



15 December 2021

Planning Application for Sheep Housing/ General Purpose Agricultural Building Planning Statement

At

**Tyn Y Cwm Farm,
Rhos,
Pontardawe,
SA8 3EY**

**Beechwood Court,
Long Toll, Woodcote,
RG8 0RR**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) is instructed by Mr Rhodri Hopkins (the Applicant) to submit a planning application for a general-purpose agricultural building to house sheep during the lambing period at Tyn Y Cwm Farm, Rhos, Swansea, SA8 3EY. This document forms the supporting statement for that application and will provide a description of the development as well as a brief appraisal of the proposal.

1.2 Figure 1 below shows the location of the application site.

Figure 1. Location of the Proposed Building and Surrounding Area at Tyn Y Cwm.



1.3 In responding to these instructions RAC has visited the farm and discussed with the applicant the need for a building to house part of his 370-ewe flock, for which there is inadequate provision at present.

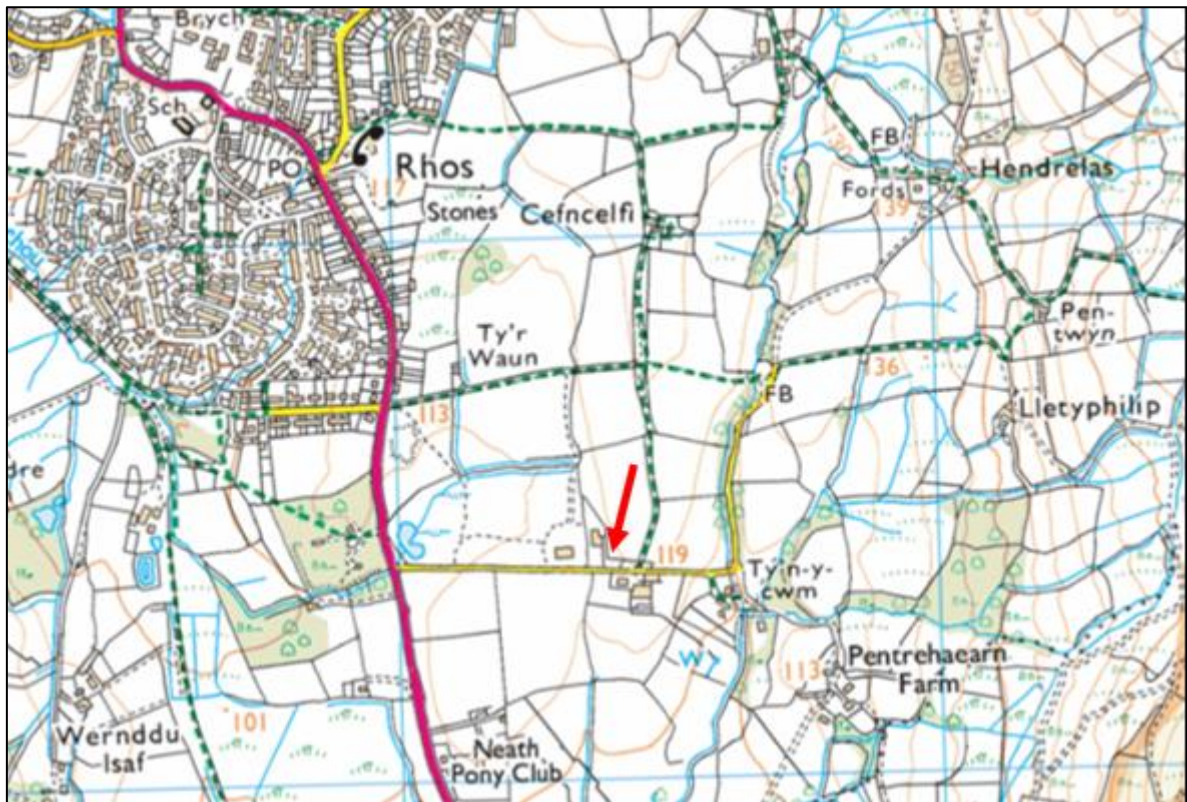
2 Background

- 2.1 Recently, planning permission was applied for, and subsequently withdrawn, for an agricultural building and detached rural enterprise dwelling at Tyn Y Cwm Farm under application P2020/1114. This application had previously been the subject of a pre-application enquiry (ref. Q2020/0121). The site history is discussed in further detail below.
- 2.2 This proposal for an agricultural building is now re-submitted in tandem with a separate application for a rural enterprise dwelling to serve Tyn Y Cwm Farm.
- 2.3 Tyn Y Cwm Farm forms part of an existing family-run agricultural business which extends to approximately 166ha (410 acres) of permanent pasture land which supports a flock of 370 pure-bred Welsh Mountain ewes and 50 suckler cows with followers, in conjunction with land at Llwyn Llanc Uchaf Farm, Crynant and further blocks of land in Crynant, Abernant, Rhyd Y Fro and Pendoylan. Tyn Y Cwm Farm alone comprises approximately 67ha (165 acres) of owned pasture land.

The Application Site

- 2.4 The site located off Tyn y Cwm Lane, which runs eastward from the A474 Neath Road A474, Rhos and is immediately to the east of the existing mixed-use yard at Tyn Y Cwm Farm. The location is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Location of the Application Site



- 2.5 Access to the building would be through the main yard entrance *via* an access track, keeping farm traffic separate from that of the domestic traffic associated with the proposed agricultural dwelling.
- 2.6 The site currently forms part of a large agricultural field, adjacent to an existing steel portal framed building. The site benefits from natural screening provided to the highway boundary comprising existing, mature vegetation, as shown in Figure 3, which will be extended and enhanced with additional planting.

Figure 3: View of Application Site Travelling West Along Tyn Y Cwm Lane



- 2.7 The land surrounding the site is predominantly agricultural with large expanses of pasture land divided by hedgerows and Public Rights of Way (PROWs), as indicated in Figure 2. The gradient of the land slopes gently from the site towards the existing buildings. There are a small number of residential dwellings accessed off Tyn-Y-Cwm Lane, with a small-holding south-west of the application site and Pentrehaern Farm to the south-east. To the east, the land rises to Mynydd Marchywell,

Site History

- 2.8 The wider Tyn Y Cwm site has a varied history, which has culminated in an established, and lawful, mixed agricultural/commercial use site. The history, as revealed through a search on the Local Authority's website, is summarised below in Table 1. However, it does not reveal the full history of the site and is expanded on further below.

Table 1: Relevant Site History

Reference	Description	Decision
P2000/0102	EXTENSION TO AGRICULTURAL BUILDING FOR HANDLING PENS FOR CATTLE AND SHEEP	Prior Notification not required
P2000/0676	APPLICATION UNDER CONDITION 3 OF APPEAL PERMISSION APP/J6710/95/508622 FOR APPROVAL OF VARIED PHASING AND RESTORATION PROGRAMME (APPROVED UNDER CONDITIONS 2 AND 4 ON 9TH JANUARY 1996)	Approved
P/2003/0167	DETAILS UNDER CONDITION 1 (RESTORATION SCHEME) OF CONSENT P00/0676	Approve
P/2003/0561	VARIATION OF CONDITION 1 OF APPROVAL REF:P/00/0676 TO ENABLE CONTINUATION OF PHASE 3 TIPPING OPERATIONS UNTIL 30 SEPTEMBER 2003 AND COMPLETION OF RESTORATION WORKS BY 30 APRIL 2004	Refused
P/2006/0523	Agricultural Building	Prior Notification Required
P/2006/0873	AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS FOR STORAGE OF HAY ETC AND FOR CATTLE AND SHEEP	Refused
p/2019/5590	LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE (EXISTING USE) FOR THE USE OF WORKSHOP BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED YARD FOR THE CARRYING OUT OF THE SERVICING AND REPAIR OF BOTH AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL	Issue Certificate

	VEHICLES, MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT AND THE ASSOCIATED PARKING AND STORAGE OF SUCH VEHICLES, MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS.	
p/2020/0185	RETENTION OF EXTENSION TO WORKSHOP BUILDING	Approved
P/2020/0835	SINGLE STOREY SIDE EXTENSION TO EXISTING AGRICULTURAL BUILDING FOR LIVESTOCK ACCOMMODATIO	Approved
p/2020/1114	DETACHED RURAL ENTERPRISE DWELLING, PARKING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AND AN AGRICULTURAL BARN	Withdrawn
P/2021/0189	EXTENSION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING	Approved

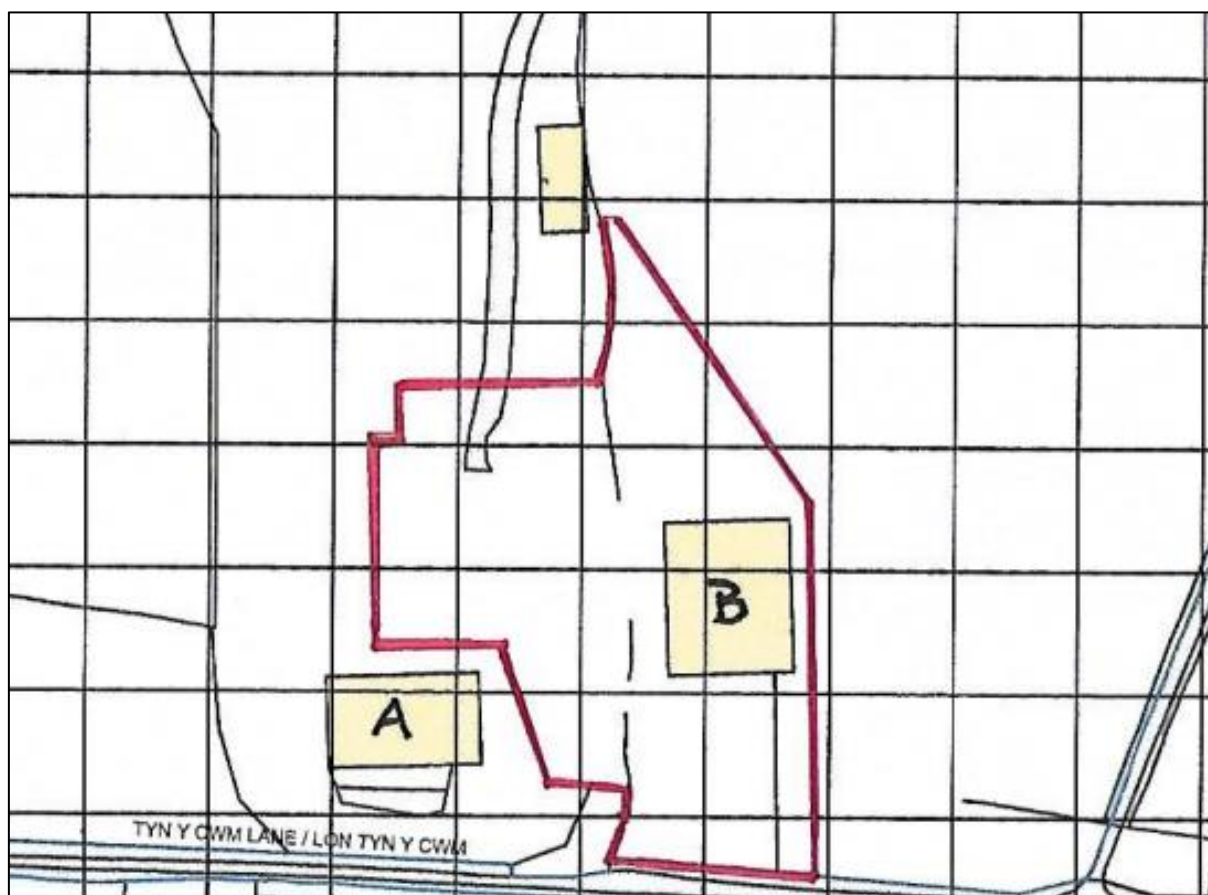
- 2.9 The large building closest to the proposed development site was constructed in 1996/97. It was set up to be predominantly a workshop to carry out machinery, equipment and vehicle servicing and repairs, as well as for the storage and servicing of agricultural machinery. The building has consistently been used since construction for the service and maintenance of both agricultural and commercial vehicles and equipment.
- 2.10 The yard adjacent to 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.
- 2.11 No planning permission had ever been sought for the use of the barn and yard for commercial purposes in connection with Crynant Plant and a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development was applied for in 2019, and subsequently issued, to regularise the use of both.
- 2.12 The Certificate states:

“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.”

- 2.13 The Certificate related to the whole of the barn i.e. building B, and including a side extension that had been built in 2017 without the benefit of a prior planning permission, and the associated yard, as shown in the extract from approved plan 099 in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Extract from Plan 099 Approved under p/2019/5590



- 2.14 Retrospective planning permission (P2020/0185) was approved on April 2nd 2020 for the extension and was subject to 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.”

3 The Proposal.

- 3.1 The land has provided grazing and winter forage for a large sheep flock and the proposal will enable the yearlings and ewes bearing twins to be housed during lambing and would meet an existing under provision on the farm for accommodation for the more vulnerable and inexperienced ewes and reduce lamb losses.
- 3.2 The flock would lamb from the end of February until April. All yearling ewes (approximately 70) and those bearing twins would be housed at lambing in order that they can be closely monitored during this crucial period. More experienced ewes would lamb in the adjacent field and any ewe in difficulty would be brought into the building for welfare reasons.
- 3.3 The building will be sited adjacent to an existing building and is proposed to measure 18.3m x 12.2m (223m²) with a ridge height of 5.62m (3.6m to the eaves) underneath a pitched roof. It is proposed to be clad with Yorkshire boarding. The roof will comprise natural grey fibre cement panels and the walls would be concrete panels to 1.5m in height, typical of agricultural buildings. There would be gated access to the front and side elevations (see accompanying plans (RAC/9227/??)).
- 3.4 Access to and from the building will be *via* the existing yard and entrance at Tyn Y Cwm Farm.
- 3.5 The proposed building is of a size and design common to most farms and is of an appropriate scale for a holding with 370 ewes which lambs yearlings indoors. The building is necessary for animal welfare and for the efficient operation of the holding.
- 3.6 The building is designed to allow access with large agricultural machinery for manure removal following sheep housing or used for storage of fodder and machinery when not being used for sheep. When stocked with lambing ewes, part of the building would contain hay and straw for feeding and bedding the ewes without the shepherd having to leave the building during busy periods or when the weather conditions are particularly poor.

4 Relevant Policies

- 4.1 The main policy areas to be taken into consideration in the determination of this application are:

National Policy

4.2 National guidance and planning policy is contained within Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11, February (PPW); and a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

4.3 The principle of sustainability lies at the heart of the objectives contained within PPW. To this end, PPW is supportive of the rural economy. It notes at paragraph 5.6.2 et:

“supporting the development of a broad range of employment opportunities in rural areas planning authorities can increase economic prosperity and help address the effects of rural decline or depopulation where it occurs. Greater opportunity can support and strengthen the future well-being and sustainability of rural communities”

4.4 It goes on to specifically comment on agricultural proposals at paragraph 5.6.8:

“Planning authorities should adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, especially those which are designed to meet the needs of changing farming practices or are necessary to achieve compliance with new environmental, hygiene or welfare legislation....”

4.5 The most relevant policy area to this application is found in TAN 6 *Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* which is broadly supportive of a strong rural and agricultural economy. On consideration of new agricultural buildings, it states in Annex A:

“New buildings should normally form part of a group rather than stand in isolation, and relate to existing buildings in size and colour.”

4.6 The application site is in a Green Wedge and PPW specifically references development in such areas at 3.75 stating that it will only be appropriate in a small number of circumstances, including where it is justified for rural enterprise needs.

Local Policy

4.7 The Neath Port Talbot CBC Local Development Plan (2011-2026) (Adopted January 2016) provides the vision for development in the area and the policies against which development in the County Borough must be assessed. The policies relevant to the determination of this application are:

- **SC1 Settlement Limits:** Outside development limits development associated with agriculture will be permitted;

- **EN3 Green Wedge:** there is a presumption against inappropriate development in Green Wedges. The proposal site is within EN3/1;
- **EN8 Pollution and Land Stability:** Proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity will not be permitted;
- **BE1 Design:** Proposals should complement and enhance the character and appearance of the site and area and respect the context, utilising appropriate materials;
- **M1 Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas:** Development in these areas will only be permitted in certain circumstances including where there is an overriding need for the development and where the location would have no significant impact on the working of the resource

5 Policy Appraisal

- 5.1 PPW and the LDP recognise that development for the purposes of agriculture is acceptable outside of the settlement boundary and in Green Wedge locations. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that the proposal is indeed reasonably necessary for that purpose, the principle of the development will be acceptable.
- 5.2 Consequently, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are whether the proposal :
- is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture;
 - is a suitable design for agriculture;
 - has an adverse impact on amenity; and
 - has an adverse impact upon the mineral resource.

Reasonably Necessary

- 5.3 National policy dictates that support should be given to appropriate economic activity in rural areas. In order to satisfy these policy provisions, it must be proven essential that the proposal is reasonably necessary for agriculture on that unit.

- 5.4 Furthermore, Policy EN3 permits only justified and development essential to activities that need to be located in the area whilst SC1 supports agricultural development in the countryside.
- 5.5 The reasons for requiring the shed in this location have been discussed above. The following paragraphs provide a more in-depth justification for the requirement for a building such as this for lambing purposes
- 5.6 In order to reduce the risk of losing lambs due to hypothermia and improve the ability to monitor birthing, lambing of the more inexperienced ewes is undertaken indoors. Housing these ewes during lambing also helps the inexperienced ewe bond with her new lamb just after birth and helps prevent mis-mothering. Similarly, ewes bearing twins may require more help to care for the lambs around birth. It is also important to be able to monitor the ewe during lambing in case of any complications, for example if the lamb is mal-presented.
- 5.7 After birth, lambs are treated with iodine, sprayed onto the umbilical cord to prevent infection. Yearling ewes often need special treatment due to their inexperience in caring for their lambs. This requires individual penning of the ewe and her lambs in order to strengthen the maternal bond.
- 5.8 It is clear that there is a need for housing these ewes during the lambing period, for the general welfare of the animals.
- 5.9 The proposed building measures 18.3m x 12.2m (223m²) which would provide sheep housing and storage for hay and straw bedding. This enables the bales to be easily collected from the storage area within a single building during the busy lambing period – which is particularly useful if it is snowing or during the night.
- 5.10 Recommended space requirements for Welsh Mountain shearling ewes would 1.2m² of floor space per ewe so 70 yearlings plus say 30 ewes with twins would require a minimum of 120m² .
- 5.11 Following lambing in communal pens, the ewes and lambs would be taken to individual mothering up pens for the ewes to form a strong maternal bond with the lambs. This would require an area of 2m² per ewe. In a flock of this size, it would not be unusual for 10 ewes to require penning with their lambs. This is a busy time for the shepherd and it is essential that these pens are all set out before lambing starts in order that he can concentrate on ewes which are lambing, plus the other problems which occur at or around lambing which require urgent attention.

- 5.12 Therefore, the pens account for another 20m² of floor area.
- 5.13 Thus, the 223m² building would provide adequate space for some 100 ewes and their lambs plus adequate mothering up pens for the split flock; as well as storage space of 80m² for bedding/straw and hay for the sheep.
- 5.14 The proposed building is an appropriate size to meet the welfare requirements of the flock and, therefore, is demonstrated to be reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture. This confirms that the principle of the development is acceptable and compliance with policies SC1 and EN3 of the LDP.

Design

- 5.15 The building is proposed to be sited adjacent to an existing group of similar buildings and an established yard. Its materials, size and pitched roof design are not only appropriate for the nature of the activity intended but also consistent with the design of the existing buildings on the site and typical of modern agricultural buildings.
- 5.16 The existing hedge would screen direct views from the highway through existing and additional planting. and although the building will be visible when travelling west, the building will be viewed, by the limited number of users of the highway, within the context of the existing complex of buildings, assimilating with the adjacent existing agricultural buildings, as suggested within TAN 6 in Annex A and LDP Policy BE1.

5.17 Amenity

- 5.18 There are a small number of properties sited along Tyn Y Cwm Lane and it is therefore necessary to consider the impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of the occupants of those dwellings.
- 5.19 The proposal is located on an existing mixed-use unit, where livestock are already present. Sheep will be bedded on straw purchased from local farms. The straw soaks up any urine from the housed sheep and there is no effluent from the bedding which is generally replenished twice per week. It is advisable to maintain a clean bedded pen for the ewes in order to provide a clean environment for the ewes and lambs at birth to prevent infections. Consequently, there is little odour associated with sheep housing and it is highly unlikely that any odour will be noticed off the site, even though the nearest dwellings are some 100m from the site.

5.20 Sheep are only likely to be noisy when anticipating being fed, so any noise would be transient and a maximum of twice per day and not at anti-social hours. The site is part of an existing unit which operates a plant hire business as well as housing livestock. As a result, the site is active with vehicles and employees throughout the day and already generates a degree of noise within acceptable levels. The proposal would not, therefore, have an additional adverse impact in terms of noise generation and the proposal therefore complies with Policy EN 8 of the LDP.

Impact on Mineral Resource

5.21 The proposal site, being located immediately adjacent to existing development and opposite a residential property and along a through-route to other dwellings, albeit a small number, does not make for a viable mineral extraction site. To extract the mineral resource in this location would have a significant adverse effect on land stability and residential amenity of properties at Tyn Y Cwm as well as rendering the existing business at Tyn y Cwm Farm obsolete. It would not therefore have a significant impact upon the working of the mineral resource since this specific site would not be considered appropriate.

5.22 Application P/2021/0189 for an extension to an agricultural building on the farmyard was recently approved, which sets a precedent.

5.23 In addition, it has been demonstrated above that there is an overriding need for the development in this location and therefore the proposal complies with Policy M1 of the LDP.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Mr Hopkins is seeking planning permission for an 18.3m x 12.2m steel portal framed building to house part of a flock of 370 ewes on an existing agricultural holding. The building would house the yearling ewes and those carrying twins during lambing.

6.2 The building is appropriate in size for 100 more vulnerable Welsh Mountain ewes and is reasonably necessary for those purposes and appropriate within its rural context.

6.3 The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon amenity or the possible working of the mineral resource and therefore complies with the relevant policies of the LDP.

6.4 It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

