
Design and Access Statement

Change of use of agricultural building and land
for caravan storage and all associated works

Stryt Yr Hwch Farm, Sontley, Wrexham

On behalf of Mr R Williams

August 2019

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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 an the change of use of an agricultural building and land for caravan 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 the National Planning Policy Framework when considering development in the open countryside.

2.0 Planning Policy

From March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework has governed the planning policies and their application for England and Wales. Under this legislation paragraph 28 highlights planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas:

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and
- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

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 E6

Small on-farm operations such as food processing and packing, together with services to other farms, such as workshop facilities and equipment hire and maintenance, should be located within existing farm buildings. Where it can be shown that no suitable buildings are available for such operations,

Crime & Disorder Act 1998 Section 17

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gives a statutory duty to local authorities to: “without prejudice to any other obligation placed upon it ... to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonable can to prevent crime and disorder in its area”.

There is doubt that secure storage for caravans is a major factor in reducing caravan crime.

3.0 Business Overview

The business trading name is Mr R Williams, is a farm unit based in Sontley, Wrexham and the farming enterprise is 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 from the current trade in dairy farm to caravan storage. 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 caravan 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 existing agricultural building and land to be used for caravan storage at Stryt Yr Hwch.

The change of use from agricultural land and buildings to caravan storage is under the guidelines of CaSSOA (Caravan Storage Site Owners Association). CaSSOA was formed in 1999 for the purpose of looking at ways of reducing caravan crime, primarily via secure caravan storage. The applicant is a member of the CaSSOA which means that the existing site and the proposed site is a secure storage environment, incorporating features such as perimeter protection, access control, CCTV and security/amenity lighting.

There has been a move within the insurance industry for all caravans when not in use, to be stored on secure sites. Many new housing development sites have restrictive covenants on the property preventing caravans being stored on the drive. This has created a demand for caravans to relocate to secure storage. The site is ideally located near the A483 trunk road leading to South Wales.

The proposed change of use to a caravan storage facility, wouldn't remove any grassland from agriculture. The proposal would include the planting and fencing of the site for security purposes. A screened bunded area would incorporate the planting of a managed tree screen, which will add diversity to the landscape and offer alternative wildlife habitat.

The applicant has researched fully the diversification scheme to run alongside the existing agricultural business. Development proposals such as this contribute to farm income. Planning policies recognise the importance and the need to compliment agriculture as well as maintain and manage the countryside and general landscape. Diversification such as this allows the agricultural community to adapt to changing markets and enable substantial income to provide support for primary food production.

There is increasing demand for all caravans when not in use to be stored on secure sites, with the proposed site being located in an area extremely popular with caravan owners due to its close proximity to the A483 trunk road leading to South Wales.

The proposed extension to the caravan storage facility will include:

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

The application, if successful, will lead to a marginal increase in traffic on the unclassified road leading to and from the A483. This increase is part mitigated by a decrease in agricultural traffic. Caravan related traffic could be termed as through traffic and will be quickly absorbed into the mainstream traffic and less likely to cause any local conflict or congestion.

There is an existing driveway from the highway construction to a good standard, capable of accommodating HGVs.

Access to the storage area will use the existing access off the main drive with an adequate standing/parking area immediately on entering the storage site.

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

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.