

Planning Statement re Proposed Rural Enterprise Dwelling and New Barn

On Behalf of: Messrs P and H L Hopkins

Proposal: Erection of one detached enterprise dwelling and a new barn

Site: Tyn Y Cwm Farm, Rhos , Pontardawe, SA8 3EY

Report By: Graham Carlisle
Our Ref: GSC/2019/033
Date: December 2020



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Graham Carlisle of CDN Planning (Wales) Ltd to support a detailed planning application for the erection of a detached rural enterprise dwelling and new agricultural building at Tyn Y Cwm Farm, Rhos, Pontardawe.
- 1.2 The proposed developments were the subject of a recent pre-app. submission to Neath Port Talbot Council under the reference Q2020/0121. The letter of advice from the Council was dated October 16th 2020 and it will be explained later in this statement how the current detailed application has responded to that advice.

2. The Application Site and Context



- 2.1 A full and detailed description of Tyn Y Cwm Farm, together with the other linked land holdings, is provided in the Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisal prepared by Messrs Watts and Morgan and included with this application. The aerial photograph above shows the existing mixed agricultural and commercial yard served by a greatly improved commercial access. The appraisal has also now been amended to respond to the Council advice letter.

- 2.2 The proposed dwelling and barn are to be sited immediately to the east of the yard at the southern end of the adjoining field. There is already a wide vehicular access to this field from Tyn Y Cwm Lane with good visibility in either direction. (see photograph below) Please note that the land containing this access is not owned by the applicants in this case, but they retain a right of access over it. The boundary of the farm at this point is shown by the gate, fence and hedge in the photograph.



- 2.3 The land proposed for the house and barn forms part of a large field enclosure which is laid for pasture. It has a gradual slope down from east to west and is screened on its eastern side by a line of mainly mature trees which run alongside an existing track. These trees, as well as those fronting Tyn y Cwm Lane will not adjoin the application area and will be unaffected by this development, therefore.
- 2.4 There is a small farm holding immediately opposite the proposed development site on the south side of Tyn Y Cwm Lane, but with this exception the surrounding land consists of open countryside, mostly forming part of the Tyn Y Cwm Farm holding. The farm lies to the south of the village of Rhos and east of the A474 Neath Road which links the towns of Pontardawe and Neath.

3. The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The need for the dwelling and the attendant agricultural building has been carefully explained in detail in the submitted Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisal. This statement will concentrate, therefore, on the rationale behind the proposed layout, the designs proposed for both the dwelling and the agricultural building, and the national and local planning policy background against which the proposed development is to be assessed.
- 3.2 The house is required for Mr Rhodri Hopkins who is now mainly responsible for both the agricultural and commercial activities at the farm. Mr Hopkins is married with two young children and the house has been designed to meet his existing and future needs, with 4 bedrooms as well as a home office over the adjoining garage and generous utility space and washroom.
- 3.3 In terms of appearance, the house is two-storey, and appropriately designed for an open countryside location with traditional finishes proposed, including natural stone and slate. The front entrance will be via a porch and all fenestration will be in a brown uPVC and will retain a vertical emphasis. The proposed agricultural shed will be a standard steel frame construction clad with profile steel above concrete blockwork.
- 3.4 The existing vehicular entrance from Tyn y Cwm Lane initially crosses land which is owned in conjunction with the original Tyn y Cwm farmhouse opposite. This entrance will be improved and will be used to serve both the new house and the agricultural building although it will also connect to an existing track leading from the main yard. The siting of the new house is dictated to a great extent by the alignment of the new access track and the ownership situation.

4. Planning History

- 4.1 For a considerable period of time the land and buildings at Tyn Y Cwm Farm have been used as a mixed rural enterprise for both agricultural and commercial purposes. The large barn closest to the proposed development site was constructed in 1996/97. It was set up to be predominantly a workshop to carry out machinery, equipment and vehicle servicing and repairs, as well as for the

storage and servicing of agricultural machinery. The building has consistently been used since construction for the service and maintenance of both agricultural and commercial vehicles and equipment.

- 4.2 In a similar fashion the farm yard adjoining the barn has also been used since the 1990s to park both agricultural and commercial vehicles, equipment and materials, and from 2001/02 the farm has been a registered operating centre for 5 vehicles and 5 trailers for Crynant Plant
- 4.3 No planning permission had ever been sought for the use of the barn and yard for commercial purposes in connection with Crynant Plant. When the Planning Department was first contacted in 2019, therefore, regarding the need for the new dwelling and agricultural building, Mr Hopkins was advised to first resolve this situation by submitting an application for a certificate of lawful use or development.
- 4.4 The application for the lawful use certificate (P2019/5590) was submitted in December 2019 and the Certificate was issued on January 27th 2020. The first schedule of the certificate states as follows :-
- “Lawful development certificate (existing use) for the use of the workshop building B only and associated yard as identified on drawing number 099 (location Plan dated Aug 2019) for the carrying out of the servicing and repair of both agricultural and commercial vehicles, machinery and equipment and the associated parking and storage of such vehicles, machinery, equipment and materials.”*
- 4.5 The certificate related to the whole of building B, and including a side extension that had been built in 2017 without the benefit of a prior planning permission. An application for retrospective detailed planning permission (P2020/0185) was, therefore submitted in March of this year and was approved on April 2nd. The permission linked the use of the extension to the certificate of lawfulness by the following condition :-

“ The development hereby approved shall only be used for the carrying out of the servicing and repair of both agricultural and commercial vehicles, machinery and equipment and the

associated parking and storage of such vehicles, machinery, equipment and materials as certified as being lawful under Existing Lawful Development Certificate P2019/5590.”

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Local planning policy is provided by the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) which was adopted in 2016. Strategic policy SC1 - Settlement Limits makes it clear that, outside the settlement limits defined by the plan, new development will only be allowed in certain specific circumstances. One such circumstance concerns the provision of ‘an appropriate rural enterprise dwelling’. No further details are given in the LDP regarding this but it is dealt with in the National Advice document Technical Advice Note 6 (TAN 6) which applies throughout Wales and which was published in 2010.

5.2 Paragraph 4.3 of TAN 6 confirms the appropriateness of such dwellings as follows :-

“ One of the few circumstances in which new isolated residential development in the open countryside may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable rural enterprise workers to live at, or close to, their place of work”

5.3 Any proposals for the siting and construction of a new dwelling in such circumstances will be subject to a ‘Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisal’. Five specific tests are identified as follows :-

- i. A Functional test as to whether there is a need for a resident worker.
- ii. A Time test to provide evidence of the labour requirement for the worker.
- iii. A Financial test to confirm the economic sustainability of the enterprise and its ability to sustain the cost of the new dwelling.
- iv. An Other Dwellings test to show that there are no buildings on site that are suitable for conversion or dwellings in the locality that are on the market.
- v. Other Normal Planning Requirements test to demonstrate that the dwelling is suitably located and designed.

The submitted Watts and Morgan Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisal provides detailed responses to all five tests, with some additional design details provided by this statement and by the submitted plans.

- 5.4 The application site lies within an area defined by Policy EN3 of the Local Plan as the Alltwen/Rhos/Bryncoch/NeathAbbey/LeirosPark green wedge. Within such an area there is a presumption against inappropriate development unless it is justified by very exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances are defined by Planning Policy Wales and relate to certain justified or essential activities that need to be located in the area. The provision of much needed and appropriately designed living accommodation on a large rural enterprise that currently does not have a farmhouse, and in a location close to the existing yard, would clearly meet the test set by policy EN3.

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