



Appeal Decision

by G Hall BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Decision date: 18/02/2025

Appeal reference: CAS-03745-N1J2V8

Site address: Ridleywood Farm, Ridleywood, Wrexham LL13 9YA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by TSM and LR Lunt against the decision of Wrexham County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref ISY P/2024/0009, dated 3 January 2024, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2024.
 - The development proposed is Erection of a covered manure store and all associated works.
 - A site visit was made on 3 February 2025.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Planning appeals can only be made by the original planning applicants. The planning application was submitted in the names of TSM & LR Lunt, while the appeal was submitted under the names of TSM & TR Lunt. I have determined this appeal in the name of the original applicants, TSM & LR Lunt, who have confirmed these are the correct names and that they made the original planning application.
3. The development plan for an area includes Future Wales and the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). The Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 – 2028) was adopted by the Council in December 2023. Earlier decisions not to adopt the LDP were found not to be unlawful by the Court of Appeal and the Council's subsequent decision to adopt the LDP is now subject to challenge. The Welsh Government is seeking leave to challenge the Court of Appeal's judgement in the Supreme Court.
4. At the time of this decision, the challenge to the Council's adoption of the LDP has not been heard. I have determined this appeal on the basis the LDP is part of the development plan and that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the LDP unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Main Issue

5. This is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is an enclosed section of a larger agricultural field, accessed directly from Maesgwyn Lane. The south-east and south-west boundaries comprise hedgerows, while the north-east and north-west boundaries are defined by wire and post fencing. An access gate links the enclosed area to the adjacent field. The appeal site is described as an existing open-air manure store. At the time of my visit, there were car tyres and a low mound of deposited material on the site, which appeared to consist of soil, wood and stones, and the site was otherwise grassed with a small patch of standing water. Notwithstanding the mound, the predominantly open nature of the appeal site contributes to the undeveloped rural character and appearance of the area.
7. Notwithstanding the proximity to the industrial estate, the immediate area retains a distinct rural character, with clusters of agricultural buildings arranged in compact farm complexes visible in the landscape. Whilst not part of a Special Landscape Area and lying within a 'moderate' overall evaluation based on NRW's database, the general absence of visually intrusive sporadic development in the vicinity affords the immediate area a largely open and attractive rural character.
8. During my site visit I saw the buildings on the western side of the industrial estate, including the Net World Sports building. This and the buildings around it are grouped together as part of a wider development and do not appear as isolated structures in the countryside. Whilst it may be the case that permitted development may lead to encroachment onto land of open character, there is little to indicate that this would materially erode the landscape quality or character of the appeal site and its immediate vicinity.
9. The appeal proposal would be situated well away from the existing Ridleywood Farm complex, which comprises a compact mix of large agricultural buildings. Whilst of typical agricultural design, and of a size to accommodate farm vehicles and machinery, the appeal proposal would introduce a large, isolated structure that would be significantly detached from its associated farm holding. Given its siting in this open part of the countryside, the appeal building would erode the area's character and detract from its appearance. It would undermine the established practice of clustering agricultural buildings, introducing a building in a landscape that is otherwise open and undeveloped and unspoilt by large scale visually intrusive development.
10. Although the proposal indicates that mixed-species trees would be planted near the hedgerow between the proposed building and Maesgwyn Lane, these would provide only limited screening, leaving the site clearly visible when viewed from further along the lane and by users of the nearby PRow. In my view, the site is not unsightly in its present state, and it is reflective of its use within a working agricultural holding. The erection of a large building, partly screened by newly planted trees, would not offer any visual benefit over the site in its present state.
11. Whilst I accept that the presence of the PRow, the areas at risk of flooding near the main farm, and the need to achieve regulatory compliance with environmental regulations would influence the location of a closed manure store, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that these factors would be sufficiently constraining to justify that the appeal site is the only reasonable alternative for the proposed development. Given the extensive area of land included within the blue line, including land in proximity to the existing farm complex which is neither crossed by the PRow or shown as an area affected by flooding, the justification for the appeal site is limited and I am not persuaded by it.
12. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal would support pollution management initiatives, particularly in relation to water quality. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) advises that

planning authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental legislation, and this would therefore include the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. I attach moderate weight to these benefits. However, these advantages would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the countryside I have identified.

13. I therefore conclude that the development is contrary to the objectives of policies DM1 and EM4 of the Wrexham LDP, which seek to control development in the countryside and ensure that development accords with or enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. It would also conflict with the strict controls on development in the open countryside in PPW, and the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting rural enterprises provided there are no unacceptable impacts on local amenity as set out in Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities.
14. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.
15. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives.

G Hall

INSPECTOR