

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	DATE: 12/01/2026
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Number: 3

Application Number: **C25/0277/18/LL**

Date Registered: **08/04/25**

Application Type: **Full**

Community: **Llanddeiniolen**

Ward: **Bethel a'r Felinheli**

Proposal: **Proposed development of battery energy storage system, associated infrastructure, access and landscaping**

Location: **Land South Of B4547 Seion/Pentir, Llanddeiniolen, LL55 3AN**

Summary of the

Recommendation: **TO REFUSE**

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1 Description:

1.1 This is a full planning application for the installation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) comprising energy storage units, an electricity substation, site access, landscaping and ancillary infrastructure on land south of the B4547, opposite the existing Pentir electricity substation.

1.2 The proposed development includes the following elements:

- 60 x BESS units arranged in three rows with each unit measuring 6.1m long x 2.6m wide and 3.0m high.
- 30 x transformer modules measuring 2.8m long, 3.2m wide and 2.5m high
- 60 x power conversion units measuring 1.4m long, 2.4m wide and 2.5m high
- 15 x Main Circuit? Units measuring 1.2m long, 2.5m wide and 2.5m high
- Customer Control Room measuring 18.3m long, 5.7m wide and 3.6m high
- 2 x 9.8m wide and 3m high back-up fire water tanks
- Substation Area situated within a separate fenced area, including a transformer (approximately 5.8m high), other electrical infrastructure (approximately 8.0m high) and a Distribution Network Operator Management Building measuring approximately 8.3m in length by 5m in width by 3.6m in height.
- Security fencing, gates and CCTV cameras
- Parking space for maintenance vehicles
- Equipment storage space
- Run-off Attenuation Basin

1.3 The site comprises 1.95ha of rough grazing land in an open countryside site outside any development boundary as defined in the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (LDP). The site is within the Dinorwig Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

1.4 The site includes part of a much larger grazing field which is parallel to the B4547 to the north. A stone wall runs along the boundary of the site with the highway and overhead power lines (supported by wooden monopoles) run along the eastern boundary of the site. The land has been categorised as 3a and 5 in the Agricultural Land Classification: predictive map for Wales.

1.5 The applicant explains that the proposal is for temporary planning permission, for a period of 40 years, following which the equipment will be removed from the site and the land restored to its current state.

1.6 BESS stores surplus energy from renewable energy developments and the grid when electricity demand is low. It then releases the electricity later when there is demand. So, BESS plans help provide security of energy supply.

1.7 The following documents were submitted in support of the application:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement (including Green Infrastructure Statement)
- A Pre-application Consultation Report
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Flood Impact Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Ecological Assessment Report
- Transport Statement

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- Fire Safety Technical Note
- Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
- Noise Technical Note
- Pollution Prevention Plan

1.8 It was confirmed that the applicant had undertaken a pre-application consultation in accordance with the requirements of Article 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Act 2016 as the proposed development is defined as major by the Welsh Government (a site of more than 1 ha).

1.9 The development has been screened for an Environmental Impact Assessment under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. The proposal does not fall within any development criteria in Schedule 1, but it does fall within the development description under Part 3(a) to Schedule 2, Energy Developments: Facilities relating to the generation of electricity, steam or hot water with a site exceeding 0.5ha in size. Having assessed the likely impact of the proposal on the environment, using the selection criteria under Schedule 3 as well as the guidance in the Welsh Office Circular 11/99, the impact of the development on the environment is considered insufficient to justify the submission of an environmental statement with the application.

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

PS 1 - The Welsh Language and Culture
 PS 5 - Sustainable development
 PS 6 - Alleviating and adapting to the effects of climate change
 PS 7 - Renewable technology
 PS 19 - Conserving and where appropriate enhancing the natural environment
 PS 20 - Preserving and where appropriate enhancing heritage assets
 ISA 1 - Infrastructure and Developer Contributions
 TRA 2 - Parking standards
 TRA 4 - Managing transport impacts
 PCYFF 1 - Development Boundaries
 PCYFF 2 - Development criteria
 PCYFF 3 - Design and place shaping

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PCYFF 4 - Design and Landscaping
 PCYFF 5 - Carbon management
 ADN 3 - Renewable energy and other low-carbon technology
 AT 1 - Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites, Parks and Registered Historic Gardens
 AT 4 - Protection of non-designated archaeological sites and their setting
 AMG 5 - Local Biodiversity Conservation

2.4 **National Policies:**

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040
 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12 - February 2024)

Technical Advice Notes (TAN)

TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning.
 TAN 11: Noise
 TAN 12: Design.
 TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk
 TAN 18: Transport.
 TAN 20: Planning and the Welsh Language.
 TAN 24: The Historic Environment

3. **Relevant Planning History:**

None

4. **Consultations:**

Please note that there have been several consultations in considering this application and below is a summary of the latest response received from the consultees to the application and any additional information submitted.

Community/Town Council: Very concerned about this scheme because:

- A lack of prior consultation.
- Lack of environmental assessment.

Transportation Unit: Note concerns about the lack of visibility to the east of the main entrance.

Natural Resources Wales: They express concerns about the application as submitted. However, they are satisfied that these concerns can be overcome by attaching conditions relating to a Decommissioning and Restoration Plan.

Welsh Water: Objection to secure further information regarding water use in the implementation of the development.

Biodiversity Unit: Concern that not all biodiversity features have been identified in the Ecological Report.
 Further information required regarding the proposed lighting of

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the site

A programme of biodiversity improvements is needed for the whole field as it is a single management unit from a biodiversity perspective

Public Protection Unit: Concerned that the noise level predicted from the BESS when in operation will not achieve the -5dB below the representative background in all residential properties. Advise that further mitigation needs to be looked at.

The Noise Report's conclusions are based on the assumption that other sites achieve projected levels. I do not agree with this conclusion and state concerns about overdevelopment in this area and note concerns about the cumulative impact especially at night.

Note the need to follow strict mitigation measures to prevent the risk of cross-contamination of drinking water.

Water and Environment Unit: Due to the size and nature of the development, an application will need to be made to the SuDS Approval Body to be approved before construction work commences.

Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service: Due to the known archaeology and further buried potential on the site, it was advised that a condition would be required to secure a programme of archaeological mitigation if planning permission was granted.

SP Energy Networks No response received

Cadw No objection

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Public Consultation:

A notice was posted on the site and neighbours were consulted. The advertising period has ended and correspondence was received objecting to the development on the following material planning grounds:

- Concerns about the visual impact
- Noise concerns
- Lack of benefit to the local community
- Concern about the environmental impact in the event of an accident
- Concern about damage to existing infrastructure
- Concern about the cumulative impact with other existing and planned developments.
- Concern over impact on highway safety

Observations were also received that were not planning considerations.

- The sole purpose of the development is to generate profit for a large company

An objection was also received from Pentir Community Council (adjacent to the site), objecting to the development on the following grounds :

- An overdevelopment – there is already one such site in the same area that has been permitted, and this would be an excess of this type of storage site in the countryside.
- The development will be visible from afar and is close to the main road and difficult to conceal.
- It is in a location that offers natural and open views towards Yr Wyddfa and the mountains of Eryri, and on an important road in terms of tourism.
- Fire concerns - as the type of fire that would be caused/produced from the batteries cannot be extinguished but left to burn out
- Security, as there will be no one on the site once the work is completed.
- There has not been enough consultation with the people of the area.
- The development would not bring any kind of work to the area to boost the local economy.

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5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

The principle of the development

5.1 It is a requirement that planning applications are determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless other material planning considerations state otherwise. The Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (LDP) is the adopted 'Development Plan' in this case.

5.2 In terms of general policies, Policy PCYFF 1 states that proposals outside development boundaries will be refused unless they are in accordance with specific policies in the plan or national planning policies or that the proposal shows that its location in the countryside is essential. In this case, justification has been provided in the Planning, Design and Access Statement for locating the facility at the proposed site - it was chosen as it was considered to be the most suitable piece of land available within the vicinity of the Pentir Substation.

5.3 The Statement explains that the Pentir substation is surrounded by significant tree plantations which conceal the significant electrical infrastructure from the surrounding area. Some of the woodland blocks have also been designated as Ancient Woodland. The Applicant did not want to affect this mature planting (i.e. by laying an underground cable etc.) and therefore considered that a connection using the substation's existing access road would minimise any potential impact(s). The Dinorwig Pentir Cable Replacement Scheme is currently under construction. This has resulted in fields on either side of the access road (leading to the substation) either being unavailable and/or affected by way-leaves. On this basis, the land south of the B4547 (between the road and the Cable Replacement Scheme) was identified as the next available and unrestricted stretch of land. The applicant considers that the site has the following advantages:

- It consists of pasture which is away from blocks of woodland and is of lower ecological value compared to the other areas around the substation.
- It is far from residential dwellings and has limited visibility of the surrounding area.
- It has good access to the existing highway network, reducing the need for long access routes. This offers benefits to the landscape and is also more sustainable because there will be less use of building materials.
- It is as close as possible to the connection point which reduces cable connections that are generally expensive and complex, and also reduces disruption to highway users during the construction phase.
- Although the cable route is not part of this application, it would only be included in the road and therefore there would be no impacts on natural habitats.

5.4 ISA 1 policy supports proposals for water, electricity, gas services etc. to improve provision, subject to detailed planning considerations. The policy states that it is important that the infrastructure provision for a development site is located and designed in a way that minimises the impact on the natural and built environment. Recognising that a rational process has taken place in the selection of this site, given that the site is separated from the substation by a significant highway and there is no significant existing screening for the location, there is concern that this development may be detrimental to the natural beauty of the area, particularly when viewed from the north west, where the site would take away from the views of Eryri National Park. These issues are discussed in more detail below but ultimately this proposal is not believed to meet the policy objectives of ISA 1 due to its visual impacts.

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5.5 Although the development is not in itself a renewable energy scheme, it would form part of the support network that could be used when managing the renewable supply. To this end, it can be considered part of the renewable energy network, and as such policy ADN 3 of the LDP applies. It sets out a series of criteria for consideration of proposals for renewable energy technologies and this plan will be assessed against those criteria below:

1. All impacts have been adequately mitigated.

5.6 An Ecological Assessment Report was submitted with the application and this is generally acceptable to the Biodiversity Unit, however they identified the following weaknesses:

- The Biodiversity Unit disagrees with the fact that parts of the site have been identified as being of low biodiversity value and suggests that more information is needed about the vegetation in these areas along with details of the proposed site drainage that may affect them.
- The Ecological Assessment proposes to mitigate and compensate for the loss of grassland habitat by creating species-rich meadows around the perimeter of the site. However, the Biodiversity Unit points out that this is a small and remote area and is not enough mitigation for the habitat loss that would occur.
- The assessment goes on to propose an area of grassland off-site but within the same field as the scheme which would be subject to management as a biodiversity enhancement area. However, the Unit disagrees with this suggestion as the area already identified is of high biodiversity value. The Unit considers that the whole field should be appropriately managed to ensure an appropriate level of biodiversity enhancement.

5.7 Considering the above information in the context of the landscaping plan and the environmental information submitted, it is believed that through further discussions it may be possible to ensure that there will be no significant harm to biodiversity resulting from the development and that improvements could be achieved that would improve the biodiversity value of the site. Ultimately, it is believed that the proposal is likely to comply with Criterion 1 of Policy ADN3 in terms of its biodiversity impact and that it may be acceptable under policies PS 19 and AMG 5 of the LDP, subject to further discussion and the imposition of appropriate conditions on any planning permission.

2. The proposal would not be harmful to visual amenities

5.8 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was submitted with the application including a visual impact assessment from several directions. The conclusions of that work were that, while there would be some significant local impacts, the development would have a limited impact on the landscape as a whole. The Assessment notes that, in addition to the current screening offered by land formation and growth, the development would include landscaping features, such as a row of trees, which will assist with the integration of the development into the surrounding landscape. In addition, there are existing developed features, including the pylons that are immediately nearby, which would reduce its impact on the landscape. It is also noted that the development would only affect a limited area and would be reversible. Ultimately the report claims that the development would have a Minor Adverse Effect on the local landscape.

5.9 This site is identified as being within Landscape Character Area 4 - Caernarfon - Coastline and Plateau within the Gwynedd Landscape Strategy (2012) and states that all development proposals in the area should respect the nature of the pattern and the details of the historical

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composition of the landscape. The site also lies within a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, and it is not believed that extending significant industrial development into open grassland is appropriate in these areas. It is believed that the extension of developed lands to the south of the highway would significantly disrupt the current development pattern of the landscape, particularly given that all other developments associated with Pentir Substation are restricted to the lands north of the road, where there is considerable screening from existing tree and land formation.

5.10 Considering the information submitted with the application in the context of site visits to a number of locations in the surrounding area, in acknowledging that there are several local areas where there would be no visual impact, we don't agree with the conclusions of the Landscape Assessment, rather it is believed that this development would likely have a detrimental effect on the landscape and on the area's visual amenities as a result of its location which is separate from other local developments. As such, the proposal does not meet this criterion or policies PCYFF 2 and PCYFF 4 as they consider protecting the visual amenities of the area.

3. There will be no significant unacceptable impacts on nearby sensitive uses

5.11 There are several dwellings within 1km of the site and a Noise Survey was submitted with the application. The assessment concludes that the site can be designed to operate in such a way that it complies with all appropriate and relevant noise standards and guidelines. Therefore, there is no reason to refuse the Proposed Development on the grounds of noise or vibration.

5.12 The Public Protection Service responded to the original Noise Assessment questioning certain aspects of the scheme in particular the lack of information regarding the potential cumulative impact with the other similar schemes proposed in the area. A Noise Technical Note was submitted in response to the Public Protection Service's observation and it notes that recent improvements in technology have reduced noise emissions from such equipment and it is also proposed to raise the proposed acoustic screen height to 4.8m. Taking the above into consideration the applicants claim that the noise levels would fall below the relevant levels, whether individual or cumulative.

5.13 The Public Protection Service has been consulted further on the matter and its response is awaited. This issue will be reported further at the Committee but ultimately it is believed that, should the application be otherwise acceptable, it should be possible to impose appropriate conditions to control the noise generated by the facility and the development may be acceptable under policy PCYFF 2 of the LDP as it relates to the protection of private amenities. That said, increasing the height of the acoustic screens as suggested, would also increase the visibility of the site in the landscape and exacerbate the visual impact of the scheme.

4. There would be no unacceptable impact on water quality

5.14 In light of receiving a Pollution Prevention Plan, Natural Resources confirmed that it is satisfied with the submitted mitigation measures but emphasised that an appropriate condition is needed to ensure a suitable decommissioning process at the end of the scheme's life. This Plan was also acceptable to the Public Protection Service although it did stress the importance of adhering to strict control of the site due to the risk of cross-contamination of drinking water. Noting the above, at the time of writing this report Welsh Water

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maintained its objection to the application due to a lack of information regarding the use of water during the operational period of the scheme. Additional information was submitted in response to these concerns and Welsh Water's response to that information is awaited. The matter will be further reported upon at the Committee.

5. Previously used buildings / land should be used

5.15 This is a greenfield site but we note the justification for selecting the site which is included in the Planning, Design and Access Statement and discussed in 5.2 above.

6. There would be no unacceptable cumulative impact on the landscape.

5.16 Given that this site is on a greenfield site which is separated from the remaining existing and proposed developments around Pentir Substation, it is believed that permitting it would cause a development of an industrial nature to flow beyond its natural boundary as defined by the highway and that the development would be an unacceptable addition to what has already taken place or is under consideration in the area.

7. Where appropriate, the equipment shall be removed from the site at the end of the scheme's life.

5.17 The equipment installed on the site is generally temporary in nature and it is considered appropriate to impose a condition to ensure that it is removed from the site when the need for the facility ceases.

Summary

5.18 In considering the above assessment it is believed that the application is contrary to several criteria within Policy ADN 3 and therefore the proposal does not meet the main relevant policy in the LDP.

Other matters

Sustainability

5.19 It is noted that policies PCYFF 5, PS 5, PS 6 and PS 7 are supportive of plans to develop renewable technologies that contribute towards environmental protection and climate change mitigation however, in accordance with Policy ISA 1, any scheme must be acceptable following an assessment of the relevant planning considerations and this is true in this case.

Transport and access matters

5.20 The site is located on the south side of the B4587 and will be served by two new junctions. Access to the BESS during the construction and operational phases will be by means of a new priority junction from the B4547, which would connect to the northern corner of the Site. There is enough space within the site to allow construction vehicles to manoeuvre in order to leave the site in forward gear. A separate site access junction would also be provided in the south-east corner of the site, for emergency use only. During the

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construction phase, it is expected that all traffic would travel to the site from the A55 and therefore would arrive at the site from the north-west via the B4547 and leave in the same direction. During the operational period, the size of the largest vehicle that would require access to the site would be a large van, therefore, the access route for maintenance requirements could be from either direction along the B4547.

5.21 It is anticipated that the full construction period will take 40 weeks and peak construction activity (in terms of number of vehicles) would take place during the enabling works period, when daily traffic levels are estimated to be a maximum of 17 vehicles per day, including 7 HGV journeys. This equates to 34 daily two-way movements.

5.22 Observations were received from the Transport Unit on the application and it noted the following comments and concerns:

i. Main Access – Visibility (Eastern Direction)

The Transport Statement states that a visibility strip of 2.4m x 130m to the east of the proposed access can be ensured. However, this is significantly lower than the least desirable vehicle speed-based visibility requirement of 173m on the B4547. This shortcoming raises significant concerns about the suitability of visibility for vehicles leaving the site, especially given the nature and speed of traffic on this section of the highway.

In addition, it is noted that the current visibility is further reduced by the presence of vegetation within the visibility splay. While the submitted plans suggest that better visibility can be achieved within the applicant's control, this has not been demonstrated in practice. The applicant will therefore be asked to reconsider the access design and submit revised plans showing the maximum possible visibility splay, together with evidence of land ownership or management to ensure that the splay can be maintained free of any obstruction.

ii. Second Access – Emergency Use Only

Visibility at the second access is also limited. However, the applicant has stated that this access is intended to be used only for emergency purposes. On that basis, and subject to a condition limiting use to emergency situations only, the highway authority will not require full visibility standards for this access.

iii. Traffic Movements

It is accepted that the expected number of traffic movements is low. Nevertheless, the lack of standard visibility at the main entrance remains a concern, particularly from a road safety perspective and the potential for collisions with traffic travelling along the B4547.

5.23 A revised access plan has been received from the applicant in response to these observations and a further response to these plans is expected from the Transport Unit. The matter will be reported further at the Committee meeting, but, as it stands, the plans submitted do not ensure the visibility that the Transport Unit has identified to the East, and therefore does not comply with the requirements of Policy TRA 4 of the LDP in terms of highway safety and convenience.

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Heritage and Archaeology Matters

5.24 There are a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and a Scheduled Historic Garden in the vicinity of the site and the Design, Access and Planning Statement sets out the need for archaeological mitigation works. The Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service (Heneb) notes there is potential at the site for previously unrecorded archaeological remains relating to Roman period activity in the area. This conclusion is based on the known evidence found relating to the site of the application and the surrounding areas, mainly the Roman road recorded as crossing the site. Heneb noted that a mitigation programme for the site should include archaeological strip drilling and mapping and recording of the application site prior to construction which will cover the excavation of the Roman road, along with research, analysis, reporting and ancillary archiving as needed for the results. Provided a condition is imposed to ensure that such a programme is implemented, we believe that the application would meet the requirements of policies PS 20 and AT 4 of the LDP as they relate to protecting sites of archaeological importance from harm.

Linguistic matters

5.25 Excluding the developments that meet the thresholds for submitting a Welsh Language Impact Statement/Assessment as noted in Policy PS1, guidance is provided in terms of the type of relevant applications where consideration should be given to the Welsh language in Appendix 5 (The Screening Procedure) of the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 'Maintaining and Creating Distinctive and Sustainable Communities'. The guidance included states that every retail, commercial or industrial development that is not required to submit a Welsh Language Impact Statement / Assessment should show how consideration has been given to the language.

5.26 The Planning, Design and Access Statement notes the consideration that has been given to the Welsh language in forming the scheme and it identifies several aspects of how the scheme will promote the language, these include:

- Naming the development taking into account local linguistic heritage;
- Providing bilingual signage in public places;
- Providing opportunities for local workers during the construction process.

5.27 We believe that by imposing a condition regarding the use of the Welsh language on documents and signage, it could be ensured that the development will contribute towards the visual presence of the language in accordance with the requirements of policy PS 1.

Agricultural land

5.28 The Welsh Agricultural Land Classification Prediction Map classifies the proposed site for the facility itself as Grade 3b or Grade 5 lower quality land, with the majority being Grade 5. Given that the proposed development has specific locational needs and is a temporary development, with the land eventually restored, it is not believed that there will be a significant long-term loss in the quantity or quality of agricultural land locally.

5.29 Policy PS 5 of the LDP aims to protect the "best and most versatile agricultural land", however national policy permits the development of such land if there is a "critical need for the development". In this case, in light of the small amount of highest grade land that will be lost and the strategically important nature of the development in question, the loss of this land from the general supply is considered acceptable.

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6. Conclusions:

6.1 It is considered that while the principle of this type of development may be acceptable in the countryside for practical reasons relating to the efficiency of the electricity distribution system, this particular development is not acceptable because of its likely visual impact. It would be an industrial development on an open grassland site in the countryside that would go beyond the natural boundaries of developments associated with Pentir Substation.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 To refuse

1. This development would be detrimental to the landscape as it would introduce an industrial element to an open grassland site in a prominent location that would be visible within notable views of Eryri National Park. The application is therefore contrary to policies ISA 1, ADN 3, PCYFF 1, PCYFF 2 and PCYFF 4 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan as they relate to ensuring that developments are appropriate to their location.
2. The proposal does not provide adequate visibility pitches and therefore there are significant concerns about the suitability of visibility for outgoing vehicles, particularly given the nature and speed of traffic on this section of highway. The application is therefore contrary to the requirements of policy TRA 4 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan which rejects proposals that would cause unacceptable harm to the safe and efficient operation of the highway.