a clear need for the development has been demonstrated and where there is no reasonable alternative location for the development".

4.5 LDP Policy DM1 is also considered to be of relevance, which is a general 'catch-all' development management policy. It reads as follows:

"Development proposals, where relevant, must:

i. Accord with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape in terms of their siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping;
ii. Not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties/land; and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers/users of the development itself;
iii. Safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land, noise, light or air, or land instability, arising from development;
iv. Take account of personal and community safety and security in their design and layout;
v. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use ahead of travel by car;
vi. Not give rise to highway safety, pedestrian safety or parking problems on site or in the locality;
vii. Contribute to low carbon communities through energy efficiency, be designed to minimise the use of non-renewable energy, water and the production of waste both during construction and when in use;
viii. Not increase the risk of flooding but make adequate provision for sustainably dealing with foul and surface water drainage and not result in an unacceptable impact upon the water environment;
ix. On sites which have previously been developed, new development proposals should make use of existing suitable building materials wherever possible for appropriate uses in order to re-use recyclable materials and reduce the amount of imported materials; and

x. ***Ensure that any risks arising from past coal mining, as indicated on the constraints map, can be adequately managed."***

4.6 However, at the time of writing, the status of the Wrexham LDP is unclear given the recent ruling by the Court of Appeal which confirmed that the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 does not impose a duty upon Welsh Councils to adopt an LDP which, following the examination process, the Inspector has recommended for adoption. Indeed, it seems highly likely at the time of writing that the current Wrexham LDP will imminently be un-adopted which will significantly reduce the weight given to its planning policies within the overall planning balance.

5.0 Review of Main Material Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

5.1 The development relates to the provision of a new agricultural building on the site to provide a modern and secure agricultural store for use by the Applicants on their holding. The building will be used for the storage of agricultural machinery, implements and equipment used in the upkeep of the agricultural land forming part of the holding.

5.2 Whilst the application site is separated from the Applicants' main existing agricultural complex (to the north-west) by the unclassified public highway, it is nevertheless closed grouped with the existing farm building and from within the wider landscape would be viewed within the context of the existing built development within the immediate vicinity.

5.3 It is important to note that the application site lies within a working agricultural landscape characterised by small open fields divided by mature hedgerows and individual or small groups of trees. The area is typical of the agricultural nature of the area containing farms and associated farm buildings together with individual dwellings. There is a non-associated farm complex approximately 100m to the south-west of the application site, whilst another lies approximately 90m to the north. The proposed agricultural building is therefore very much within the context of the surrounding functional agricultural landscape and will not be out-of-keeping with the character and predominant land-use within the area.

5.4 Given the current uncertainty with regards the status of the Wrexham LDP, it is considered the most relevant planning policy pertaining to the application comprises national policy contained within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Ed. 12) and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6. Neither policy document contains reference with regards to establishing 'need' for new agricultural buildings such as the proposed let alone any detail as to how essential need is to be measured.

5.5 Ultimately, the application proposes a building to serve a land-based, farming activity. As such, the proposed development is capable of being an exception to the generally restrictive approach of both local and national planning policy to development within the open countryside. PPW seeks to encourage agriculture in the rural countryside to thrive and TAN 6 seeks to promote sustainable rural communities. The proposed small-scale agricultural storage building is consistent with both of these Welsh Government policy objectives.

5.6 In light of the above, the principle of providing a small-scale agricultural building within this location is acceptable in compliance with LDP Policies EM4 and DM1, PPW and TAN 6.

Design & Visual/Landscape Impact

5.7 As noted, the application site lies within a working agricultural landscape characterised by small open fields divided by mature hedgerows and individual or small groups of trees. The area is typical of the agricultural nature of the area containing farms and associated farm buildings together with individual dwellings. There is a non-associated farm complex approximately 100m to the south-west of the application site, whilst another lies approximately 90m to the north.

5.8 The application site is also not located within an area of the County Borough subject to a protective landscape or heritage designation.

5.9 The proposed agricultural storage building is of a minor scale; having a maximum height of 3.65m and an internal floor area of 55.8m2. It would also be of standard modern agricultural appearance and would match the appearance of the Applicants' existing agricultural building located within the adjacent field parcel, being finished with slate blue box profile cladding.

5.10 The building has been sited sensitively within the application site; benefitting from screening afforded by the site's existing mature boundary hedgerows, which when considered alongside the proposal's limited height and the close proximity of surrounding agricultural built development, means there would be no adverse landscape visual impact caused by the proposed development in this instance.

5.11 Indeed, the proposed building cannot be reasonably considered to be in an 'isolated' position as it would form part of a cluster of existing buildings comprising the Applicants' existing agricultural building to the north-west, the row of dwellings 30m away on the opposite site of Bronwylfa Road, and the larger existing farmsteads lying to the north and south-east of the site. The pattern of farm holdings with fragmented field ownership and tenancy means that it is not always practical nor viable to have all associated buildings located in one place. Even so, the position of the proposed building is not seen as an isolated location within the host functional agricultural landscape.

5.12 It is also important to note that the height of the proposal is limited at only 3.65m, which is significantly lower than the vast majority of existing agricultural buildings within the host rural landscape.

5.13 The proposed building would replace an existing storage container within the site, and the Applicants would be happy to accept a condition being attached to a grant of planning permission to require the removal of the storage container from the land once the proposed building has been constructed. This would secure a betterment in visual terms.

5.14 The application also proposes the planting of three new native species hedgerow trees along the application site's southern boundary, which once planted and matured, will provide additional benefits in terms of screening.

5.15 In light of the above, the development is acceptable with regards its visual impacts and design.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

5.16 The proposed agricultural storage building as submitted does not have the potential to cause any adverse impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity and privacy, in accordance with the requirements of LDP Policy DM1.

Ecology & Green Infrastructure

5.17 There are no statutory nor non-statutory ecological sites located within close proximity to the application site, although the site is wholly located within the freshwater catchment of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC. Notwithstanding this, given that the proposal comprises an agricultural storage building (which will not be used for the housing of livestock) there will be no impacts upon the SAC as a result of the development.

5.18 Prior to the laying of the stone/gravel surface on the land, the application site comprised an area of 'scrubland' which was largely laid to weeds and offered low ecological value. No trees or lengths of hedgerow have been removed from the site.

5.19 Given the current state of the application site, the construction of the proposed agricultural building will not have the potential to cause any adverse impacts upon protected species.

5.20 In terms of green infrastructure and providing a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB), Dwg No: 80168 / GH / 004 shows the proposed planting of three new native species hedgerow trees along the application site's southern boundary. Full details of planting methods, species, timings and aftercare measures are contained on the submitted plan. The proposed planting will provide a significant NBB effect over and above the application site's green infrastructure baseline, and therefore complies with the requirements of PPW

(Chapter 6). Please refer to the submitted Green Infrastructure Statement for further details.

5.21 In light of the above, the development would not cause any adverse ecological effects and would provide an NBB effect on-site in-line with the requirements of PPW (Chapter 6) and TAN 5.

Highways

5.22 As noted, a vehicular access has been created into the site. However, as this is off the unclassified public highway, this work did not require the benefit of planning permission, and it does not, therefore, comprise part of the planning application.

5.23 The planning application does not propose any change of use of the application site; with this remaining wholly agricultural. As such, the proposed small-scale agricultural storage building does not have the potential to materially increase the frequency or number of vehicular movements to/from the application site.

5.24 As such, the development as submitted would not cause any impacts upon highway safety within the application site's vicinity.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The development is needed for legitimate agricultural storage purposes and would provide an efficient use for the small agricultural field parcel as part of the Applicants' existing agricultural holding. The proposal is of a modest scale, and would be of an acceptable appearance within the host rural landscape. The development would not cause any adverse impacts upon the natural environment, neighbouring residential amenity nor upon highway safety.

6.2 Therefore, the proposal is fully compliant with both national and local planning policy requirements, and it is respectfully requested that full planning permission be granted for the development without delay.