
PLANNING COMMITTEE 3 March 2025

Attendance

Chair: Councillor Elwyn Edwards

Vice-chair: Councillor Huw Rowlands

Councillors

Berwyn Parry Jones, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Louise Hughes, Gareth T Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Cai Larsen, Edgar Owen, Gareth A Roberts, John Pughe, John Pughe Roberts and Gruffydd Williams

Others invited:

Councillor Elfed Williams – Local Member for item 5.1

Councillor Llio Elenid Owen – Local Member for item 5.2

Officers:

Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Planning and Environment Department), Keira Sweenie (Planning Manager), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Elin Hywel and Councillor Gareth Coj Parry

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PROTOCOL MATTERS

- a) The following member declared an interest in relation to the item noted:
- Councillor Huw Rowlands (a member of this Planning Committee), in relation to item 5.2 C20/1093/24/LL on the agenda, as he had presented observations on the application
- b) The following Members declared that they were local members in relation to the items noted:
- Councillor Elfed Williams (not a member of this Planning Committee), in relation to item 5.1 C24/0977/18/LL on the agenda
 - Councillor Llio Elenid Owen (not a member of this Planning Committee), in relation to item 5.2 C20/1093/24/LL on the agenda

3. URGENT ITEMS

As a matter of order, it was reported that since the Chair was joining the meeting virtually, the Assistant Head would be announcing the results of the voting on the applications.

4. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 3 February 2025 as a true record.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee considered the following applications for development. Details of the applications were expanded upon and questions were answered in relation to the plans and policy aspects.

5.1 Application Number C24/0977/18/LL

WALES SLATE MUSEUM, GILFACH DDU, LLANBERIS, CAERNARFON, GWYNEDD

Restoration work to the site to include internal and external alterations

- a) The Planning Manager highlighted that this was a full application for restoration work to the site to include demolishing the existing café and shop and erecting new buildings.

It was explained that the Gilfach Ddu site in the village of Llanberis was located outside of the village's development boundaries but within the Slate Industry World Heritage Site, as well as the Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. It was noted that the buildings were grade I listed and that the waterwheel there was a monument.

The application was submitted to the committee due to the scale of the site.

It was reported that most of the work was internal restoration work, and there was no need for formal planning permission to complete this. However, it was noted that the restoration work had been assessed within the associated listed building application and that approval and permission had been obtained from CADW on that application. This meant that listed building consent had been obtained for the physical work to the building, but the proposal still required planning permission. It was elaborated that the Council's Conservation Officer had provided significant input to the application during the 'pre-application advice' period and the success of the advice was reflected by CADW's prompt decision to support the proposal.

Attention was drawn to the main elements of the proposal which included demolition of the existing shop and erection of a new one with the same footprint, erecting an extension to create new toilets, demolishing the existing café and erecting a new one with the same footprint, erecting a new workshop and a new canopy as a shelter for visitors. Reference was made to the variety of minor alterations that were also included in the application, namely creating and altering openings, installing infrastructure, erecting fences, landscaping, creating a storage yard and removing modern partition walls.

In the context of the principle of the proposal, it was noted that improving tourist attractions was supported by policy TWR 1. It was considered that the proposal, on the grounds of the design and impact on amenities, was acceptable and no objection was received from the Transportation Unit as there were no changes to the entrance or the parking provision within the site. Wildlife reports were received with the application and, by imposing conditions, it would be possible to satisfy the observations of the Biodiversity Unit and Natural Resources Wales.

It was noted that the restoration work was essential for the future of the site and the new buildings would be a significant improvement in terms of design and visitors' experience of the site. It was considered that the proposal would be acceptable and the officers recommended that the Committee approved the proposal with conditions.

- b) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the Local Member made the following comments:

- That he, as well as the Local Member for the Llanberis ward, supported the application
 - There was a need to ensure that the character of the buildings was protected
- c) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the applicant's agent noted the following observations:
- The basic principle and basis of the application, as well as the application already approved for the internal refurbishment of a listed building, was to ensure that the developments were suitable for the World Heritage Site.
 - Gilfach Ddu was an extremely important heritage site, and the importance of the site was considered when making the proposals, as well as the process of Assessing the Impact on Heritage.
 - Pre-application engagement sessions had been held with the Local Planning Authority, CADW, and the Slate Sub-group
 - The proposed developments would improve visitors' experience; ensure that the site was available to everyone; and create more employment and education opportunities.
 - The plan to create an Interpretation Hub for the Slate Landscape, which is a World Heritage Site, complied with key themes from the World Heritage Site Management Plan, namely 'caring', 'enjoying' and 'learning' about the Slate landscape. The Interpretation Hub would promote the industrial legacy, the Welsh language and its culture.
 - The alterations, the new buildings and the improvements to the landscape would be designed carefully in a way that respected the local area.
 - A substantial collection of supporting information was submitted to accompany the application.
 - The consultants had considered all the information in detail, and no objections were received from them.
 - No third-party organisations had presented any objections during the planning process.
 - The proposed development was considered as one that complied with the main policies of the development plans attached to the Future Wales Plan, the Gwynedd Local Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales.
 - The Officer's report noted that the proposed developments would have a positive impact on the character of the site, as well as people's enjoyment of the site, but most importantly, secured the future of the site.
 - The Local Authority Officers were thanked, especially Eryl Williams for engaging positively throughout the process.
- d) It was proposed and seconded to approve the application
- e) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:
- The application was to be welcomed
 - There was a need to protect the culture
 - The site needed regeneration
 - It was essential to retain the character of the buildings

In response to an observation regarding the use of red corrugated sheeting as the roof for the shop and visitor shelter and not slate, and a suggestion to impose a condition to ensure that local slate was used as a more traditional material, it was noted that a decision had been made to choose different materials to be able to differentiate more easily between the old and the new, ensuring that the new buildings did not compete with the traditional buildings.

DECISION: To approve the application subject to the following conditions:

1. **5 years**
2. **In accordance with the plans**
3. **Cast-iron rainwater goods**
4. **Details of the new doors to be approved beforehand.**
5. **Lime mortar**
6. **Details of flue/vents to be approved beforehand.**
7. **Details of the new fence to be approved beforehand.**
8. **Stone samples**
9. **Samples of the materials to be used**
10. **In accordance with the requirements of GIS**
11. **Welsh Water Conditions**
12. **Lighting conditions**
13. **Biodiversity/NRW conditions**
14. **Landscaping**

5.2 APPLICATION NUMBER C24/0734/17/LL

THE STABLES HOTEL AND RESTAURANT, BETHESDA BACH, CAERNARFON, GWYNEDD

Change of use of chalet / bedrooms to proposed 10 affordable residential units (mix of 1 and 2 bedrooms, self-contained units)

- a) The Planning Manager highlighted that this was a full application to change the use of bedrooms to 10 affordable residential units.

In terms of the principle of the development, it was explained that policy PCYFF 1 was relevant as the site was located outside of any development boundary as defined within the LDP and the site was in open countryside. It was highlighted that the policy stated that proposals were refused unless they were in accordance with other policies within the plan or national planning policies or the proposal showed that its location in the countryside was essential.

It was reiterated that consideration to Policy TAI 7 was also important, as the proposal involved converting buildings in the countryside into living units. However, the policy only allowed the conversion of traditional buildings. Reference was made to Section 7 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 'Replacement Dwellings and Conversions in the Countryside', which defined traditional buildings as those built prior to 1919 and of 'breathable construction'. It was noted from the site's planning history that permission was given to erect the building in 1978 and therefore it will not be possible to consider the proposal against Policy TAI 7 as it would not be a conversion of a traditional building. It was noted that the guidance also noted that traditional buildings had an aesthetic value which derived from the way that people had sensible and intellectual enjoyment of the building with the character of the building often encompassing local unique features and contributed to the sense of place. In this context, it was explained that the construction was mainly made of red brick construction and modern windows that did not have a high amenity value and did not reflect the character and nature of traditional buildings in the area. Given this, the application did not meet the requirements of policy TAI 7 as the proposal did not involve a conversion of a traditional building, and as there was no other policy within the LDP that allowed provision of affordable housing in open countryside; the principle of the proposal was therefore contrary to policy PCYFF 1.

It was also explained that the application did not meet other criteria within policy TAI 7 as a structural report was not received to support the application. In addition, no evidence was received to prove the need for the affordable units and how the development had been designed to ensure an appropriate mix of housing in accordance with policy TAI 8. It was highlighted that Planning Policy Wales (PPW) required new affordable housing to reach the Welsh Government's development quality standards, and because these units, based on their size, did not meet these requirements, it was considered that the proposal was contrary to PPW. It was also considered, due to the restricted size of the units, that the proposal was contrary to policy TAI 8 as the proposal did not reflect a high-quality design standard which created sustainable and inclusive communities - these units did not support the creation of healthy and lively environments, and they did not consider the health and well-being of future users in accordance with policy PCYFF 3.

Criterion 1 of policy TAI 7 was considered, which required evidence that employment use of the building was not viable, as well as policy PS14 (The Visitor Economy) - the legal use of the building as bedrooms for a hotel. It was explained that this policy was relevant in the context of support to the protection of holiday accommodation and facilities. It was noted that the only information received from the application was that the building had been marketed over a period of 18 months since 2022 before the applicant made an offer to buy the building.

It was acknowledged that the building had been marketed, but in accordance with the SPG requirements, it was necessary to receive financial evidence that the business was not viable and that it was not expected for it to become economically viable in the future. It was also acknowledged that the planning statement offered more evidence from the company responsible for marketing the building, but this was not requested as the application did not meet the principles of policy TAI 7, and receiving the information would not overcome the conflict with the policy. Therefore, it was considered that the proposal was contrary to policy PS 14 and criterion 1 of Policy TAI 7.

It was accepted that the application complied with some policies in terms of visual impact and general amenity impact, transportation, biodiversity and impact on the language, but it was not considered that this overcame the conflict with the basic policy. The Officers recommended to approve the application with conditions.

- b) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the applicant's agent noted the following points:
- The Stables had ceased trading in 2019
 - It was put on the market in 2022 without any success
 - The application had been submitted in October 2024 - there had been no communication with the Planning Service until they became aware that the application was to be discussed at the Committee
 - There was a request to defer the decision to prepare responses to the objections
 - There was a housing crisis in the County - a need for affordable housing
 - Disagreed with the officers' views regarding the proposal meeting the need and the view that the building was not considered as a traditional building
 - The proposal would provide affordable housing
- c) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the Local Member made the following observations:
- The application was unsuitable - it would have a negative impact on the village
 - Contrary to local requirements
 - Many local residents had highlighted their dissatisfaction with the planning application
 - No public transport - no suitable access - no resources within walking distance

- The plan was of an urban nature - an overdevelopment
- It did not respond to the demand for this type of housing provision needed in the area
- The size of the units was very small
- It was not within the LDP - it was contrary to local and national policies - contrary to Policy TAI 1 - the building was not of traditional design and contrary to Policy TAI 8 - no evidence of the demand locally
- There was no standard to the design
- No evidence of commercial / self-contained use or evidence supporting the creation of a healthy community submitted
- There had been no correspondence with the Community - the applicant had not considered the views of local residents

ch) It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application

- d) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:
- The units were sub-standard - this was not a good precedent for Gwynedd
 - There was a need to keep standards high and ensure suitable housing for the people of Gwynedd
 - The local objection was very substantial

In response to a question regarding the request for pre-application advice, it was noted that a request had been made but that was for a development that was slightly different to the one submitted to the Committee.

RESOLVED: TO REFUSE

- 1. The application was considered to be contrary to policy TAI 7 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Replacement Dwellings and Conversions in the Countryside' as the building was not traditional. As there were no other policies within the LDP which permitted new residential dwellings in open countryside, it was considered that the proposal was also contrary to policy PCYFF 1.**
- 2. No evidence had been received of affordable local need, or information indicating that there was an appropriate mix of housing for the number and type of units proposed. As a result, it was considered that the proposal was contrary to policy TAI 7 and TAI 8.**
- 3. Insufficient evidence received to demonstrate that the commercial use of the building was not viable or evidence to justify the loss of serviced holiday accommodation, which was contrary to PS 14, and criterion 1 of policy TAI 7.**
- 4. That the units, due to their limited size, were contrary to paragraph 4.2.30 of edition 12 of Planning Policy Wales as the units did not meet the Welsh Government's development quality standards. It was also contrary to policy TAI 8 as the proposal did not reflect the high-quality design standard that created sustainable and inclusive communities and the units would not help to create healthy and lively environments, and did not consider the health and well-being of future users in line with policy PCYFF 3.**

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 13:40

CHAIR