

Penrhos Farm

AGRI 2017/0057

Note on Landscape and Visual Matters Relating to the Permitted Agricultural Building on the Site

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Viento Environmental Limited
www.viento-env.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been commissioned by Rebo UK Limited to consider the potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity as a result of the permitted agricultural building at Penrhos Farm under notification reference AGRI2017/ 0057.
2. This agricultural building has never been built, although the permission remains active. Instead, the current steel frame portal building at Penrhos Farm has been constructed without permission.
3. This report sets out the details of the permitted building and discusses the potential landscape and visual effects of this building in comparison to the current unapproved building at Penrhos Farm (the 'current building').
4. The report is illustrated by **Figures 1– 3**, photomontages from **Viewpoints 3, 6 and 7** and by **Appendix 1**, and makes reference to **Figures LV1 - LV4** from the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, dated April 2021, for the retrospective permission of the current building.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

5. Notification reference AGRI 2017/0057 (dated 11.08.17) from Powys County Council ('the Council') states that an agricultural building for fodder and machinery storage at Penrhos Farm does not require prior approval from the Council. It also states that the building must be carried out in accordance with the notification submitted to the Council within five years of 26.07.17.
6. The main visual elements of the permitted building can be summarised as follows:
 - Built form – measuring 15.24m by 30.48m and 8.25m to ridge of roof. The building has an eaves height of 6.0m with four entrance bays on the east and west facades measuring up to 4.0m in height and width. The building would have concrete panels at lower level, rising to 2.0m on all sides with Yorkshire boarding above. The roof would be constructed of slate blue fibre cement. See **Appendix 1** for details.
 - Hardstanding – a 2.0m wide hardstanding would surround the building to the north, west and south, with a larger hardstanding area immediately to the west of the building measuring approximately 15.0m by 24.0m and a 3.0m wide track extending west from this.
7. Its position within the Penrhos Farm complex is approximately indicated on **Figure 1** as a blue outline in relation to the current building and the other existing built form at Penrhos Farm.

8. It is also worthwhile noting that no landscaping proposals were intended to be implemented as part of the construction of the permitted building. As such, the planting that has been implemented by Rebo UK Limited since taking ownership of the land would not be part of the current baseline landscape if this permitted agricultural building had been built instead.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT BUILDING (UNPERMITTED)

- Built form – measuring 79.05m x 36.6m and 9.56m to ridge of roof. Of steel portal frame construction. The roof has two ridges and an eaves height of 7.0m. The building has four entrance bays on the eastern façade measuring approximately 4m in width and 5m in height and three standard sized door entries on the western façade. The roof of the building is grey in colour, with the south and west façade walls a mid-green colour and the north and east walls a dark grey/ blue colour.
- Hardstanding – existing hardstanding areas have been utilised and extended slightly to the south, surrounding the building by a few metres to the west, south and also to the east.
- Landscape enhancement proposals – a landscaping scheme is proposed in association with the development and some of this planting has already been implemented. These measures are proposed to aid in the integration of the building into the area as well as adding enhancements to local landscape fabric. They comprise:
 - Soil bunding to the southwest and south of the new building and hardstanding area with a double row of leylandii and a single row of semi-mature deciduous trees planted along the length of the bund. In addition, four semi mature birch trees have also been planted within the field south of the new building. (All of these works are already implemented).
 - Additional earthworks to extend and slightly increase the height of existing ground levels to the immediate south of the building (beyond the hardstanding area). These ground levels would be created through a series of engineered landforms as indicatively illustrated in **Figure LV4** of the LVIA (April 2021) and would provide some elevated landform onto which native woodland would be planted. These works can be secured by condition.
 - A sizeable native woodland block wrapping around the southwestern and southern end of the Penrhos Farm site (as indicated in **Figure LV3** of the LVIA (April 2021)) totalling approximately 7,250sqm, linking with the existing Penrhos Coppice to the west. (Detailed planting plan to be agreed post permission, local native species include ash, elm, bird cherry, oak, hawthorn, hornbeam, hazel, rowan, sycamore as well as some honeysuckle, ivy and rose). This can be secured by condition.

9. Its position within the Penrhos Farm complex is approximately indicated on **Figure 1** as a red outline within the southwest of the Penrhos Farm complex.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PENRHOS FARM COMPLEX

10. The current building, as well as the permitted building described above, are both situated within the existing farm complex. Part of the land over which the current building has been built was previously occupied by another agricultural building of a smaller footprint (but of a comparable height) and a small outbuilding, both of which were demolished to allow for the construction of the current building which now stands on this land. However, it is understood that the intention with the permitted building was to retain these two existing buildings and add this new building adjacent to them, as indicated within the Location Plan drawing accompanying the notification to the Council in July 2017 (contained here for reference as **Appendix 1**).
11. The landform of the site itself is flat, but then slopes down to the south beyond the existing built development and earth bund. The site is situated at approximately 111m AOD, and the grass field to the south then gently slopes down to approximately 97m AOD to the south where it meets the road approximately 75m away. To the north and northwest the landform gradually rises to a high point of 154m approximately 600m away. Therefore, it is a fair description to say that the current building (along with Penrhos Farm itself and the adjacent haulage yard which is in the ownership of Rebo UK Limited) is located on the side of rising land as part of a wider valley landscape.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

12. As mentioned above, the local area broadly forms a valley landscape and the landscape is generally very well vegetated, particularly in the vicinity of Penrhos Farm where a number of woodlands are located including Penrhos Coppice and Ash Coppice.
13. This is a rural landscape where Sarnau and Deuddwr form the main small settlements local to the site. Beyond this, residential properties and farms tend to be scattered throughout the area.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment Approach

14. As set out above, the documentation for the permitted building illustrates two other agricultural barns/ outbuildings located immediately north of the permitted building and indicates that

these barns would have been retained as part of the Penrhos Farm complex of buildings should this permitted building have been built.

15. In reality these two buildings were in fact demolished to make way for the current building. Nevertheless, the baseline in relation to the permitted building is that these two buildings remained and the incremental effects of adding the permitted building will be discussed. It should also be noted that no earthworks or planting proposals were envisaged with the permitted building and so these current elements would not have been included with the permitted building.
16. As a second step, this report will also discuss the potential visibility of the permitted building (in conjunction with the previous baseline) in comparison to the current building on the site and the beneficial and adverse effects of both in broad landscape and visual terms.

Good Practice Guidance and Data

17. The methodology used in this study conforms to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). GLVIA3 recommends that for non-EIA development, an assessment of significance is not required and that the assessment should also be proportionate to the scale of the project and the nature of its likely effects.
18. As mentioned above, the assessment has utilised guidance set out within the GLVIA3. Photographs illustrating views from each viewpoint have been taken using a Canon EOS 6D digital camera using a fixed lens with a 50mm focal length. In accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals (LI, 2019), the viewpoints are illustrated within the photomontage booklet as single frame images with a set viewing distance. The viewpoint images are provided for information purposes. These viewpoint images should not be considered as a substitute to visiting a viewpoint in the field.

Prediction Methodologies

19. The prediction methodologies for the viewpoint analysis, landscape assessment and visual assessment are provided at the beginning of these sections.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Theoretical Visibility Analysis

20. **Figure 2** includes a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the current building, indicating the locations within a 3.0km radius where topography would theoretically allow visibility of the building. This has been based on one of the highest points of the building; the apex of the roofline (Point A at 9.56m above ground level). This point has been used at a height above ground level relating to the height of the roof apex within the design. The ZTV has been

generated using a computer-based intervisibility package and the Ordnance Survey Digital Terrain Model (DTM) with height data at 50m intervals.

21. However, **Figure 3** illustrates a cumulative ZTV which utilises the ZTV from **Figure 2**, but also incorporates a ZTV of the permitted building. This has been based on one of the highest points of the building; the apex of the roofline at 8.25m above ground level. This point has been used at a height above ground level relating to the height of the roof apex within the design. This ZTV has then been overlaid over the ZTV from **Figure 2** for the current building. **Figure 3** illustrates that the areas where both the permitted and current buildings would be visible from are indicated by the mustard tone. Where only the permitted building would potentially have been visible, the yellow tone is used, and where only the currently building would potentially be visible, the lilac tone is used.
22. It is clear that **Figure 3** illustrates the areas of potential visibility are broadly exactly the same for the permitted building as well as the current building. Although the current building is larger than the permitted building, in theory it would broadly be seen across exactly the same parts of the study area as the permitted building.
23. The ZTV is based on bare terrain topographical data only. It does not take into account the screening effects of any minor topographic features, vegetation such as woodland, tree belts and hedgerows or built structures and therefore tends to over-emphasise the extent of visibility in this type of well vegetated landscape, providing a worst case scenario. In reality, these surface features would fragment and reduce the extent of most of these zones of theoretical visibility, and, in a well vegetated landscape such as this, would also reduce the amount/proportion of the development visible from any given location.
24. The ZTV does not illustrate the decrease in the scale of the built development with increased distance from the site which is better illustrated by viewpoints. As a result, fieldwork and the viewpoint analysis are essential as a way of verifying the ZTV and undertaking a thorough assessment.
25. Furthermore, the ZTV does not account for the earthworks or planting measures proposed as part of the planning application associated with the retrospective planning permission for the current building.

Viewpoint Analysis

26. Eight viewpoints were assessed in detail as part of the LVIA for retrospective planning permission for the current building. These were selected as representing and illustrating some of the most open and/or key locations or receptors within the 3.0km radius study area and were located in positions where the ZTV suggested that potential visibility of the current building

may be available. Each of these viewpoints is indicated on **Figures 2 and 3**. Nevertheless, as the LVIA shows, some of these viewpoints would gain no visibility of the current building due to a wealth of intervening vegetation (namely VPs 1 and 4). This vegetation would also entirely screen the permitted building from view in the same way.

27. It is not proposed for the purposes of this report to assess each of the 8 viewpoints in detail, but instead to focus on those with the most open views towards the current building and to discuss the potential visibility of the permitted building from these locations in broad terms so as to be able to directly compare the potential effects between the two built forms.
28. These viewpoints are listed below and the locations of these viewpoints are shown on **Figures 2 and 3**.

Table 1 – List of viewpoints

Vp	Viewpoint Name	NGR	Approx. distance from built development	Landscape Character (Visual & Sensory Layer)	Visual Receptor
3	Sarnau to Penrhos road	323525 316265	0.6km	Guilsfield Rolling Farmlands AA	Walkers, Motorists
6	West edge of Sarnau	323215 315675	1.25km	Guilsfield Rolling Farmlands AA	Walkers, Residents, Motorists
7	Local road east of Sarnau	324230 315625	1.25km	Guilsfield Rolling Farmlands AA	Walkers, Residents, Motorists

Prediction Methodology

29. The following viewpoint analysis has been assessed on the assumption that the baseline is formed by the site prior to construction of the permitted building, and pre demolition of the previous buildings, and so firstly measures the magnitude of change occurring as a result of the permitted development (and without any of the earthworks and planting measures implemented currently).

30. The existing view photographs were taken in September 2020 and illustrate the current building, along with the existing earth bund and existing planting measures on the site. The assessment from each viewpoint was also undertaken in September 2020.
31. The wireframe and photomontage views illustrate the permitted building.
32. In accordance with GLVIA3, the sensitivity of each visual receptor group at each location is a function of the susceptibility of visual receptors to change at that location and the value attached to these views. All visual receptors are people and are assumed to be equally sensitive to change. However, the location and activities of visual receptors influence the way in which they currently experience the landscape and views, the extent to which views of the surrounding landscape may contribute to their existing visual amenity, the value they place on these views and their susceptibility to changes in these views. Accordingly, at any one location there may be different levels of sensitivity for the different receptor groups, the sensitivity may vary depending on the direction of the view, and any one receptor group may be accorded different levels of sensitivity at different locations.
33. Receptor susceptibility levels of susceptible, moderate susceptibility and slight susceptibility are used taking into account the following factors:
 - Receptor location, occupation or activity,
 - Movement of receptor and duration and frequency of view experienced,
 - Focus of attention and interest.
34. The judgement of value is based on a five point scale – National value, County/Borough/District value, Community value, private value, unvalued. The value attached to a location or to a particular view at a location can influence the purpose and expectation of receptors at the location and the judgement of value takes into account:
 - Recognised value – for example by the presence of planning designations or designated heritage assets,
 - Indicators of value – to individuals, communities and society generally, such as the popularity of a location.
35. Accordingly, within this assessment visual receptor sensitivity is determined in terms of the sensitivity of each location for each receptor type (rather than the sensitivity of the receptors *per se*), using a five point relative scale (high, high/medium, medium, medium/low and low).
36. The magnitude of the change in the views from the viewpoints has been assessed based on the assessor's interpretation of largely quantifiable parameters, including:
 - Distance and direction of the viewpoint from the development.
 - Extent of the development visible from the viewpoint.

- Field of view occupied by the development (horizontal and vertical angles of view) and proportion of view (as a percentage of the panorama).
- Context of the view and degree of contrast with the existing landscape and built elements (background, form, composition, pattern, scale and mass, line, movement, colour, texture, etc).
- Scale of change with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view.
- Duration and nature of the effect, eg direct/ indirect, secondary, cumulative, temporary/ permanent, short term/ long term, intermittent/ continuous, reversible/ irreversible, etc (as related to the nature of the development).

37. This magnitude of change scale is a relative scale and is not an absolute scale.

38. The resulting overall degree of impact is a combination of receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change and is divided into eight levels of impact (major, major/moderate, moderate, moderate/ minor, minor, minor/ negligible, negligible and imperceptible) as indicated in the matrix below.

Table 2: Assessment of overall impact

Location sensitivity	Magnitude of change			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor
High/ medium	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor
Medium	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible
Medium/ low	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewpoint 3 – Sarnau to Penrhos road

39. This viewpoint is located on a local road at approximately 75m AOD and 0.6km south of the built development within Guilsfield Rolling Farmland LANDMAP visual and sensory aspect area. This location was identified during fieldwork as the only open section of the road where a clear view towards the built development was available.

40. As illustrated in the existing view photograph the current building on site is barely discernible above the roadside hedgerows. Its colour blends with the local vegetative colour palette so that

the viewer may mistake it for landform on the horizon. In addition, some of the existing vegetation planted around the building since it was built assists in softening visibility of the current building.

41. Predicted view: The permitted building would be located slightly further north within the site than the southern façade of the current building, so that its position on the northern valley slope would be set back slightly further than the current building. However, this is not clearly evident from the viewpoint as the lack of vegetation or earth bund around the base of the permitted building would result in visibility of parts of the southern façade close to the base of the building. The timber colour of the Yorkshire boarding would contrast with the predominantly green local colour palette where it would form a noticeable element within the view.
42. The viewpoint represents views of motorists (medium sensitivity) and nearby footpath users (high/ medium sensitivity).
43. The permitted building would form a noticeable addition to the view, contrasting with the current colour palette where a *moderate* magnitude of change in the view is expected. For motorists (medium sensitivity) this would result in a *moderate/ slight* effect on visual amenity and for nearby footpath users (high/ medium sensitivity) a *moderate* effect on visual amenity would occur.
44. In comparison to the effects as a result of the current building, as set out within the LVIA, a slight (winter) or negligible (summer) magnitude of change was assessed, resulting in *minor or minor/ negligible* effects on motorists and *moderate/ minor or minor* effects on walkers.

Viewpoint 6 – West edge of Sarnau

45. This viewpoint is located on a local road close to a nearby footpath at approximately 95m AOD and 1.25km southwest of the built development, within Guilsfield Rolling Farmland LANDMAP visual and sensory aspect area. From this location wide and open views north across the valley are available with the agricultural landscape evident along with the wealth of local vegetation. The agricultural barn close to Ty Top is clearly visible within the valley, as are a number of buildings within the locality, all partially visible amongst existing mature vegetation.
46. Similarly, the current building at Penrhos Farm is partially visible on the valley side, although partially screened by existing vegetation. The colour of the building is a good fit with the local colour palette in conjunction with the softening effect provided by the mitigation planting measures currently in place at the site.

47. Predicted view: The permitted building would be set slightly further back on the sloping landform than the current building and so the proportion of the building visible above existing mature trees to the west of the building would be slightly less than the current building. However, the existing vegetation around the base of the current building which forms part of the mitigation measures for the building would not exist in association with the permitted building and so the base and full height of the permitted building would be more visible as a result. In addition, the concrete and timber colours of the walls of the permitted building would be noticeable as a contrast to the current local colour palette, with the permitted building drawing the eye within the view as a result.
48. The viewpoint represents views of footpath users (high/ medium sensitivity), residents (high sensitivity) and motorists (medium sensitivity).
49. The permitted building would form a noticeable addition to the view, contrasting with the current colour palette, but seen in the context of some other noticeable features of the view, where a *slight* magnitude of change in the view is expected. For walkers (high/medium sensitivity) a *moderate/ minor* effect is expected, for residents (high sensitivity) a *moderate* effect is expected and for motorists (medium sensitivity) this would result in a *minor* effect on visual amenity.
50. In comparison to the effects as a result of the current building, as set out within the LVIA, a *negligible* magnitude of change was assessed, resulting in *minor* effects on walkers, *moderate/ minor* effects on residents and *minor/ negligible* effects on motorists.

Viewpoint 7 – East of Sarnau

51. This viewpoint is located on a local road close to a nearby footpath at approximately 105m AOD and 1.25km south of the built development, within Guilsfield Rolling Farmland LANDMAP visual and sensory aspect area. From this location wide and open views north across the valley are available where foreground vegetation allows. The agricultural barn at Ty Top is visible on higher ground within the valley, as are a number of other buildings, again all partially visible amongst existing mature vegetation. Ash Coppice is clearly visible extending out throughout the right hand side of the view.
52. The current building is partially visible on the valley side, predominantly seen as the southern façade and roofline amongst a wealth of mature trees in the surrounding landscape as well as some mitigation planting located immediately adjacent to the building. The building is entirely backgrounded by pasture fields and so the lighter colour of the roof makes the building more evident against the green backdrop.

53. Predicted view: The permitted building would also be seen as its southern façade. The viewpoint is at a similar height to the site and so any existing buildings behind the permitted building would tend to be screened from view by the permitted building itself, much in the same way as with the current building. The mass of the permitted building would appear slightly smaller than the current building although the concrete and timber colour of the walls and the slate blue colour of the roof would stand out against the green pasture backdrop and the surrounding mature tree cover. In addition, no mitigation planting around the current building would exist and so a greater part of the full height of the southern façade walls of the permitted building would be visible. Therefore, mainly due to the timber and concrete colours of the permitted building, overall the building would become a noticeable element within the view.
54. The viewpoint represents views of footpath users (high/ medium sensitivity), residents (high sensitivity) and motorists (medium sensitivity).
55. The permitted building would form a noticeable addition to the view, contrasting with the current colour palette, but seen in the context of some other noticeable features of the view, where a *slight* magnitude of change in the view is expected. For walkers (high/medium sensitivity) a *moderate/ minor* effect is expected, for residents (high sensitivity) a *moderate* effect is expected and for motorists (medium sensitivity) this would result in a *minor* effect on visual amenity.
56. In comparison to the effects as a result of the current building, as set out within the LVIA, a *negligible* magnitude of change was assessed, resulting in *minor* effects on walkers, *moderate/ minor* effects on residents and *minor/ negligible* effects on motorists.

Table 3: Summary of Visual Effects

LVIA Vp	Distance from current building	Predicted Visual Impact Resulting from Introduction of Permitted Building	Predicted Visual Impact Resulting from Current Building (as set out within LVIA)
3	0.6km	Moderate/ minor effects for motorists and minor effects for walkers.	Summer months – minor effects for walkers and minor/ negligible effects for motorists. Winter months – moderate/ minor effects for walkers and minor effects for motorists.
6	1.25km	Moderate/minor effects for walkers, moderate effects for residents, minor effects for motorists.	Minor effects for walkers, moderate/minor effects for residents, minor/ negligible effects for motorists
7	1.25km	Moderate/minor effects for walkers, moderate effects for residents, minor effects for motorists.	Minor effects for walkers, moderate/minor effects for residents, minor/ negligible effects for motorists

SUMMARY DISCUSSION

57. The extent of potential visibility of the permitted building would be very similar to the current building. In general terms neither building would be visible from the vast majority of the northern half of the study area. Visibility would be focussed within the southern sector, mainly seen looking north across the valley where both buildings would sit on the northern slopes of the valley side.
58. A wealth of mature vegetation exists within this valley and so views of the current building are occasional and not consistent. This would also be the case for the permitted building, although it would not have the advantage of the current mitigation planting measures that exist around the current building and which would be further enhanced over time by the proposed earthworks and additional native woodland planting. Over the medium to longer term the visibility of the current building would gradually reduce as the proposed planting establishes.
59. The lack of mitigation planting around the permitted building would make it more open and exposed on the valley slope. However, the mass of the building would generally be seen as smaller than the current building, although usually each is seen primarily as the southern façade, which is almost comparable in dimensions between the two. The colour palette for the permitted building of concrete and timber walls and slate blue concrete fibre roof would often contrast with the section of the view within which it is seen, and this in combination with the mass, position and mitigation planting considerations would allow the permitted building to stand out in some views and would result in a more noticeable and, at times, more prominent built structure in some views than the current building, as indicated by the photomontages.
60. Therefore, overall, in purely visual terms the permitted building would have more of an effect on views experienced by local visual receptors than the current building, but also in comparison to the future baseline of the current building. In landscape terms, the mitigation proposals yet to be implemented in association with the current building would add distinct benefits in terms of landscape fabric, but would also strengthen landscape character to a degree by linking existing areas of woodland and increasing the cohesion of the local landscape. The permitted building would add a more noticeable element to the landscape, similar to the barn near Ty Top, where a built structure becomes a feature within the landscape by standing out within the muted colour palette and largely rural context of the locality.