

Cae Mor Farm Free Range Egg Laying Unit

Appendum to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

June 2016

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Appendum to Landscape and Visual Assessment

INTRODUCTION

1. This Appendum is intended to provide further information and clarification on landscape character and visual amenity matters in respect of the Cae Mor Farm Free Range Egg Laying Unit application (P/2015/810).
2. This document is to be read in conjunction with the documentation submitted in support of the planning application, in particular the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (dated January 2016), the associated viewpoint panoramas (Viewpoints A – L), photomontages (of Viewpoints A and H), appendices (A-C), Figure LVIA 1, Viento Environmental Limited letter dated 4th March 2016), and the various Roger Parry & Partners plans, Design and Access Statement and cross sections providing details of the design and layout of the application and the potential alternative locations for the proposal.
3. Under a series of headings set out below, this document will provide further information specifically in relation to landscape and visual matters raised within the Planning Officer Report to Committee (dated 7th March 2016) and also the Addendum Report to Committee (also dated 7th March 2016).

TOPIC AREAS

Consideration of Alternative Locations

4. In total, five locations for the proposed development of a 19.8m by 76m long agricultural building have been considered by the applicant. These are illustrated on Figure XXXX. The LVIA (January 2016) was undertaken on the Option D location and size of development as this was the final design chosen for the proposal after consideration of a number of feasibility and accessibility issues. Since the application has been refused, and bearing in mind comments in the Planning Officer Report to Committee, the location for Option E and the reasons that it would be unsuitable for development have been set out within a separate report (XXX).
5. This information has been considered as part of this document and set out below are brief summaries of the potential impacts on landscape fabric, landscape character and visual amenity of the four other potential development locations (Location Options A – C and Option E). Broad comments on the potential impacts refer to LVIA viewpoints for reference and are, in general terms, made in comparison to Option D.

Option A:

- Landscape fabric – If access was necessary from the B4579, either local road improvements (widening of road and removal of roadside hedgerows) would be required, or a new access track would be necessary from the B4579, requiring removal of a section of hedgerow and potentially some cut and fill would be required to accommodate correct gradients. Further cut and fill may be required at the site of the building. The location of the building close to the existing hedgerow to the north would increase the potential to damage existing trees within the hedgerow through tree root damage and compaction. (Option D location is at a greater distance from hedgerows and woodland to north and east).
- Landscape character – Character is similar to that of Option D location although a greater concentration of mature trees are located in the vicinity of Option D. This is illustrated by Viewpoint A where the field surrounding Option A is located directly below the arrow to the blue site field.
- Visual amenity – Viewpoints I and J particularly show that the Option A field is clearly visible from some lower slopes to the north of Cae Mor Farm. Viewpoint I shows the existing wooden barn which is currently visible within the northeast corner of the Option A field. Viewpoint J does show that the proposal would at times be seen in association with the farmhouse although, as a listed building, this may have implications on the setting of the farmhouse. In terms of visual receptors, the viewpoints

indicate that Option A would be visible from some proximate locations (Vps I & J) and also more distant locations (Vps A, K & L), affecting a range of receptors, such as residents, walkers and motorists.

Option B:

- Landscape fabric – The location of Option B on Figure XXXX suggests the building would need to be positioned over an existing watercourse, which would require careful treatment to minimise impacts. It would also require the removal of an area of mature woodland to accommodate the building. If access was necessary from the B4579, either local road improvements (widening of road and removal of roadside hedgerows) would be required, or a new access track would be necessary from the B4579, extending through several agricultural fields and requiring removal of several sections of hedgerow. Additionally some cut and fill would potentially be required to accommodate correct gradients. Further cut and fill is expected to be required at the site of the building, which would be complicated by the existing watercourse and current gradients of local slopes.
- Landscape character – Character is similar to that of Option D location. Localised slope of land and mature vegetation result in a slightly more enclosed character although the proposal at this location would still be discernible within the landscape from a range of locations as illustrated by Viewpoints D, G, J, K and L.
- Visual amenity – Viewpoint J particularly shows that the Option B location would be visible from some lower slopes to the north of Cae Mor Farm. Viewpoints J and L show that the proposal would at times be seen in association with the farmhouse although, as a listed building, this may have implications on the setting of the farmhouse. Due to the potential position of Option B on the slope and the existing woodland to the south, views from Footpath PROW 22 and the B4579 would be very limited. However, the position of Option B close to footpath PROW 25 and PROW 24 to the northwest is expected to result in filtered views of the building from sections of both footpaths as they are at similar elevations to Option B. In terms of visual receptors, the viewpoints indicate that Option B would be visible from some proximate locations (Vps D & J) and also more distant locations (Vps K & L), and would affect a range of receptors, such as residents, walkers and motorists, as would Option D.

Option C:

- Landscape fabric – The location of Option C on Figure XXXX suggests the building would require the removal of a section of hedgerow (with hedgerow trees) to accommodate the building. In a similar way to Option D, access would be required from the B4579, which may necessitate further hedgerow removal to accommodate the entrance and visibility splays. Similar cut and fill proposals to Option D would be required for the building and access track.
- Landscape character – Existing character is similar to that of the Option D location. The position of the building over a field boundary would be at odds with the local character and stand out within the local landscape. Position of the building centrally on the slope would also be evident and incongruous with the general character. The cut and fill works may also be more evident than at Option D due to the open slope and the removal of the hedgerow section to the east which would break the natural lines of the agricultural field pattern.
- Visual amenity – The building at Option C location would be viewed from the north, northwest and northeast as half way up an open field, unlike Option D, which is partially screened by the nearby mature hedgerow with hedgerow trees. A good illustration of this are Viewpoints A, J and L and photomontage A where the field within which Option C is located is visible adjacent to the Option D site field. As the Option C field is longer north to south than the Option D field and the building in Option C would be located at an elevation within the centre of the field, no vegetation within or adjacent to the field would screen it in the way that the woodland and hedgerow to the north does with Option D. This would mean that in general terms the Option C building would be more visible within the locality than the Option D location.

Option E:

- Landscape fabric – If access for Option E was necessary from the B4579, either local road improvements (widening of road and removal of roadside hedgerows) would be required, or a new access track would be necessary from the B4579, extending through an additional agricultural field and requiring removal of further sections of hedgerow. Additionally some cut and fill would potentially be required to accommodate correct gradients for the access track. Further cut and fill is expected to be required at the site of the building.
 - Landscape character – Character is similar to that of Option D location. Position of the building relatively centrally on the slope would also be evident and incongruous with the general character. The cut and fill works may also be more evident than at Option D due to the open slope.
 - Visual amenity – Viewpoints C, G - L show the relatively unobstructed visibility that would be available of the proposal in this location due to the limited screening, with only some views from the east limited by the nearby mature woodland. Nearby views of the building would be available relatively unobstructed, as indicated by Viewpoints C and D. However, due to the position on the slope, less visibility of Option E would be available from the B4579 and distant locations than of Option D. PROW 25 is located close to Option E, with some filtered views of the building expected for walkers. The building would be seen in association with the existing farmhouse, although modern agricultural built form is not found within the existing farm layout. As a listed building, this may have implications on the setting of the farmhouse.
6. These findings indicate that, in landscape and visual terms, within the applicant's landholding Option D offers a suitable location for the proposed building which would utilise nearby links to the B4579 and the screening offered by adjacent mature hedgerows and woodland. Each of the five options would have some impacts in landscape and visual terms (to greater or lesser degrees), although the design of Option D would seek to minimise these impacts as far as possible, as outlined in more detail within the LVIA (January 2016).
7. It is also worth noting that the viewpoints discussed above were chosen specifically as part of the assessment of Option D and so may not show the most open and unobstructed views of the other four options as the viewpoints were never selected with that intention in mind. However, the viewpoints have been utilised, where pertinent, to illustrate the points set out above, although other locations within the local area are likely to contain additional viewpoints as further examples of the points made above.

Changes to the Landform on Site

8. The LVIA (January 2016) notes the proposed alterations to the landform as part of the application in paragraph 12. As indicated by Drawing RJC-MZ-1845-04, some cut and fill of the local landform will be required around the building and along the access track from the B4579.
9. The Planning Officer Report to Committee notes (on page 63) that this would be across approximately 45m width. It is important to note that the proposed building is approximately 20m wide and so the ground alterations would extend approximately 12.5m either side of the building. Additionally, at the point that the building is proposed to be positioned, the current ground level ranges between approximately 299.25m AOD and 295.75m AOD, which is a difference of 3.5m across a 20m width. The bottom of the field is located at approximately 290m AOD, with the top of the field approximately 325m AOD. Therefore, it can be seen from this information, and from the position of the proposed building within the northeastern part of the field, that whilst ground alterations would be required, the position of the building within the lower part of the field close to existing vegetation would result in minimal visibility of these ground alterations. The mature woodland and hedgerow on the northern field boundary would screen the landform to the north of the building, and the building itself would screen the landform changes behind it to the south, as illustrated by the cross sections on Drawing RJC-MZ-1845-04.

10. As the field is laid to pasture, these landform changes around the building would not result in the permanent loss or long term temporary loss of any existing important/mature/diverse/distinctive components. The hedgerows to the north and west of the building would remain intact and no trees are located within the field itself.
11. Along the access track, some limited landform alterations would also be required, again across areas of pasture which would then be reseeded on either side of the track with local provenance seed. The track would be of crushed stone construction which is typical of local farm tracks in the area. In addition, landscape improvements would be made along parts of the track (and turning circle) which would have a positive impact on landscape fabric and also screen and soften the visibility of the access track, particularly from views from the B4579 and from footpath PROW 25 and views from the north.

Hedgerow Removal

12. The planning application and the LVIA (January 2016) notes in paragraph 26 that up to 86m of hedgerow along the B4579 may need to be removed in order to allow appropriate visibility splays for highway access. However, the assessment also notes that trimming of this hedgerow may avoid its removal. Indeed in the Planning Officer Report to Committee notes (on page 68) the consultation response on Highways notes that adequate vision splays may be achieved by lowering the height of the hedgerow. This option would be the applicant's preference. Nevertheless, some adverse impacts on landscape fabric would result from the trimming back of the hedgerow, although on balance these would be outweighed over the lifetime of the development by the beneficial impacts of the landscaping scheme proposed as part of the application which includes not only the planting of native trees along parts of the route of the access track and turning circle, but also along northwestern sections of the northern site boundary, and infill hedgerow planting along the southern boundary.
13. Overall, should 86m of existing hedgerow need to be removed as part of the proposal, then these adverse impacts to landscape fabric would be balanced out over the lifetime of the development by the beneficial impacts of the proposed landscaping scheme. However, given that new planting takes time to establish, the balance between adverse and beneficial impacts would not occur in the initial years of the development.

CAN WE DELETE THIS PARA IF WE CAN DEFINITELY SAY THE HEDGEROW DOESN'T NEED REMOVAL?

Landscape Enhancements

14. The existing trees (height and density) are discussed within the LVIA (January 2016) paragraph 13. The site field boundaries on most sides contain good levels of mature hedges, hedgerows and mature trees.
15. The proposed landscape scheme is detailed in Drawing RJC-MZ-1845-01B. As mentioned above, this includes enhancements to sections of the hedgerow along the B4579 to improve the density and height of the hedgerow, where necessary. In addition, the existing hedge/tree belt along the northwestern field boundary would be improved with an additional belt of tree planting to add width and density to the existing mature trees here. As a further measure, planting along parts of the access track and turning circle are proposed to further filter views of the building and track, especially from Cae Mor Ucha Farm, the B4579 (for motorists, walkers, cyclists and horse riders), and from views available from the north.
16. The landscaping measures have been carefully chosen to reflect the existing character of the area; native species found locally would be used and the main planting measures would be to reinforce existing areas of trees and hedgerows within the existing field pattern, rather than creating new areas of planting. The planting around the turning circle and along parts of the track would not be dense blocks of planting; with the intention to filter views and to be in addition to existing screening along roadsides and within field boundaries. As a result, the natural linkage of hedgerow lines and woodland blocks would not be disturbed by the proposed planting, but would simply be reinforced, minimising impacts to landscape character and benefiting the landscape fabric of the site.

17. Drawing RJC-MZ-1845-01B gives an indicative indication of the planting proposed within the site, where a detailed planting plan including the exact location of planting along the access track and turning circle and the species and sizes to be used would be approved with Wrexham Borough Council, should the application be successful.

Colour of Built Form

18. As outlined in paragraph 11 of the LVIA (January 2016), the proposed development is proposed to be juniper green in colour, although the final colour would be agreed with the Council should the application gain permission. As a result, the photomontages (A and H) were produced showing the building in a mid green colour. This colour is considered to be a good match between the darker green colour of the surrounding woodland, tree belts and hedgerows and the lighter green colour of the pastureland within the site field and the surrounding pasture fields. Viewpoint Panorama A illustrates both a September and a January view and shows a limited difference in the colour palette within the local area across the five months. It is accepted that bracken occupies some southern parts of the field, allowing for some further shades of green in summer months and brown in autumn months. However, the predominant colour is green within the local fields and across the site and the applicant is happy to agree a suitable tone with the Council which would best match the surroundings.

Visual Receptors

19. Paragraphs 46 to 58 of the LVIA (January 2016) discuss the potential impacts on visual receptors including residents, users of long distance recreational routes, public rights of way and public highways.
20. It is noted within the Planning Officer Report to Committee notes (on page 80) that the viewpoint locations do not consider the possibility of cyclists or walkers using some of the surrounding highways.
21. The detailed Viewpoint Analysis submitted within the application was contained within Appendix B of the LVIA (January 2016). This outlined the methodology for the assessment and also detailed the viewpoints assessed. Five of the viewpoints were assessed in detail within Appendix B (Viewpoints A, E, G, I and L). These viewpoints are set out in Table 1 below along with the viewpoint location and NGR details. In addition, the magnitude of the change in the view which was assessed within Appendix B is now contained within Column 6 of Table 1 below.
22. Cyclists and walkers on local public rights of way or highways would be assessed as high/ medium sensitivity. As such, this sensitivity has been combined with the magnitude already assessed for these viewpoints to provide the overall effect on these receptors as a result of the proposed development at each of the five viewpoints.
23. Paragraph 13 of Appendix B of the LVIA (January 2016) states:

"Overall effects of major/moderate and above are considered significant and are shaded dark grey in Table 2 below. Overall effects of moderate+ may be significant if experienced over a sustained length of a route or over most of a zone, area or location, and overall effects of moderate may contribute to significance if combined with greater changes at the same general location, whereas moderate/minor+ or lower changes are unlikely to result in significant changes to views or landscape character."
24. As can be seen below, none of the effects/impacts at any of the viewpoints would be considered significant for cyclists, walkers or horse riders. However, from Viewpoints E and G on parts of the B4579 closest to the site, a moderate + or moderate effect is expected. As set out above, this may be significant if experienced over a sustained length of a route or if combined with greater changes nearby. However, due to the changing orientation of the road combined with the often good levels of vegetation along the roadside, views of the proposal would not be consistently available, with only intermittent visibility of the proposal, often filtered by intervening vegetation, even in winter months. Therefore, no significant effects on the visual amenity of cyclists, walkers or horse riders using these sections of the B4579 are expected.

Table 1: Potential Effects on Cyclists, Walkers and Horse Riders

Vp	Location	NGR	Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Effect
A	View south from near Dolywern	321775 337815	Cyclists/ walkers/ horse riders	High/ medium	Slight/ negligible	Moderate/ minor
E	View east from B4579 near Cae Mor Ucha	322680 335860	Cyclists/ walkers/ horse riders	High/ medium	Moderate	Moderate+
G	View west from B4579	323360 335545	Cyclists/ walkers/ horse riders	High/ medium	Moderate/ slight	Moderate
I	View south from local road north of site	323125 336473	Cyclists/ walkers/ horse riders	High/ medium	Slight	Moderate/ minor
L	View west from byway and road junction near Pwll-hir	324400 335470	Cyclists/ walkers/ horse riders	High/ medium	Slight	Moderate/ minor

CONCLUSIONS

25. The LVIA (January 2016) reached the following conclusions in paragraphs 59-63:

This assessment has examined the likely effects of the proposed development on the landscape and visual amenity of the site and surrounding area.

The significant effects of this proposed development would be limited to:

- The character of the landscape of the site. This would be limited to an extremely small part of LCA 4.

There would not be any significant effects on landscape fabric, the character of the landscapes beyond the site, or the visual amenity of residents, or walkers, equestrians and cyclists in the study area or motorists on any B and local road network within the study area.

It should also be noted that this assessment has considered the landscaping proposals at the point at which they have been implemented and not once the planting has established and matured, which will further filter the proposal in views from the surrounding area over time.

Therefore, it is considered that the significant effects on landscape and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development would be limited in this location.

26. The information provided within this document seeks to clarify matters in relation to landscape character and visual amenity for the Cae Mor Farm application. Through this process the conclusions reached on the potential significant effects within the LVIA (January 2016) have not altered and remain valid.