
PLANNING COMMITTEE 16 June 2025

Attendance

Chair: Cllr Elwyn Edwards

Vice-chair: Cllr Huw Rowlands

Councillors:

Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Louise Hughes, Elin Hywel, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Gareth T. Jones, Edgar Owen, Gareth Coj Parry and Gruffydd Williams.

Officers:

Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services - Monitoring Officer), Gareth Jones (Head of Planning and Environment), Keira Sweeney (Planning Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

Others invited:

Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn (Local Member)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Cai Larsen and Cllr Gareth A. Roberts

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PROTOCOL MATTERS

- a) The following member declared that he was a local member in relation to the item noted:
- Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn (not a member of this Planning Committee), in relation to item 5.2 (C19/0154/03/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 Legal Officer 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 19 May 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 C22/0585/22/LL

Land near Oxtan Villa, Ffordd Haeam Bach, Penygroes, LL54 6NY

Application for erecting an affordable dwelling with access, parking and associated landscaping (amended plan).

- a) The Planning Manager highlighted that this was a full application for the erection of one affordable two-bedroom house with access and parking on a site situated within an agricultural field on the outskirts of Penygroes.

It was explained that a decision on the application, at the January 2024 committee, had been deferred in order to receive written evidence of the applicant's position with Tai Teg, together with confirmation that the applicant was eligible for a self-built affordable house. It was added that the deferral had been a fair opportunity for the applicant to also consider reducing the size of the house's surface area and the size of the plot.

It was reported that several attempts had been made by officers to seek information, but there had been no progress with the request. With almost a year and a half having elapsed, it was decided to bring the application back to committee for a decision.

The reasons for refusal were highlighted, explaining that one reason related to the location of the site - a site which was located on the outskirts and outside the development boundary of the village of Penygroes. It was noted that with the development boundary located on the boundary of the Glaslyn property with a public footpath situated between the Glaslyn property and the application site, this meant that the site did not adjoin the development boundary and therefore failed to comply with the requirements of the TAI 16 policy as an exception site for an affordable unit. In addition, this meant that the site was in the open countryside, with no justification or need proved.

The reason for refusal was cited, relating to the size of the property and the curtilage which was too large to enable the property to be affordable in the future and comply with the scale of development density. It was added, again, that the local need for a self-built affordable house had not been proved.

It was considered that the applicant had had sufficient time to modify the application and despite the attempts of officers to receive information, it was reported that there had been no progress.

The officers recommended that the application be refused.

- b) It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application.
- c) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:
- The application was submitted to the Committee at the Local Member's request, but the Local Member was not present
 - The site was outside the development boundary
 - Tai Teg had refused the application
 - This was the third time the application has been discussed at the committee
 - A request for information had been made, but there was no change in the situation
 - Consistency needed to be ensured
 - There was a lack of contact from the applicant

 - In the context of size – was it really bigger than an affordable house? Local people didn't want to live in boxes!
 - The site seemed to 'adjoin' the boundary and was close to other houses
 - Insufficient evidence not to approve

In response to a question about a specific reason for the delay, the Planning Manager noted that initial meetings had been held with the agent, but no information had been received despite the promises. It was added that Tai Teg had also contacted the applicant directly to discuss the justification for the need, but again, no response had been received.

In response to the comments, the Assistant Head noted that eighteen months ago the committee had asked the applicant for more information but as no information had been received, the recommendation was to refuse. He added that when considering the size, consideration had to be given to whether it was 'affordable in perpetuity' and from the point of view of plot size, that there was sufficient space for three dwellings. He noted that since no evidence had been presented, the application was contrary to local and national policies.

RESOLVED: To refuse the application

Reasons:

- 1. The proposal is not appropriate as a logical extension to the settlement because of its location and the current boundaries that separate the settlement from the countryside in this location. The development is therefore contrary to the requirements of policies PCYFF 1, TAI 15 and 16 of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Affordable Housing which ensure suitable affordable housing developments as an exception on the peripheries of development boundaries.**
- 2. The local need for a self-built affordable house has not been proved. The size of the proposed property and curtilage is too large to enable the property to be affordable in the future and comply with the scale of development density. The development is therefore contrary to the requirements of policies TAI 15, TAI 16 and PCYFF 2 of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Affordable Housing which ensure development on an acceptable scale which would be affordable in future.**
- 3. The development is tantamount to erecting a new house in open countryside without any justification and is contrary to the requirements of policies PCYFF 1 and paragraph 6.4.36 of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026 and Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for sustainable rural communities.**

5.2 APPLICATION NUMBER C19/0154/03/LL
Market Hall, Church Street, Blaenau Ffestiniog, LL41 3HP

Conversion of building into 14 flats

- a) The Planning Manager highlighted that it was a full application for change of use and conversion of a building into 14 flats which would include eight one-bedroom flats and six two-bedroom flats creating three new windows to the side facing the railway, closing one opening facing the high street and creating six new openings to face the adjacent church.

It was explained that a decision on the application had been deferred in the Planning Committee in July 2019 following the receipt of the Language Unit's observations which stated that there was a lack of information, and to discuss with the applicant to try to understand the linguistic situation in the context of the application. It was noted that a Language Impact Assessment, a Design and Access Statement and an amended Viability Assessment were submitted in 2020, and following this the building was listed as a Grade II building by CADW in June 2021. It was added that officers had sought an update and current information for the application, but no response had been received.

In the context of current housing figures, it was noted that the application could be supported on the basis of the indicative supply level for Blaenau Ffestiniog along with the acceptable mix of units that met the need locally. It was explained that as this proposed development would not involve a greater provision than the indicative housing provision determined for the settlement, a Welsh Language Statement was not required. However, a statement was submitted with the application and a Language Impact Assessment submitted later on. The Policy stated that a statement was required for a development of five or more units, unless it addressed evidence of need and demand for housing. At the time concern was expressed about the type of units, the mix and the linguistic impact but due to the time that had now elapsed, there was no up-to-date information to assess the proposal against the requirements of policy PS1, and therefore it could not be confirmed whether the intention would comply with the policy or the SPG.

In the context of Policy TAI 15 which outlined the requirements for the provision of affordable housing to be at least 10% of the proposal, a minimum of one unit would be required to be affordable. The application was originally accompanied by a Financial Viability Assessment, along with a later amended version justifying the lack of affordable unit provision. However, due to the time that had elapsed since the previous assessments the proposal could not be accurately assessed against the requirements of the TAI 15 policy as the information was no longer current nor had it considered the listed status of the building.

An update to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW), which dealt with green infrastructure and the net benefit to biodiversity and required all planning applications to submit a Green Infrastructure Statement, was highlighted. It was noted that no such Statement had been submitted as part of the application, and because of the lack of response from the application's agent, the officers had not requested the information; without the information it could not be ensured that the proposal complied with the requirements of PPW or policy PS19. In addition, given the listed status of the building, and the fact that there was little land around the site, opportunities to provide improvements to biodiversity were considered to be very limited. As a result, it was not considered appropriate to impose a condition as it might not be possible to propose enhancements.

It was considered that the applicants had been given sufficient time to modify the application and despite the attempts of officers, there had been no progress. The officers recommended that the application be refused on grounds of lack of up-to-date information to assess the proposal.

- b) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the Local Member made the following observations:
- He agreed with the officers' recommendation to refuse the application
 - He agreed with the concerns of Blaenau Ffestiniog Town Council
 - There was insufficient consideration for the Welsh language in the application

- There were insufficient parking spaces for the proposal – parking was already a problem in the area
- The building had a history – there were strong feelings locally that it needed to be protected, but this development was not the answer

c) It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application.

ch) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- There was insufficient information to assess the proposal
- Regret at the condition of the building - something needed to be done to protect it
- The design was acceptable
- This was another historic old building that was dilapidated

RESOLVED: To refuse in accordance with the recommendation.

Reason:

No sufficient or current information had been submitted with this application to assess the proposal against the requirements of policies PS1, TAI 15 and PS19 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Maintaining and Creating Distinctive and Sustainable Communities and Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW), which deals with the impact on the Welsh language, provision of affordable housing, green infrastructure and the net benefit to biodiversity.

Following the recent appointment of Keira Sweeney as Director of Planning and Partnerships of Eryri National Park, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Keira for her service, advice and unstinting support to the Planning Committee. Best wishes were extended to her in her new post.

The meeting started at 13.00 and ended at 13.25.

CHAIR