Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Siting and Design of New Farm Buildings

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Supplementary Planning Guidance

To the Local Development Plan for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Adopted 13th June 2012

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1. Introduction

1.1 This supplementary planning guidance provides detailed advice on the siting and design of new farm buildings under Policy 7h of the Local Development Plan.[1] It does not form part of the Local Development Plan, but as it has been adopted[2] has significant weight in deciding whether a proposal can receive planning permission. A report of consultations detailing how the Guidance was consulted upon is available to view on the Authority's website.[3].

2. Purpose of this guidance

1.2 Agriculture is a key and strategically important industry within the national park, and has a central role in shaping management of its landscape. It helps to maintain its special qualities including its diversity of landscape and cultural heritage. Farm buildings built of locally sourced materials such as rubble stone and slate provide local character. Farming maintains landscape features such as field patterns, traditional boundaries of hedgebanks or stone walls, trees, woodland and copses. The National Park Authority supports the Welsh Assembly Government's objectives for a sustainable and profitable future for farming while safeguarding the environment and contributing to the vitality and prosperity of our rural communities. The National Park Authority will adopt a constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals, and will foster a spirit of partnership with the farming community in pursuit of a sustainable future.

1.3 Changes in farming practices and systems, the requirements of new environmental, hygiene and animal welfare legislation have created a demand for new and larger buildings. Modern farm buildings are generally larger than traditional buildings, and of single span, shallow roof construction to achieve the best economic and practical solution. Scale, materials and location however may not appropriately reflect local design tradition and may have an adverse landscape impact. A key requirement is to respect the character and Special Qualities of the National Park and to dovetail this with appropriate aspects of local design traditions to produce sustainable and suitable farm buildings.[4]

1.4 This guidance cannot cover all development on farms and does not refer to agricultural workers dwellings, farm diversification schemes or waste management such as anaerobic digestion plant[5]. Specific advice about these should be sought from the planning department using the pre-application service.

[1] http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=178
[2] By resolution of the National Park Authority on the 13th June 2012.
[3] http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=183
[4] See the Authority's guidance on Landscape Character Assessment for further information http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=249
[5] See the Authority's guidance on Renewable Energy provides further information about this.

3. The Importance of Design

3.1 A constructive approach towards agricultural development proposals is proposed.

The main design considerations when planning a farm building should be –

- **Achieving a cost-effective and operationally efficient building.**
- **Minimise impact on the local landscape, countryside and traditional buildings**. Consideration of the siting in the local landscape and in relation to existing traditional buildings, how to break up the bulk of a building, the construction materials, landscaping and the scope for re-using existing buildings will all help to reduce the visual impact of a new farm building.

- **A sustainable design approach[6]**. Any development should incorporate sustainable design. Farm buildings can be well designed and contemporary as well as high quality buildings using the principles of intelligent siting, response to climate change and sustainably sourced local materials. Large spans can also present an opportunity for solar or photovoltaic panels to be incorporated[7].

4. Do I need Planning Permission?

4.1 All new farm buildings and structures fall within the scope of the planning system[8], requiring either 'prior notification' or planning permission. The Local Planning Authority should be contacted at the earliest opportunity, using the pre-application enquiry process[9] for advice about consents that will be needed and the type of development that is likely to gain permission. Some works, such as internal alternations to a building don't require planning permission. Appendix 1 provides some general guidance about whether planning permission is required for agricultural buildings.

Other Regulations

4.2 Other regulations may also be applicable to agricultural development, including Environmental Impact Assessment for intensive agricultural use of uncultivated or semi-natural areas, water management (exceeding 1 hectare) or intensive livestock installations (new floorspace exceeding 500 square metres) may require Environmental Impact Assessment. The Environment Agency is also an important regulator of agriculture.

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[6] The National Park Authority has adopted Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Guidance, June 2011. http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=183

[7] Planning permission is required to put solar panels or photovoltaic panels on existing farm buildings or can be part of a planning application for a new farm building. Please see the the Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance for further information on solar panels. http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=183

[8] In addition, farmers should take into account all relevant agricultural BSI British Standards and codes of good agricultural practice for soil, air and water protection and any other relevant regulations.

[9] See http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=282 for pre-application forms

Local and National Planning Policy

4.3 National planning policy relating to agriculture is contained within Planning Policy Wales, Edition 4 (February 2011), and supplemented by further guidance in Technical Advice Note 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities July 2010[10].

4.4 The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan, September 2010, contains policies which are relevant to proposals for farm buildings. These include Policy 1 'National Park Purposes and Duty'; Policy 7 'Countryside'; Policy 8 'Special Qualities', Policy 15 'Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park'; Policy 29 Sustainable Design; and Policy 30 Amenity.

In addition, the National Park Authority has produced supplementary planning guidance on Sustainable Design and on Renewable Energy[11] which may be relevant to farm building proposals.

[10] See http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/?lang=en

[11] Visit http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=183 for the Sustainable Design or Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance documents..

5. Design Guidelines

5.1 The design guidance set out in the following sections is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to help shape schemes that meet the farmers' needs and are in harmony with their surroundings. What will be appropriate in a particular case will depend on the nature of the individual proposals and the site circumstances. Buildings for livestock housing, for example, will raise different issues to those for storing grain, straw or potatoes. As a result of technological advances in both the farming and building industries, new farm buildings tend to be larger than traditional farm buildings and make use of more varied construction materials. It is important that they continue to integrate with the landscape and have positive impacts on biodiversity and habitats, pollution control, the historic and cultural environment and relate well to existing buildings.

Siting

5.2 Preference should be given to new buildings which sit within or are well related to existing building complexes, since the existing development can help to provide a context which is less intrusive than new isolated development. However, it is recognised that such siting is not always appropriate, for operational, pollution control or other practical reasonsIt may also be possible to integrate with or extend existing buildings. Practical considerations include ease of access for machinery, vehicles and livestock; shelter; sun/shade requirements; security and drainage needs. In addition, the following advice should help to lessen the building's impact on the landscape:

- avoid prominent sites including those near to public highways and public rights of way;
- where possible site the building below the skyline;
- use existing or new planted vegetation to screen the building or to soften its appearance;
- use the building as an opportunity to screen any existing unattractive buildings;
- avoid siting near to residential properties unconnected with the farm. Potential smell and noise should be taken into account;
- where possible site new buildings parallel or at right angles to existing buildings;
- avoid removing or concealing features of interest such as ponds, trees, hedges or traditional walls and buildings;

Plate 1 : Sited below the skyline, this complex uses a variety of roof shapes. The addition of planting on the hedgebank to the front of buildings would grow up to screen the buildings.

5.3 When planning a new building, landscape enhancement opportunities may arise through rationalisation of the use of existing buildings on the farmstead or by removing buildings of particularly poor appearance or those in a poor state of repair (providing they have no historic merit).

5.4 A building on the skyline will break the natural line between the sky and land, and will tend to dominate the landscape and be intrusive. In most cases this can be avoided. Siting below the skyline considerably reduces the potential intrusion of modern farm buildings into the landscape. Where this is not possible careful attention should be given to the design, size, outline, reflectivity of materials and colour of the building and its relationship with the contours of the land. The outlines of the building should be interesting and well balanced in proportion. The distant views of buildings in this situation are particularly important.

Topography

5.5 The relationship of a building to the contours of the land is fundamental to its overall appearance. Traditional farm buildings often seem to grow out of the land, partly because they were built of traditional local building materials but partly because the builders shaped each building to fit the site. With larger new buildings this is not quite so easy to achieve. However through careful siting the lines of a building can sit against the landscape backdrop and can hug the sweep of the land closely. A sloping site, although it may seem more difficult to develop, should not be ignored as it may have several advantages:

- Setting a building into a slope will minimise its impact on the landscape and will help it to merge into its surroundings.
- The slope can give shelter and a warm aspect.
- A sloping site may be less productive agricultural land.
- The spoil from excavation can often be used to reduce the apparent height of the building through sensitive ground shaping through the creation of banks and mounds.

5.6 Cut and fill can be the best method of providing a level building site on a steep slope and of setting a building into the landscape. Appearance will be improved by keeping the cut and fill to a minimum. In addition, “stepped” buildings can produce interesting roof patterns. Extensive cut and fill can however result in large expanses of unattractive retaining walls and bare slopes and should be avoided. Taking advantage of a sloping site can result in improvements to the form of buildings

Form and Design

5.7 Modern farm buildings need to be carefully designed. Large single span buildings can potentially cause the greatest visual impact.

Consideration should be given to:

- using multi-span structures which reduce the bulkiness of the roof and enable the gable elevation to be in more than one plane;
- varying the standard rectangular plan;
- breaking up large flat expanses of walls by using materials of a different colour and texture (e.g. stone below timber cladding, timber doors, etc.);
- using different coloured materials for the walls and roof;
- good construction detailing;
- dividing the building into two smaller ones which can then be more easily incorporated into an existing group.

5.8 The type and colour and texture of external construction materials will greatly affect the impact the building has on the landscape. (Breeze block walls for example can be of relatively poor appearance and are not considered appropriate in sensitive or prominent locations, although account will be taken of the justification for choosing this form of construction).

Plate 2 : Variety of spans and design can add interest.

Type of Material

5.9 Traditional local stone is a material which blends well with the rural environment. They can be used to good effect as a plinth to a portal framed and timber clad building.

5.10 Concrete blocks or in situ concrete or natural grey blocks if a high quality can have an acceptable appearance, provided they are not used extensively on exposed elevations. Rendering of concrete or block work is generally acceptable.

5.11 The use of concrete materials as a plinth, not exceeding one third of the height of the building, with cladding at the higher level, may be acceptable in many circumstances. Cladding can where appropriate be timber, stone or corrugation.

5.12 Vertical timber boarding remains a popular cladding material, in particular for livestock buildings, and usually blends successfully with traditional buildings. Horizontal boarding

can also be acceptable. Preservative treatments can have acceptable colours. Plywood, blockboard, hardboard and similar sheeted timber materials are generally visually unsatisfactory, and are unacceptable.

5.13 Plastic coated metal sheeting can have a good appearance if a suitable colour is chosen. It requires no maintenance, has an extremely long life, erection is simple and the sheets can be re-used. It is available in a range of suitable colours and profiles. As a general rule, the bigger the building, the bigger should be the profile (i.e. the distance between the corrugation which gives the ripple appearance). For smaller buildings traditional rounded corrugation is appropriate.

5.14 Self-coloured fibre cement sheets are available in natural or coloured finish. Although it is relatively inexpensive and easy to maintain, its practical drawback is its brittleness, which makes re-use difficult and damage likely if used at ground level. A coloured finish is strongly recommended as the natural finish takes a long time to weather and can be unduly prominent.

5.15 Bitumen and mineral fibre board is a lightweight corrugated cladding material which can be used on flat or curved surfaces and is available ready coloured. It has a relatively short life expectancy of around 25 years. It is normally only suitable for use on irregularly shaped or temporary buildings.

5.16 Corrugated steel sheeting was traditionally used for many farm buildings and was usually painted to maintain its appearance. Other options include plastic coated or coloured fibre cement sheeting and will normally be acceptable.

Colour of Material

5.17 The use of appropriate colour is very important when trying to make the building fit into its surroundings Dark colours have less visual impact. Most materials come in a range of colours and the following general advice is given:

- use dark matt finishes or roofs and walls such as brown, dark green, black or dark grey which blend well with the landscape and a building will appear to be smaller;
- choose a darker colour for the roof – the roof reflects more daylight than the walls and so will appear lighter if coloured the same as the walls.
- avoid a large expanse of a single colour for walls – a blend of materials or shades can be preferable;
- colour-coated sheets are preferable to some through-colour pigmented sheets, as they give a more even and long-lasting results.

Plate 3: A variety of materials and colours can be acceptable.

5.18 The precise choice of colour will depend on local surroundings, including the colour of any adjacent buildings. The existence of inappropriately coloured buildings nearby will not be acceptable justification for a poor choice of colour or materials.

Plate 4 : Colour choices and scale can help buildings blend with the traditional

Construction Details

5.19 As farm buildings often consist of large expanses of flat surfaces, good detailing can greatly enhance their appearance. Detailing worthy of consideration include eaves, rooflights, gutters, rainwater pipes, doors, windows and ventilation units. Prominent or sensitive locations are likely to require close attention to detail.

In sensitive locations the following can improve the appearance of the building:

- the apparent scale of the building will be reduced if the roof overhangs the walls, as an horizontal shadow line is created (natural ventilation will also be improved);
- gutters and rainwater pipes can be important design elements and care should be taken to ensure that they cannot be damaged by livestock and farm machinery;
- doors, windows and ventilation units should be in proportion to the whole building.

5.20 Problems often arise with large doors, particularly on gable ends. The upper corners of the door openings and the 'runners' should be kept well away from the roof to improve appearance. An industrial appearance to doors should be avoided.

6. Landscaping

6.1 Tree planting and natural boundary treatments will often be required to integrate and help blend new farm buildings into the landscape. It will also provide protection from strong winds and habitat for wildlife. The need for tree planting will be influenced by the scale and prominence of the building and the adequacy of any existing trees or planting which screens the building from main viewpoints. Careful siting and choice of materials

may reduce the need for tree planting. In prior notification cases, if the building is likely to have a significant impact on its surroundings, landscaping may be essential if other ways of reducing the impact cannot be found. Landscaping will always be a matter for detailed consideration for developments which require planning permission. Artificial bunds even when planted can look out of place and should be avoided.

6.2 Submitted planting schemes should consider:

- planting in groups and not in evenly spaced rows, unless in shelter belts;
- choosing species which do well locally and are native to the area;
- planting some distance away to protect sensitive viewpoints.
- the risk of damage to buildings from falling branches, gutters becoming blocked with leaves or root damage to foundations;

6.3 Planting requirements will normally be the subject of conditions imposed on planning permissions or on approval of details submitted under the prior notification procedure. These will normally cover the means of protection for existing landscape features within the site, the carrying out of the planting within a specified timescale and future maintenance responsibilities. New trees should be protected from rabbits and stock by appropriate fencing. Maintenance conditions will include a requirement to replant any trees which fail to survive for five years.

6.4 The Authority has produced a list of native trees and shrubs which occur naturally within the National Park to assist and is available on the Authority's website[12]. Advice is also available from the Authority's Tree and Landscape Officer.

7. Extensions to Existing Buildings

7.1 Similar considerations will apply to extensions as to new buildings. Consideration should also be given to the visual benefits of an extension that is subservient (smaller in scale) to the original building and that matches it in design and materials. However, an alternative solution may be best, particularly where the appearance of the existing building is poor and the proposed extension would be prominent.Suggestions may include the construction of a separate building and physical works or landscaping to improve the appearance of the existing building.

8. Access Roads

8.1 Existing access roads should be used where at all possible. Extensions to existing access roads or new access roads to farm buildings can have a significant impact on the countryside, particularly where the land is undulating or features of interest are removed. [13]Junctions of new farm roads and public roads will have to satisfy the requirements of the Highway Authority, who may request an alternative siting or specification, for reasons of highway safety or maintenance;

8.2 New or extended existing access roads should:

[12] http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/files/files/dev%20plans/AdoptedSPG/NativeTreesShrubs2011.pdf

[13] Planning permission may be required for making or altering access roads.

- avoid causing harm to features of interest, such as trees and woodland, ponds, the settings of listed buildings or ancient monuments, etc.;
- follow established field boundaries or contours;
- consider the impact on any neighbouring dwellings not connected with the farm;
- take into account public rights of way (such as public footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways and their users, advice should be sought from the public rights of way section before any changes are made to the surface of any public right of way;
- consider dark surfacing as tarmac or crushed aggregate can be less noticeable in the landscape. Any hard surfacing of a bridleway running along an access road requires prior consultation and consent of the public rights of way team;
- consider whether new tree planting or hedge banks are appropriate

9. Other Considerations[14]

There are a wide range of considerations which must be taken into account for any development, and these can be relevant to farm buildings. Each proposal can present different considerations. Pre-application advice can be provided.

- **Biodiversity** (**Habitats and Species)** the potential for protected species to be present, and for loss or damage to habitat must be considered. Effects on biodiversity of run-off and pollution, including air, water and soil pollution must be considered. Enhancements to biodiversity can be incorporated into many schemes, such as barn owl boxes and bat boxes

  The effects on biodiversity can often be avoided, minimised or mitigated through careful siting and design. Appropriate management of feed stocks such as silage, and waste arising from any livestock that is housed within the buildings can assist. Technical advice should also be sought from the Environment Agency Wales about pollution[15].

- **Effect on Historic landscape or buildings** Particular care should be taken when the development is within an historic landscape, or would impact on an historic park or garden. Potential impact on listed buildings and their settings, buildings of local importance and development within Conservation Areas should be taken into account along with the potential for archaeology and protected monuments and sites. The need for Listed Building Consent should be considered where alterations to listed buildings are concerned. Every effort should be made to retain buildings which are of historic interest, seeking their repair and adaptation rather than removal.

- **Public Rights of Way** are highways and are protected by law in exactly the same manner as any other highway such as a High Street or dual carriageway. If a new building or associated works are likely to affect a public right of way, either crossing, adjacent to or being used as access this will be considered as

[14] See Local Development Plan policies 10 and 11 for further information: http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=178

[15] http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk

part of the planning application process. Permission will not be granted for any development which would prejudice public access onto or through the PROW network unless specific arrangements are made for suitable alternative routes which meet the legal tests. Please seek further advice from the public rights of way team.

- **Water Protection and Pollution Control** standards are required. The Environment Agency can provide advice about this.

10. Further Advice

Further advice is available from the Planning Department via the pre-application enquiry procedure. Advice is also available on access, tree, building conservation and biodiversity matters.

Please direct your planning enquiries to:

Development Management
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Llanion Park
Pembroke Dock
Pembrokeshire
SA72 6DY

Tel: 0845 3457275 Fax: 01646 689076 Email: devman@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

11. Useful Contacts

Environment Agency **www.environment-agency.gov.uk**
General Enquiries 03708 506 506
Incident Hotline (to report an incident including pollution 0800 807060
Agricultural Waste registration 0845 603 3113

Countryside Council for Wales
General Enquiries 01646 624000

Dyfed Archaeological Trust **www.cambria.org.uk**
Contact telephone 01555 823121

Planning Aid Wales **www.planningaidwales.org.uk**
Planning Aid Wales is an independent registered charity providing free impartial and professional advice on all aspects of planning in Wales. PAW provides a helpline service for elegible members of the public. Tel *02920 625000*

APPENDIX 1 : Do I need planning permission or prior notification?

This will depend on the size of the holding, whether a separate parcel of land is being used, and the development proposed.

Holding Under 5 hectares?

On holdings of less than five hectares (or separate parcel of land of less than one hectare) the erection of any new agricultural building requires formal planning approval.

Holding of 5 hectares or more?

On holdings over five hectares some agricultural buildings and other works could be permitted development. If the holding is more than five hectares, and **any** of the answers to the following questions is **YES**, then full planning permission is required. If **all** the answers are **NO**, then the Prior Notification Procedure applies.

Checklist :

- Is the farm holding less than five ha in area or the development to take place on a separate parcel of land less than one hectare? **YES/NO**
- Would it involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes? **YES/NO**
- Would the ground area of the development exceed 465 sq metres? **YES/NO**
- Would the height of any part of any building, structure or works within three km of the perimeter of an aerodrome exceed three metres? **YES/NO**
- Would any part of the development be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk or classified road? **YES/NO**
- Would the development be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge, **YES/NO**
  - If yes, would it be within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building? **YES/NO**
- Would the development involve excavations or engineering operations connected with fish farming? **YES/NO**

The prior notification procedure can be described in two stages:

i. The farmer or developer is required to provide details of their proposal to the National Park Authority. This should be done by filling in the "prior notification" form and sending it to the Authority, along with the correct fee [16] and any supporting information. Twenty-eight days are allowed for the Authority to decide whether their approval is required; were the Authority to indicate that prior approval is not necessary (or fail to give a decision in twenty-eight day period), the work can proceed.

ii. Progress to the second stage is dependent on whether or not the authority considers prior approval necessary. If this is the case, the farmer or developer is required to submit full details of the proposal, including siting, materials and external appearance. These will be subject to careful consideration by the Authority, who will aim to make a decision within eight weeks of receiving full details. During this period, the Authority may suggest amendments to make the proposal more acceptable.

In deciding whether or not the second stage (ii), i.e. prior approval of details is necessary, Officers will assess whether or not the proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on its surroundings. In making this judgement, regard will be had to:

[16] Current fees can be found on our web site at http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?pid=132

- the visual impact of the proposal on the landscape or any potentially adverse effects it may have on conservation interests, such as sites of nature conservation value, listed buildings or ancient monuments and their setting, archaeological sites, conservation areas or areas subject to landscape policies;
- any relevant Local Development Plan policies;
- the design guidelines referred to in this document;
- National Planning Policy and consultation with relevant agencies.

Farmers are encouraged to submit as much detail as possible at the stage of initial notification and to follow the design guidelines set down in this guidance. Sketch elevations or trade literature on materials can be particularly helpful way of conveying the information.

Under Regulation 73 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010, where development is likely to have a significant effect on a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area, it is a condition of any planning permission granted under these arrangements that prior notification be given to the NPA before starting work.