

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 21/10/2019
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE MANAGER	CAERNARFON

**Number: 3**

**Application Number:** C19/0716/25/LL

**Date Registered:** 29/07/2019

**Application Type:** Full - Planning

**Community:** Pentir

**Ward:** Pentir

**Proposal:** Change of use of buildings from Use Class B1 (offices) to Use Class D1 (non-residential institutions), together with additional car parking, pedestrian links, bus stop and access road

**Location:** Tŷ Menai and Llwyn Brain, Ffordd Penlan, Parc Menai, Bangor, LL57 4HJ

**Summary of the Recommendation:** TO REFUSE

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## 1. Description:

- 1.1 This is a full application for a change of use of the Tŷ Menai/Technium and Llwyn y Brain (former Natural Resources Wales site) buildings located in close proximity to each other on the Parc Menai Employment site, and which currently stand empty, from their current B1 Class Use (offices and associated store) to Class D1 Use (educational non-residential establishment). The proposal also involves creating additional parking spaces, footpaths, a bus stop and walkway. The application can be split into several different elements, which include:-
- 8,976 square metres of the current offices' floor space of the two buildings above would be converted for educational use by Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai, and the proposal does not involve any external modifications or extensions to the current buildings.
  - It is anticipated that the main proposed campus would provide for approximately 700 students, 111 full time lecturers and 339 part-time lecturers, although they would not all be on campus at the same time.
  - The current provision is for 257 parking spaces and 10 disabled parking spaces, and five space for mini-buses. This provision would continue. However, a new walkway access would be created to the north of the site in order to link the proposed bus stop with the existing internal roads network.
  - It is intended to undertake an element of landscaping around the bus stop area.
  - Create a walkway to link the Llwyn y Brain and Tŷ Menai sites. It is also intended to create a footpath to link Llwyn y Brain with Ffordd Penlan and the proposed bus stop.
- 1.2 The site is at the south western corner of the Park Menai Employment Site, which is protected for B1 Business Use within the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2017 (LDP). The proposal involves substantially sized buildings that are served by an unclassified county roads network as far as the Parc Menai roundabout and the A487 trunk road. The site measures approximately 2.9ha and is partially located within a Special Landscape Area and within a Site of Outstanding Historic Interest. Trees protected by a tree preservation order are found close to the site and a number of listed buildings are within 500m of the site of the application.
- 1.3 The application has been submitted as Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai is seeking a site to relocate its main campus, currently on Ffriddoedd Road (including the grade II listed former Friars School) in Bangor. According to the information submitted, the main reason for relocating is the deterioration of the buildings and associated structures on the existing campus and because they no longer adhere to current teaching and health and safety standards. The applicant states that relocating to a new campus would enable the educational establishment to create a Centre of Excellence for creative and digital media, relocate approximately 200 learners from Llangefni to Bangor, avoid duplication of the service industry curriculum across the Group in North West Wales and improve teaching standards.
- 1.4 In order to support the application, the following documents were submitted - Planning Statement, Assessment of Office Supply and Employment Land in Bangor and a Travel Scheme. It was confirmed that the applicant had undertaken a pre-application consultation in accordance with Article 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Development Control Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) 2016, as the proposal is considered to be a major development. A Pre-application Consultation Report (PAC) has been included with the application to reflect this consultation.

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## 2. Relevant Policies:

2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Local Development Plan.

2.2 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 places a duty on the Council to take reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet the seven well-being goals within the Act. This report has been prepared in consideration of the Council's duty and the 'sustainable development principle', as set out in the 2015 Act. In reaching the recommendation, the Council has sought to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### 2.3 **Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (LDP) adopted 31 July 2017:-**

Policy PS1 - The Welsh Language and Culture

Policy ISA1 - Infrastructure provision

ISA2 - Community Facilities

Policy ISA3 - Further and Higher Education Developments

Policy TRA1 - Transport network developments

Policy TRA2 - Parking standards

Policy TRA4 - Managing transport impacts

Policy PS 4 - Sustainable transport, development and accessibility

Policy PS5 - Sustainable development

Policy PCYFF1 - Development boundaries

Policy PCYFF2 - Development criteria

Policy PCYFF3 - Design and place shaping

Policy PS13 - Providing opportunities for a prosperous economy

Policy CYF1 - Safeguarding, allocating and reserving land and units for employment use

Policy CYF5 - Alternative use of Current Employment Sites

Policy PS20 - Preserving and where appropriate enhancing heritage assets.

Policy AT1 - Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites and Landscapes, Parks and Registered Historic Gardens

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## 2.4 National Policies:

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, (2018)

Technical Advice Notes (TAN) 18: Transport (2007).

TAN 18: Transport (2007).

TAN23: Economic Development (2014).

TAN24: The Historic Environment (2017)

## 3. Relevant Planning History:

- 3.1 Application number 3/25/147E - extension to the business park approved in September 1990.
- 3.4 Application number 3/25/147X - construction of an office and parking spaces approved in April 1995.
- 3.3 Application number 3/25/147Y - construction of a store building approved in July 1995.
- 3.4 Application number 3/25/476 - construction of a building for storing and a new office approved in November 1995.
- 3.5 Application number C99A/00655/25/LL - construction of a single storey building for B1 use, car parking and landscaping, approved in February 2000.
- 3.6 Application number C01A/0660/25/LL - erection of building for advanced technology business, car parking and landscaping, approved in December 2001.
- 3.7 Application number C02A/0479/25/LL - erection of building for advanced technology business, car parking and landscaping (amended scheme) approved in September 2002.
- 3.8 Pre-planning application consultation number Y19/000391 for Class D1 Use (non-residential establishments). The Local Planning Authority responded by stating:-
  - The proposal is contrary to the requirements of Policy ISA3 of the LDP regarding further and higher education developments. Any planning application would have to include a comprehensive assessment of the suitability of the current Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai sites, and the reasons those sites could not be used after undertaking improvement and maintenance work. Consideration must also be given to sites that are close to the current campus, windfall sites and other sites within the development boundary of Bangor.
  - The proposal would be contrary to the requirements of Policies PS13 and CYF1 of the LDP, which safeguard and protect sites within Employment Sites for employment/business enterprises (B1 use in the case of Parc Menai).
  - The proposal would be contrary to many criteria within Policy CYF5, regarding alternative use of existing employment sites.
  - Transportation - elements of the Transport Assessment submitted with the pre-planning application enquiry require further investigation.

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- Parking requirements - the existing parking provision would be inadequate for the proposed use, meaning that cars would be parked on the carriageway of nearby roads.
- Cycling/pedestrian links - there are no formal pedestrian/cycling links from the site to the existing network.
- Sustainability of the site - concern about relocating a substantial education facility from a sustainable and accessible site within the city to a site that is located far outside Bangor, with restricted facilities and public transport links.
- Heritage assets - important that the settings of listed buildings, ancient monuments and the Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest are protected. It is believed that such a proposal would have a limited impact on nearby heritage assets.
- The existing sites (Ffordd Ffriddoedd and Ysgol Friars) - need to present a strong justification along with any planning application as to why the campus and existing structures cannot be upgraded to respond to the Group's future educational requirements.
- Economic implications - the Council has already stated a lack of employment sites in the area. It is considered, possibly, that undertaking work to the existing structures would make them more attractive for B1 use.
- Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme - the city faces many challenges and its designation as a Sub-regional Centre is undermined by developments on the outskirts of Bangor, which, in turn, have impacted the viability of the city centre. It is believed that relocating the campus would have a detrimental impact on the viability and function of the city centre by reducing the numbers of people who visit.
- Impact on Parc Menai - the Parc is one of the most successful employment sites in Gwynedd and permitting D1 use on this site would be likely to have a detrimental impact on the pattern of land use within the Parc and would make it less attractive for B1 businesses.
- Access and traffic - the catchment already faces heavy traffic and traffic jams are a daily problem on the local roads network and locating such use within Parc Menai would be likely to exacerbate this situation.
- Conclusions - the LPA has fundamental concerns about the principle of locating a D1 Class Use within a site protected as an employment site within the JLDP. A strong and robust justification would be required to contravene the current Development Plan and the follow-up test would have to be conducted in line with the requirements of Policy ISA3 of the LDP. If sufficient evidence existed to justify the proposal, the two main planning considerations would be the potential traffic impact, considering the current problems and the sustainability element, and the reason for relocating a large educational facility from a city centre site to an isolated site in an out of city location.

#### 4. Consultations:

Community/Town Council:	Whilst there were no grounds for objection, concern was expressed about the implications of increased traffic in and out of Park Menai and on the Britannia Bridge roundabout.
Transportation Unit:	Discussions have recently been held with the applicant about the Unit's concerns regarding matters of parking levels, transport services, distance to cycle and walk to the

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site, and bus parking arrangements within the site. This information had not come to hand at the time of preparing this report for Committee.

The agent has suggested that amended plans will be submitted, which would endeavour to address to concerns, but these had not been received when preparing the report for Committee, and, therefore, concerns about the proposal still stand.

Economy and  
Community  
Department:

#### 1. Impact on Parc Menai

The Parc Menai site is one of the most successful employment sites in Gwynedd. It offers an environment of quality and provides sites and property to a wide range of employers. It must be ensured that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the estates pattern of use and thus make it less attractive and competitive. There is concern that aspects related to D1 developments (including colleges) would affect the quality of the site and it must be ensure that measures are in place to manage them.

#### 2. B1 Employment Use

Parc Menai has been designated as a main employment site within the Local Development Plan, and Policy CYF1 protects employment use on these sites. It is understood that matters arise in terms of the design / current setting of Tŷ Menai, and it is possible that responding to these matters would facilitate employment viability. It is not considered that there is an over provision of employment properties within the boundaries already, especially property that is greater than 2,000 square metres. There has been demand for large, high quality, cost effective units in the Bangor Area, and during the past three years, the Department received 91 enquiries for business property in the Bangor area.

#### 3. Access and traffic

Parc Menai already has patterns of heavy traffic - traffic congestion is a daily feature (especially in the early morning and at the end of the afternoon). It must be ensured that the proposed development does not have a detrimental impact on businesses, whether this exacerbates traffic congestion and/ or leads to an increase in on-road parking within Parc Menai.

#### 4. Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme

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Bangor city is facing several challenges - and the condition and performance of the city centre undermines its function as a regional centre. Over the years, the city has seen a range of investments on the outskirts (e.g. Caernarfon Road), which have had a detrimental impact on the viability of the city centre. Part of the scheme to regenerate the city is to increase activities and use in the city centre.

The proposed scheme would lead to relocating the College's activities to the outskirts of the city. The existing site is within reach of the city centre with access to good links. Relocating the campus to the outskirts of the city would be likely to undermine the business and function of the city centre and would reduce the number of people visiting the centre.

Natural Resources Wales:	No observations on the proposed development.
Welsh Water:	Conditions regarding protecting the main public sewer that crosses the site along with a condition to dispose of surface water from the site to the nearby public system.
Public Protection Unit:	No response.
CADW:	The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the setting of any nearby registered heritage asset.
Welsh Historic Gardens Trust:	Although we have not received a response to the application, comments received following the pre-planning application consultation process stated that any proposal that would extend to the Faenol Estate would be opposed.
Biodiversity Unit:	No observations to make.
North Wales Police:	No response.
Economy and Infrastructure Department (Transport) Welsh Government:	Although we have not received a response to the application, comments received following the pre-planning application consultation process stated that no direction would be given in this case.

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Public Consultation: A notice was posted on the site and nearby users were notified. The advertising period has since expired and correspondence was received objecting on the following grounds:

- Concern regarding an increase in traffic - at peak times, there is daily congestion on the Britannia Bridge/Parc Menai roundabout. Has a survey been conducted on the traffic impacts if this application were to be granted permission?

## 5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

### The principle of the development

5.1 The principle of providing an educational facility on the site of the application is set out in Policy ISA3 of the LDP, which involves further and higher education developments. In line with the requirements of this policy, proposals for new facilities or extensions to existing buildings for academic and for ancillary purposes are permitted, subject to being acceptable in terms of such matters as scale, location, design, amenity and transportation. In considering the suitability of this site in Parc Menai for educational use, it must be ensured that *a sequential test* has been undertaken, which prioritises:-

1. *Firstly, existing further and higher education sites; or*
2. *Secondly, sites that have a close link with an existing campus.*

5.2 It is confirmed that the proposed development is not located on the existing site of the college (Ffriddoedd Road and Ysgol Friars campus), and, therefore, the proposal does not comply with the first criterion. Regarding the second test, it is not considered that a close physical link exists between the site of this application and the current Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai site in Parc Menai. The distance between the two sites is approximately 230m, if the connecting roads network/footpaths are followed, with various constructions and open areas between them. In addition, it is a small site that specialises in Art and Design that Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai currently has in Parc Menai, not a campus as exists in Ffriddoedd.

5.3 Due to the above, it is considered that the proposal does not comply with the two locational priorities set out in Policy ISA 3 and, consequently, a sequential test assessment will need to be undertaken in order to discover whether the principle of the development complies with the guidance noted in Policy ISA 3 or not. The Planning Statement submitted with the application contains an assessment of the suitability of the applicant's current sites (the main campus on Ffriddoedd Road along with the Ysgol Friars campus) and why these are unsuitable for modification/modernisation for the needs of the college. The assessment submitted with the application concludes that physical, practical and financial restrictions are associated with any modernisation/upgrading work on these sites/constructions. Reference is also made to the George campus, belonging to Bangor University, by the Menai Strait. Because of the University's strategic timetable that is associated with the George site, it will not coincide with the timetable for relocating Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai. Therefore, the assessment considered this site to be unsuitable for the relocation of the college.

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- 5.4 Consideration is also given within the Planning Statement to the housing designation identified in the LDP on a site near the former Friars School that is owned by the applicant. The agent dismissed this site based only on the housing designation, but no further evidence has been received by the applicant that would justify, unconditionally, why this specific site could not be used for relocating the college, especially as it is located directly next door to Grŵp Llandrillo-Menail's existing campus, and as relocating would mean an opportunity (probably) to redevelop the existing site for alternative uses, including housing.
- 5.5 In addition to Policy ISA 3, above, which specifically relates to establishing the propriety of the principle of the proposal, Policy PS13 and Policy CYF1 of the LDP are also relevant. These two policies protect the site and units therein (Tŷ Menai and Llwyn y Brain) for employment use in B1 Class Use (light industry, research and development, and offices). The proposed development would involve changing the use of the units to D1 class use (non-residential educational establishments). The safeguarded and designated employment sites within the JLDP are based on the findings of the Employment Land Review held in 2012. The LDP attempts to ensure that a sufficient and appropriate provision of lands are available for employment purposes. In this context, it is considered vital to ensure that these are retained as far as is possible as they are located in places that are close to where people live, and as these sites support local economic growth. Furthermore, the North Wales Regional Employment Land Strategy has been prepared, which identifies a portfolio of strategic employment land and attempts to identify how these sites can satisfy the demand during the lifetime of the Regional Plan. Within the North Wales Regional Employment Land Strategy, the Parc Menai site is recognised as a sub-regional strategic site, and, in line with Policy CYF1, is defined as a main employment site.
- 5.6 In accordance with Policy CYF5 of the LDP along with the content of TAN23: Economic Development (para.4.6), **only in exceptional cases** is it possible to consider proposals to release land in Class B1, B2 or B8 Use on existing employment sites that have been protected in accordance with Policy CYF1 for alternative use only when one or more of the following criteria can be met:-
1. *If the site is vacant, that it is unlikely to be used in the short and medium term for the original use or the safeguarded use and there isn't a viable business or industrial use for the site, or*
  2. *There is an over provision of employment sites within the vicinity, or*
  3. *The current employment use is having a detrimental effect on amenity and the environment, or*
  4. *The proposal would not have a detrimental effect on employment uses at adjacent sites, or*
  5. *There is no other suitable alternative site for the proposed use, or*
  6. *If the site is used in the short term (on a temporary basis) it should be assured that there are appropriate restoration measures in place to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.*
- 5.7 The Planning Statement submitted by the applicant states that only one or more of the criteria must be adhered to when considering this application and that this is reflected nationally in TAN23: Economic Development. However, considering that this proposal cannot be dealt with as an 'extraordinary case' (due to non-compliance with Policy ISA3) it is not considered proper/necessary to assess the principle of the proposal against the criteria within Policy CYF5.

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- 5.8 However, in order to ensure transparency and in response to the information submitted by the applicant as part of the information pack associated with the application, the following contains an unbiased assessment of the proposal's compliance with the criteria contained in Policy CYF5. Should the principle of the proposal fully comply with Policy ISA3 and were the Council fully persuaded that this was an 'exceptional case', then the proposal in this case would rightly be considered to comply with all criteria included in the policy, specifically, as previously noted, because of Parc Menai's role as a main employment site within the North Wales Regional Employment Land Strategy, and because of its role as a main employment site in the LDP.
- 5.9 The first criterion states in the event that the site is vacant and unlikely to be used in the short and medium term for its original purpose or for safeguarding use. The applicant has stated that Tŷ Menai suffers from design weaknesses and is no longer suitable for business use. It was noted that the internal design of the unit does not reflect the need for the type of business units that exist within the current market. Furthermore, the Planning Statement states that this unit has been subject to substantial subsidy in the past by Welsh Government and it believes it would not be financially sustainable in future. Llwyn y Brain has been a vacant unit since Natural Resources Wales relocated and it requires substantial work in order to comply with the requirements and standards of current business units. Despite the reasons above, no evidence has been received by the applicant that demonstrates the effort that both units have been marketed and, in this context, it is considered vital to have strong justification for this (which includes the site as a whole, rather than separately). It is believed that a continuous period of 12 months for marketing both sites to be appropriate in this case and submitting such evidence, ensuring that the units would be unlikely to be re-used in the short and medium term for the use for which the units are safeguarded (i.e. B1 Class Use).
- 5.10 The second criterion states the need to prove an over provision of employment sites in the vicinity. The Planning Statement includes an initial assessment in terms of the need for employment sites and office use and an assessment of the current provision. The needs assessment and enquiries for employment sites in the vicinity are based on a database retained by a local company only and, although this information is useful, it would have been appropriate to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the need and the demand for employment sites in the vicinity. The information submitted is based on the whole of Gwynedd and Anglesey and it is believed that it does not acknowledge the status of Bangor as a Sub-regional Centre within the LDP (Policy CYF1). It is also noted that the assessment identifies a need for a specific type of business units (small and medium enterprise units) and although it acknowledges that there are limitations to Tŷ Menai and Llwyn y Brain, it would be beneficial to receive information about the possibility of re-letting/changing the form/modifying the existing buildings to make them more attractive to the demand identified in the study (i.e small and medium business units). In addition to the above concern and as referred to above, the Council's Economy and Community Department states that there is no over provision of employment property in the vicinity of the application site, especially units that are greater than 2,000m<sup>2</sup>. There is demand for high quality, cost effective units in the Bangor area and during the past three years, there were 91 enquiries for business premises in the area. Approving this application would, therefore, lead to a loss of units/business property of high quality and may deprive businesses that could be interested in establishing themselves on this site in future.
- 5.11 The third criterion states that existing employment use should not have a detrimental impact on amenities and the environment. The legal and established use for the site of the application is B1 Business Use, which complies with the protected use of both sites,

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for light business use along with offices/research and development. These uses comply and are in keeping with the business use of Parc Menai as a whole. To this end, therefore, it is not believed that B1 use or associated activities deriving from the site of the application (the site is now disused) have had a detrimental impact on the character, quality or image of the business park itself.

- 5.12 The fourth criterion states that a development should not have a detrimental impact on employment use in nearby sites. Explanatory paragraph 6.3.44 of the policy clearly states that the integrity of the employment site is not compromised by the proposed use. Furthermore, it should be ensured that the use would not conflict with the employment use that would continue on the site. The aims of this guidance are reflected in paragraph 4.6.7 of TAN23: Economic Development, which states - *In managing the retention and release of existing employment sites authorities should aim to ensure that the integrity of remaining employment sites is not compromised*. Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10 (2018) expands on the above advice by stating - *Careful consideration should be given to the attributes of strategic employment sites to ensure that they have unique selling points*.
- 5.13 The Design Statement submitted with the application states that the proposed use would be self-contained and would not directly affect other units in Parc Menai. It states that National Advice promotes businesses from the same industry or that have a similar interest to be located together, sharing resources and infrastructure, and that Policy ISA3 also approves educational and training facilities or similar organisations that improve the training and skills base to be located on protected or designated employment land.
- 5.14 As referred to above, the applicant refers to the attempt to justify the proposal to relocate the main Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai campus to Parc Menai on the grounds that the second part of Policy ISA3 justifies educational and training facilities or similar organisations that improve the training and skills base are located on protected or designated employment land. However, the second part of this policy relates to improving the standard of training and skills, which encourages information-based businesses or specialist businesses that are **not** already associated with a higher education establishment that already exists. This application involves the provision of a further and higher education establishment and, as such, this part of the policy is not a material consideration.
- 5.15 The applicant is already aware of the Planning Officers' concern about the possible impact further and higher educational use would have on the employment use of the business park. The Council's Economy and Community Department states that there is no doubt that Parc Menai is one of the most successful employment sites in the County as it offers a high quality environment and provides employment sites/buildings for a wide range of employers. They are keen to ensure that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the estate's usage pattern and consequently make it less attractive and competitive. They are also concerned that elements associated with D1 developments (including colleges) would have an impact on the quality of the site and measures must be imposed to manage them. In considering this application, it is believed that locating educational use on the site would undermine the image and integrity of this part of the business park on the grounds of the nature of the proposed use (where movement back and forth is an unavoidable activity in the proposed use) along with general disturbance (a mixture of vehicles and students) that would derive from the facility on a daily basis. In truth, it is anticipated that the proposed main campus would provide for approximately 700 students, 111 full time

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lecturers and 339 part time lecturers and, although they would not all be on campus at the same time, the Officers have not been persuaded that this type of density and nature of use would not have a detrimental and negative impact on the existing employment use within the park or the opportunities to attract investment and to develop the employment site in future.

- 5.16 The fifth criterion involves ensuring that no other alternative site exists for the proposed use. The requirements of this criterion are in keeping with the requirements of the sequential test within Policy ISA 3. As reiterated in the above assessment, Officers have not been fully persuaded that the sequential test states why the college cannot be relocated on other, more suitable sites, with priority being given to existing further and higher education sites or on sites with close links with the existing campus. The Economy and Community Department has already expressed concern about the negative impact of relocating the main campus from Bangor City to Parc Menai, as this type of proposal would undermine the Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme, which aims to regenerate the centre of the city. The city centre faces many challenge with its condition and performance undermining its function as a sub-regional centre. The existing site is within reach of the city centre with good access and transport links. For some years, the city has seen a range of investments to the outskirts (e.g. Caernarfon Road), which have had a detrimental impact on the viability of Bangor city centre. The aim of the Regeneration Scheme is to increase activities and uses in the centre of the city. It is, therefore, considered that the proposal to relocate the main campus of the college from a site within the city to a site on the outskirts of the city would undermine the bustle, the function, the role and viability of Bangor city centre, which is considered to be a Sub-regional centre in the LDP.
- 5.17 Considering the above assessment, it is believed that the principle of the proposal, based on the information and evidence submitted, is not acceptable and, thus, it is not considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy ISA 3, CYF1 or CYF5 of the LDP.

#### **Visual amenities**

- 5.18 The site is located on the south western boundary of Parc Menai and contains vacant buildings, roads network and footpaths, parking spaces and established landscaping. The main public views of the site are from an easterly direction and from within Parc Menai. A backdrop of coppices lie to the south and west of the sit and the site itself has buildings/structures of a contemporary design and appearance. It is not intended to extend or change the external elevations of the buildings and any exterior work would be restricted to refurbishing parts of the existing infrastructure in order to provide foot/cycle paths and a parking/turning bay for transport that would serve the educational facility. This work will be confined to the curtilage of the existing site. It is believed that such work would not undermine the visual amenities of this part of the local landscape. Consequently, the proposal is acceptable based on the requirements of Policy PCYFF3 of the LDP.

#### **General and residential amenities**

- 5.19 Although the site is located on the south western boundary of Parc Menai, there are a range of B1 business uses nearby. Previous uses of the buildings on the site of the application range from office use, light industry, laboratories and research and development work. Although B1 use of the site generates some noise disturbance based on vehicle and pedestrian movements (on a level and scale that reflect the nature and movements of the activities of the business park in general), and although users of the

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business park have not submitted any response to this end following the statutory consultation, it is believed that providing a further and higher education facility on the application site would change the nature of the daily movements within and beyond the application site. Although the Planning Statement refers to the fact that there would be a reduction in the numbers of vehicular journeys to the site, it is anticipated that the nature of the use of the further and higher education facility would increase the noise/disturbance and movements of pedestrians/students within and around the site e.g. during lunch hours or free lectures. It is anticipated that such a situation, in turn, would undermine not only the general amenities of the local workplace but would also have a detrimental impact on the image and character of this part of the business park and this concern has already been voiced above. It is, therefore, considered that the proposal because of its nature is contrary to the requirements of Policy PCYFF2 of the LDP regarding the need to protect, not only the amenities of the occupiers and users of nearby properties, but also to safeguard land uses and the characteristics of the local area.

### **Sustainable transport and parking matters**

5.20 The Planning Statement notes the following points in support of the application:-

- The college, currently, runs buses for students to its various centres and such a service would continue for the site in Parc Menai.
- It is believed that the site of the application would comply with the requirements of planning policies that pertain to developments that are accessible for every transportation method.
- The proposal would entail creating an internal footpath between the Llwyn y Brain site and the Tŷ Menai site and provide a new bus stop for students within the existing site.
- There would be separate paths within the site for pedestrians (staff and students), buses and goods delivery vehicles.
- Parking requirements for D1 Use is in line with national statutory standards and these standards allow a 20% reduction in parking space numbers. In accordance with these standards, 257 parking spaces would be needed within the site of the application, of which 10 would be for disabled people and five for mini buses. There would be facilities within the site for 14 bikes.
- The Planning Statement (which refers to the Transport Assessment) states that there would be 59 fewer journeys into and out of the site compared with the current use for B1 Use on the site.
- As the local roads network already serves businesses, any removal of parking spaces would either have a low impact on traffic using the roads network or would create natural traffic calming measures and this would not, in turn, have a detrimental impact on nearby employment use.
- Coleg Llandrillo-Menai has an existing travel scheme on all its sites. The aim of the scheme is to promote sustainable travel, promoting a wide range of modes of transport to its sites, including to the application site in Parc Menai. The Transport Assessment recommends that a new staff/student travel survey should be conducted once the buildings are occupied.

5.21 As referred to above, concerns of the Transportation Unit have persisted since the applicant undertook the pre-planning application process and these concerns relate to:-

- Parking levels - parking requirements within the site could comply with national standards, but it is suggested in the Transport Assessment that a 20% reduction

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could be achieved with parking requirements (for the new use) by collecting sufficient sustainable points is inaccurate based on the details of local facilities, bus stops, cycle routes and the frequency of the bus service. During the pre-planning application discussions, a concern had been raised about the possibility of vehicles parking on the local roads network. Transportation services - the public transport service to Parc Menai is sporadic, considering the timetable submitted as part of the Transport Statement. The element of the bus service quoted includes a bus service specifically for the college students that would run occasionally only, and the public transport service and lack of links to parts of Bangor e.e. the city centre. There are inconsistencies within the Transport Statement about the numbers of specific buses that serve the college.

- The distance for walking and cycling - the Transport Statement emphasises the accessibility of the site in Parc Menai and sustainable modes of transport, including cycling. However, cyclists would have to cross busy roads and would have to cycle up the steep Faenol hill in order to reach Parc Menai when cycling from the south. Furthermore, the location of Parc Menai itself means that it would be unlikely that people would consider arriving there on foot or by bike as being practical.
- The arrangements for parking buses - the scheme as presented with the application is not suitable for parking buses as it would not allow bus users to have unimpeded access in and out of the buses due to the proximity of the parking spaces to each other.

5.22 The Transportation Unit continues to be concerned about the accessibility of the site. Use of the site for further and higher education, coupled with the frequency of the bus service and its location on the outskirts of the city, is highly unlikely to make it accessible for pedestrians and cyclists for most students and staff and this, in turn, could lead to heavy dependency on cars. The reality is that most staff travel to the college by car, with approximately half the students travelling over 10 miles to the college. The likelihood, therefore, is that most staff and students attending the college in Parc Menai would travel there by bus or car, thus adding to the congestion that already exists at peak times (morning and afternoon) in the vicinity of the Parc Menai roundabout and the Council's Economy and Community Department and one Parc Menai user (see above) has already expressed this concern.

5.23 Considering the concerns above and based on the information contained in the Planning Statement submitted in support of this application, officers have not been unconditionally persuaded that the proposal is acceptable on the grounds of Policy PS4 (locating developments in order to reduce the need for travel along with maximising accessibility for all modes of transport), Policy TRA1 (improvements to existing infrastructure including cycle paths, parking and travel), Policy TRA2 (providing parking for all modes of transport along with the provision of appropriate bus parking facilities) and Policy TRA4 (planning and designing a development in a way that promotes the most sustainable modes of transport, paying attention to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, transport management and parking spaces for buses).

### **Biodiversity matters**

5.24 The site is located in close proximity to coppices protected under 3/TPO/A38a Y Faenol along with a site designated as the Parc Menai Woodland Wildlife Site. Nevertheless, and considering the nature and scale of the proposal, the Biodiversity

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Unit has no concerns about its impact on local biodiversity matters. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable on the basis of the requirements of Policy AMG5 of the LDP.

### **Heritage assets**

- 5.25 There are several heritage assets within 3km of the application site, including various listed buildings at Y Faenol and Plas Newydd, and the Landscape and Historic Park and Gardens at Y Faenol along with ancient monuments. However, as the buildings or curtilage of the existing site will not be extended and considering the nature and scale of the work of creating new infrastructure for vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists within the site, it is not believed that there will be a substantial impact on the setting of these historic assets in accordance with comments from CADW, received following the statutory consultation process. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable on the basis of the requirements of Policy PS20 and AT1 of the LDP.

### **Linguistic matters**

- 5.26 Policy PS1 of the LDP relating to the Welsh language and Welsh Culture sets guidances as to when applicants or developers will be required to submit Welsh language statements or Welsh language impact assessments in support of planning applications. In this case, as the proposal involves the provision of an educational facility, such evidence will not be necessary. Nevertheless, the applicant has stated that the purpose of this application is to relocate an educational facility only in order to meet the applicant's strategic aims (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai) and that it would not lead to a substantial flow of workforce as the workforce is already located in Bangor. The Group already provides bilingual education and there are no plans to change this provision if it relocates to Parc Menai.

## **6. Conclusions:**

- 6.3 Given the above assessment, which is based on information submitted as part of the application, it is not considered that providing a further and higher education facility/main campus (for Grŵp Llandrillo Menai) on a site that is designated and safeguarded for use within Class B1 Use and which is designated under the LDP as a Sub-regional Strategic Employment site is acceptable on policy grounds. To this end, it is recommended that the application be refused for the reasons noted above.

## **7. Recommendation:**

- 7.1 To refuse on the following grounds:-
1. The proposal is contrary to the requirements of Policy ISA3 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2007) which states that the sequential test should be adopted when determining the location of proposals for further and higher education with priority given firstly to existing further or higher education sites or, secondly, on sites which have a close association with an existing campus. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal does not comply with criteria 1 and 2 of Policy ISA3.
  2. The proposal is contrary to the requirements of Policy PS13 and CYF1 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2017) which states that land and units on existing employment sites (Parc Menai is listed in the Policy) are safeguarded for employment/business enterprises.

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3. The proposal is contrary to the requirements of Policy PCYF5 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2017) which states that proposals to release land on existing employment sites safeguarded for Use Classes B1, B2 or B8 in accordance with Policy PCYF1 for alternative uses will be granted only in special circumstances. Based on the information provided with the application (and the separate refusal reason based on Policy ISA3) the Local Planning Authority does not consider that special circumstances have been proven. Furthermore, and in the absence of a robust marketing exercise and robust evidence as to why the existing buildings cannot be modified to overcome identified issues, there is no evidence that the site is unlikely to be used in the short or medium term for the original or safeguarded use and there isn't a viable business or industrial use for the site. Additionally, there is not an over provision of employment sites within the vicinity; an educational use would have a detrimental effect on employment uses at adjacent sites and the Local Planning Authority is not convinced that there are no other suitable alternatives sites for the proposed use.
  
4. The proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy PS4, TRA1, TRA2 and TRA4 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2017) as the applicant has not convinced the Local Planning Authority that the proposed site for further and higher education use is sustainable for all modes of transport and that the bus parking facilities do not comply with statutory requirements.