

PWYLLGOR CYNLLUNIO	DYDDIAD: 04/09/2017
ADRODDIAD UWCH REOLWR GWASANAETH CYNLLUNIO A GWARCHOD Y CYHOEDD	CAERNARFON

Number: 2

Application Number: C17/0412/39/LL

Date Registered: 11/05/2017

Application Type: Full - Planning

Community: Llanengan

Ward: Abersoch

Proposal: Creation of site for touring caravans

Location: Llain Las, Abersoch, Pwllheli, LL537LA

Summary of the Recommendation: TO REFUSE

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1. Description:

- 1.1 Full application to create a touring caravan site. The proposal comprises using the site of five caravans under an exempted Camping and Caravanning Club certificate as an independent site to for nine touring caravans. It is proposed to use the existing toilet block as well as planting native trees along the northern and western boundaries of the site and to re-locate the existing gate to a site approximately 10 metres back from the side of the parallel carriageway. The caravans will be sited along the western, northern and eastern boundary of the site. The Council's definitive maps indicate that a public footpath runs through the north eastern corner of the site and that three to four caravan pitches would affect this path. However, following discussing the matter with the applicant, an amended plan dated 02 August 2017 was received which shows that the caravan pitches are located closer to the centre of the site in order to avoid the public footpath. The site is located approximately 180 metres away from the nearest residential dwelling.
- 1.2 The site is approximately 150 metres outside the Abersoch development boundary and within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site is served by an existing access to a class 3 county highway.
- 1.3 A Design and Access Statement was also submitted.
- 1.4 The application is submitted to Committee as it involves siting more than five touring caravans on the land.

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 7 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 **Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-26 adopted 31 July 2017**

TRA 2: Parking standards

TRA 4: Managing transport impacts

PCYFF 2: Development criteria

PCYFF 3: Design and place shaping

PCYFF 4: Design and landscaping

TWR 5: Touring caravan, camping and temporary alternative camping accommodation

PS 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

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AMG 1: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans
PS 17: Safeguarding and/or enhancing heritage assets
AT 1: Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites and Landscapes, Parks and Registered Historic Gardens

2.4 National Policies:

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 9 (November 2016)
Technical Advice Note - 13 Tourism
Technical Advice Note - 18 Transport

3. Relevant Planning History:

3.1 The site has no relevant planning history.

4. Consultations:

Community/Town Council: Support

Transportation Unit: No objection to the proposal. Although the proposal entails a substantial increase in the number of units on the site it is presumed that the total number of units is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the network of local roads. It is recommended that a condition is imposed for the access to be constructed in accordance with the plan.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW): No objection to the above application and propose standard observations regarding foul drainage and waste disposal. It is intended to send the observations of NRW to the applicant should the application be approved.

Welsh Water: Offer the following observations:
Suggest that the applicant seeks the views of Natural Resources Wales as it is intended to connect the private drainage system.
No objection regarding the water supply. It is intended to send the observations of NRW to the applicant should the application be approved.

Public Protection Unit: No objection to the application, but need to ensure that the development is in compliance with the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Biodiversity Unit No observations on the application.

Footpaths Unit No received (response is awaited prior to the Committee date)

Fire and Rescue Service The Fire Authority have no observations regarding the access for fire vehicles and a water supply.

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Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (AONB) The site is on a back road between Abersoch and Llanengan and in the Llŷn AONB. The AONB is a statutory designation which is protected by local and national policies.

Currently, this is an informal site for five caravans. Although it is fairly hidden when travelling towards Llanengan (to the west) the site is quite prominent when travelling towards Abersoch (to the east). The site can also be seen from nearby higher ground.

The area of Abersoch, Sarn Bach and Bwlchtocyn is already under pressure from caravans and there is concern that establishing a permanent new site will affect the AONB.

Public Consultation: A notice was posted on the site and nearby residents were notified. The advertising period has expired and no objections have been received.

5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

The principle of the development

- 5.1 Policy TWR 5 LDP permits proposals to develop new touring caravan sites provided they conform to all the criteria noted. These include the need for the proposed development to be of a high quality in terms of design, layout and appearance and sited in an unobtrusive location which is well screened by existing landscape features and/or where touring units can be readily assimilated into the landscape in a way which does not significantly harm the visual quality of the landscape; avoids excessive areas of hard standing; have limited physical connection to the ground and is capable of being removed off the site out of season; any ancillary facilities should, if possible, be located within an existing building or as an extension to existing facilities; that the site is close to the main highway network and that adequate access can be provided without significantly harming landscape characteristics and features; occupation is limited to holiday use; that the site is used for touring purposes only and any units are removed from the site during periods when not in use.
- 5.2 The site is located in a hollow in open countryside and is approximately 150 metres from the village boundary. The nine units would be sited around the site's boundaries, which is in a triangular formation. Criterion 1 of policy TWR 5 states that the design, layout and appearance of touring caravan sites should be of a high quality. The site is of a limited size with caravans sited around the boundaries. It should be noted from the plan that no amenity area has been shown as part of the proposal and it is likely that there would be insufficient space on the site for such provision bearing in mind the location of the units, parking spaces and the access. However, it should be noted that the Public Protection Unit have not objected the application.
- 5.3 There is no concern regarding using the existing toilet block. It should be noted that NRW have submitted observations stating that they have no objection to the proposal as long as the existing septic tank is in good condition and is regularly maintained. The site is located in a hollow in open countryside. Although a clawdd/hedge of varying height acts as a boundary with the road, the existing landscaping is insufficient to hide or integrate the proposed units into the landscape. While it is noted that the plan states that it is intended to strengthen the existing hedges on the

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southern and western boundaries, the site is prominent from higher ground west of the site.

- 5.4 The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application has considered the prominence of the site in the landscape and claims that it is well shadowed by hedges along the southern, eastern and western boundaries. The plans submitted as part of the application include additional landscaping along the site's boundaries. These have been included as mitigation measures for the proposed development. However, it should be realised that the site is visible from public areas higher up. Despite the landscaping proposal, the policy states that new sites should be in unobtrusive locations and effectively concealed by existing landscape features. In its current form, the site does not satisfy this criterion as the site is prominent in the landscape, therefore the proposal is considered contrary to the main principle of policy TWR 5 of the Development Plan.
- 5.5 In respect of proximity to the road network, the site has direct access to a parallel third class county highway and the plan indicates a proposal to improve the existing access. The plan does not show any proposal to improve visibility along the county highway.
- 5.6 There are a great number of caravan sites situated within the area of the village of Abersoch, and although the applicant states that only two caravan sites can be seen from the site, concern has to be expressed in this case regarding the cumulative effect of existing sites.
- 5.7 The application involves establishing a new touring caravan site to replace the existing exempted camping use (as part of the Camping and Caravanning Club). Establishing a site as part of the Camping and Caravanning Club means that up to five touring units can be located on-site without planning permission. The applicant stated, as additional information, that the site has been used as an exempted touring caravan site since 1970. It is considered that such information is an important planning consideration in assessing the proposal. The Pen Llŷn area has a variety of similar exempted sites and approving the application could lead to creating a precedent for those sites with the possibility of receiving more applications for alternative sites for the Caravan Club in an area already under pressure from touring caravans.

Visual amenities

- 5.8 The site lies within the Llŷn AONB. The site is located in open countryside and outside any village boundary as designated by the LDP. Due to the existing hedge the caravans would not be very visible from the parallel county highway, except from the access area. However, it should be noted that the site is in a dip in the landscape and consequently the caravans will be visible from higher ground, specifically from the road that leads from the site to the west. Formal observations have been received from the AONB Unit stating that the site is prominent from higher ground within the area. It should also be noted that a public footpath crosses the north eastern corner of the site and the caravans will be very prominent from this path. It is understood that the plan submitted with the application indicates a proposal to plant native trees and hedges along the western and northern boundaries of the site, however, it is felt that the proposed landscaping would not significantly reduce the impact of the proposal on the landscape enough to overcome concerns regarding the prominence of the site in the landscape within the AONB.

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- 5.9 The beauty of the landscape is one of the area's main attractions for visitors and it is extremely important to protect these resources which are vital to the prosperity of the tourism industry. Although policy TWR 5 in the approves new touring caravan sites in unobtrusive locations which are hidden by the existing features of the landscape and / or where touring units can be easily assimilated into the landscape in a way that does not have an unacceptable impact on the visual quality and character of the landscape. The proposed site is situated in the countryside and although it is not prominent from the east, the site is prominent from the access area and higher ground to the west. The application plan indicates that planting is proposed along the northern and western boundaries, however, this is not considered to be sufficient to create an acceptable development within the AONB. Therefore, it is felt that the proposal does not meet with policy AMG 1 LDP that involves protecting the AONB.
- 5.10 The current landform and landscaping are not sufficient to assimilate the units with the site. Although the plans show that it is intended to strengthen the existing landscaping by screening the caravans, no comprehensive landscaping details have been included with the plans. Should the application be approved, there is no assurance that the proposed planting would be carried out to the extent that would be necessary to screen the development. The applicant recognises that the current landscaping is insufficient and despite the proposed landscaping, it is considered that the proposal in essence is not acceptable in the context of landscaping policy PCYFF 4 LDP, given its sensitive location in open countryside and within the AONB.

General and residential amenities

- 5.11 The site is located outside any development boundary and is approximately 180m from the nearest private house. It is given to understand that the site has been used as a touring caravan site under the management of the Camping and Caravanning Club, and although it is intended to add to the number of caravans on the site, it is considered that the site's activities would not have an additional substantial detrimental impact on the amenities of this house. It is therefore felt that the proposed use will not create more noise and activities than the current use. It is not considered that the proposal would have a substantially larger detrimental impact on nearby residents and therefore it is not considered that the proposal is significantly contrary to Policy PCYFF 2 LDP.

Transport and access matters

- 5.12 The site is located outside the development boundary of the village. The location of the site means that caravans would be likely to travel approximately 1 km along the class three county highway before joining with the class one road in the villages to the east. The access already exists and has served the use of the site as a caravan site under an exempted Camping and Caravanning Club certificate, for many years. However, having visited the site it must be stated that we have concerns regarding the access especially in terms of visibility when exiting to the nearby class 3 parallel road, especially with visibility to the west. The existing hedge along the boundary to the east of the site does impair visibility from the site. As this hedge is outside the applicant's control it would not be possible to force him to alter the hedge to improve the access. However, observations have been received from the Transportation Unit confirming that there is no objection to the application due to the current use and the proposed number of caravans are not likely to have a detrimental impact on local road safety. Consequently, it is considered that it would be difficult to refuse the application on the grounds of road safety and the proposal is not contrary to policy

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TRA 4. It is intended to park visitor vehicles between the units, which is acceptable in terms of parking provision policy TRA 2.

- 5.13 It should also be noted from the Council's maps that a public footpath crosses the north eastern corner of the site. It is understood from the Footpaths Unit that this path has a low status, however, it exists on the Council's maps and therefore for legal purposes it is a public footpath. The original plan indicated that three to four caravans were sited across the public footpath. However, having discussed the matter with the applicant, an amended plan was received showing caravan pitches located closer to the centre of the site in order to avoid the public footpath. The Footpaths Unit was consulted regarding this amendment and although no response has been received at the time of writing it is assumed that there will be no objection to the amended layout.

Biodiversity matters

- 5.14 Observations were received from NRW and the Council's Biodiversity Unit stating that they had no objection to the proposal. NRW state that the foul water drainage should be connected to the public sewer where practicable, and if this is not possible, the private sewer system would have to comply with the requirements of relevant British Standards and Building Regulations. It should also be noted that the applicant should seek permission from NRW regarding the discharge of foul water into any water course etc. The applicant will have to secure the relevant rights from NRW prior to the implementation of any permission on the site. It should also be ensured that the septic tank and soakaway system are maintained and are of adequate size in order to avoid pollution. If the application were to be approved, a copy of NRW's letter dated 25 May 2017 would be sent for the applicant's attention.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 Having considered the above and all the relevant planning matters including the local and national policies and guidance, as well as the observations received, it is not believed that the proposal is acceptable based on the matters noted in the report, namely that the proposed development if approved would be likely to have a significant detrimental impact on views within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 To Refuse – reasons

The proposed caravan site, due to its location, setting and appearance in the landscape, would stand out as a prominent and intrusive feature in open countryside and would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and on the visual amenities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy AMG 1 and TWR 5 Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Plan (July 2017) (as amended by the Inspector's Report, 30 June 2017) and the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Holiday Accommodation, Gwynedd Council.