
Design and Access Statement

Change of use of building and land to B1
workshops with ancillary storage use and all
associated works

Stryt Yr Hwch Farm,

Sontley,

Wrexham,

LL13 0YA

On behalf of Mr R Williams

April 2022

Roger Parry and Partners LLP

www.rogerparry.net

richard@rogerparry.net

01691 655334

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Written by:	Lyndsey Fisher
Checked and approved by:	Richard Corbett <i>BSc (Hons) MRICS FAAV</i>
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Roger Parry & Partners LLP

The Estates Office
20 Salop Road
Oswestry
Shropshire
SY11 2NU
Tel: 01691 655334
richard@rogerparry.net

1.0 Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Mr R Williams, the purpose of which is to provide additional information and design details regarding the agricultural enterprise making a planning application for the change of use of the former dairy cattle shed to B1 workshops with ancillary storage and all associated works on land at Stryt Yr Hwch, Sontley, Wrexham.

The report provides an objective evaluation of the agricultural business operated by Mr R Williams in order to justify the requirements of Planning Policy Wales when considering development in the open countryside.

2.0 Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.

Technical Advice Note 6

3.2 Re-use/adaptation of rural buildings

3.2.1 When assessing planning applications for the re-use or adaptation of a rural building, the primary consideration should be whether the nature and extent of the new use proposed for the building is acceptable in planning terms. It should not normally be necessary to consider whether a building is no longer needed for its present agricultural or other purposes (although in the case of a tenanted agricultural building, the value in planning terms of the existing use should be taken into consideration). In circumstances where planning authorities have reasonable cause to believe that an applicant has attempted to abuse the system by constructing a new farm building with the benefit of permitted development rights, with the intention of early conversion to another use, it will be appropriate to investigate the history of the building to establish whether it was ever used for the purpose for which it was claimed to have been built.

3.2.3 Conversion proposals should respect the landscape and local building styles and materials. If a planning application is submitted for the re-use of a building which the planning authority considers has a significant adverse effect on the landscape in terms of visual amenity, it may be appropriate in connection with any proposed structural changes to impose conditions to secure an improvement in the external appearance of the building.

3.2.4 Planning authorities should consider setting out in development plans their approach to proposals for the re-use of complexes of buildings with a large aggregate floor area, and of individual buildings which are especially large. The economic and social needs of the area and environmental considerations may be particularly relevant to such proposals.

The application is a farm diversification scheme that proposes to re use an existing building. The building in question was previously used as part of the dairy enterprise, this part of the farming business has since ceased therefore the building needs to find an alternative use to generate income for the holding. The proposal will not result in any harm to the surrounding landscape.

The proposal will have a positive impact on the local economy as it will allow small businesses the much needed storage space they require.

Technical Advice note 23

3.2.1 The re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development, and tourism, sport and recreation¹³. In recognising this, local planning authorities are expected to adopt a positive approach to the conversion of rural buildings for business re-use, especially those buildings located within or adjoining farm building complexes on the basis that:

- they are suitable for the specific use;
- conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such scale as to prejudice town and village vitality;
- their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings;
- imposing conditions on a planning permission overcomes any planning objections, for example on environmental or traffic grounds, which would otherwise outweigh the advantage of re-use;
- if the buildings are in the open countryside, they are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
- conversion does not result in unacceptable impacts upon the structure, form, character or setting where the building is of historic and / or architectural interest.

The proposal is the re use of an existing agricultural building that is no longer required for the farming enterprise. The proposal will allow small scale rural commercial businesses a space to store their essential equipment that is required to run their business. The change of use will not have any detrimental effect on the surrounding area as there will be minimal external or internal changes to the existing building.

Under Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011:

Subject to the further controls over development that apply to the Green Belt, development proposals on appropriate sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefits, particularly where they relate to:

- Small-scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy, including farm diversification schemes;
- The retention and appropriate expansion of an existing established business, unless relocation to a suitable site within a settlement would be more appropriate.

Policy PS2:

Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.

Policy PS3

Development should use previously developed brownfield land comprising vacant, derelict or underused land in preference to the use of greenfield land, wherever possible, particularly so where greenfield land is of ecological, landscape or amenity value, or comprises agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a quality.

Policy GDP1 All new development should:-

- a) Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.
- b) Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.
- c) Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.
- d) Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.
- e) Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.
- f) Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.
- g) Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.
- h) Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.
- i) Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.
- j) Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.
- k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area

Policy PS4

Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.

The proposed change of use will not result in any alterations to the existing settlement pattern or character due to the reuse of the existing building. The local transport network will also see an improvement due to the previous use of the building being part of a large dairy farm with large numbers of traffic movement.

Policy T8

Development granted planning permission will be required to provide vehicle parking spaces either on site or nearby, in accordance with the Council's current parking standards. Special regard will be paid to the following factors, as appropriate:-

- a) the availability of public transport nearby,
- b) proximity to public car parking,
- c) proximity to local services and facilities,
- d) road safety hazards and amenity considerations arising from on-street parking in the vicinity of the site.

Where implementation difficulties arise in making parking provision on-site or nearby, the Council will require a developer to make financial contributions for measures to assist public transport, or walking and cycling as appropriate

The proposal allows for ample parking spaces adjacent to the storage units, the clients have ensured the spaces are to the relevant standard. The site will also accommodate for disabled parking.

3.0 Business Overview

The business trading name is Mr R Williams, is a farm unit based in Sontley, Wrexham and the farming enterprise was formerly a dairy farm along with heifer rearing. The applicant, like many other farmers on the country, have found it necessary to diversify in order to survive commercially.

The applicants have been farming at Stryt Yr Hwch for generations and would now like to diversify their existing building. This change of use will allow Mr R Williams to retain and manage the already existing traditional farm buildings, using several for the continuing heifer rearing farm business and one for the proposed B1 workshops with ancillary storage.

This considerable investment demonstrates a long term commitment to the business and sustainability of the farming unit and community.

4.0 The Proposal

Mr R Williams proposes to change the use of the former dairy cattle building and land to be used for B1 workshops with ancillary storage at Stryt Yr Hwch.

The building proposed for change of use is a former dairy building used to house cattle. The building measures 54.60m by 12.42m. The building has previously been granted planning to change the use from agriculture to caravan storage, this was approved 4/11/19 under P/2019/0645. The client would like to open the facility up to a wider range of uses hence the request for a B1 workshops with ancillary storage use.

The building will be used for as commercial units for private rent. This will allow Mr Williams to improve the current commercial unit available for rent while supporting small start up rural businesses, the change of use will provide sustainable workspace and storage. Approval of this

application has the potential to create jobs through small businesses as their business will be able to grow once a workplace and storage site has been acquired. The proposal will improve the resilience and diversity of income within the site to stabilise its future. The work shops will also be the catalyst in the growth of the occupier's businesses providing them with flexible workspace they demand to operate their business. The workshops in the building will be rented individually to allow small rural businesses to start up and become established. After much research the client has found in the local vicinity and the surrounding areas commercial property to let is largely only available on long terms agreements, combined with the urban setting leading to high rents and rates making it difficult for small and start up businesses. The units at Stryt y Hwch will fill this gap in the market and provide flexible workplaces on flexible terms to suits small businesses.

The proposed change of use will include:

- Perimeter protection
- Access control
- CCTV
- Security/amenity lighting
- Fire prevention measures
- Vermin control

On the approved application for caravan storage the highway authority has confirmed that the site is located off a rural classified highway with a 60 mph speed limit. The Welsh Government recommended visibility splays (2.4 x 43 metres) are achievable from the access in both directions. There are a number of different routes to / from the application site which are typically rural and sometimes narrow however there are adequate passing places along these routes. Traffic movements are likely to be staggered and will not have a detrimental impact upon the local highway network.

The ground is relatively level and presents no problems for vehicles or pedestrians entering or leaving the site.

There will be no WC facilities available within or adjacent to the building.

5.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to outline the scale and type of diversification. The need for an alternative income is vital to sustain the remaining agricultural at Stryt Yr Hwch. It is felt that the proposed diversification accords with planning policy in encouraging farm diversifications into non-agricultural projects.

The proposal is in accordance with UDP Policies PS2 and GDP1 and the development of the site will not be detrimental to the visual amenities of the area. The development will not adversely impact upon highway safety or residential amenity and I recommend accordingly.