

Gronwen Farm, Garth Road, Garth, Llangollen, Wrexham,
LL20 7UY

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Change use of land into tourist accommodation in the form of
2 temporary hut units

March 2024
Gronwen Farm



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Site Location and Description	3
3. Description of the application proposals	3
4. Planning History	5
5. Planning Policy Framework	5
6. Planning Assessment	5
<i>Principle of development</i>	6
<i>Visual impact</i>	7
<i>Residential amenity</i>	8
<i>Environmental Considerations</i>	8
<i>Access and Highways Safety</i>	9
7. Summary and Conclusions	9
8. Appendices	11
<i>Appendix A – Site Photographs</i>	11
<i>Appendix B – Package Treatment Plant specifications</i>	11
<i>Appendix C – Parking area permeable geocell specifications</i>	11
<i>Appendix D – Pre-application advice, ref – ENQ/2023 /0206</i>	11

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Crown & Canopy have been instructed by the landowner and applicant **[REDACTED]** to submit a planning application for a diversification scheme at their farm. The description of development is as follows:

Change use of land into tourist accommodation in the form of 2 temporary hut units

- 1.2. This planning application is informed and supported by the following documents:

- Planning drawings;
- This Planning, Design and Access Statement;
- Planning application forms;
- Ecology Statement;

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1. Gronwen Farm is a farm located in the countryside 4.4km north east of Llangollen and 10.7km south west of Wrexham. The land borders the village of Garth.
- 2.2. The farm has been in the applicant's family for 150 years, the applicant is a fourth generation farmer and has been running the operation for 22 years. The total land holding is approximately 180 acres (72.8 ha) which is primarily pasture used for livestock with some agricultural steel fabricated buildings. The site area for the development itself makes up 0.5ha of this. Photographs of the site are attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3. The site lies within a very low risk flood zone, lies in a Special Landscape Area and in the catchment of River Dee/Bala Lake SAC. It is not subject to any other environmental designations. It is sited outside the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site consists of a pleasant mix of open meadows, plantation on Ancient Woodland, and restored ancient woodland. Notwithstanding this, owing to the local topography, the site is well contained and not easily viewed from outside its ownership.

3. Description of the application proposals

- 3.1. This planning application proposes a modest, small scale glamping use in keeping with the character of the farm to enable the owners of the land to derive a sustainable income from an eco-tourism-based business that will be of benefit to the local area and help sustain the farm in the long term. The proposal is intended to be an extremely low impact development, with just two structures discreetly located on the land.
- 3.2. The 2 glamping plots will be located to the south of the farm buildings. The two plots are in land currently used for livestock grazing. The locations of the units have been selected in areas where landscape visual impact is lower due to the existing vegetation and topography, and are sited within reasonable distance in respect of commercial ongoing livestock farming operations. There are existing trees and hedgerows screening the units already from the south, and there will be additional planting of a wildflower meadow surrounding the units too, as shown on the habitat enhancement plan at the end of the ecology survey.

- 3.3. The units would serve as year-round accommodation for people visiting Wrexham and the surrounding area. The structures will be mounted on wheeled chassis and use removable groundscrews so are therefore temporary. It was deemed that these units would make for a much stronger business model than shepherd's huts as in the pre app given the current market and attraction towards higher end accommodation. They are also aesthetically a more appropriate design for the landscape, and more fit for purpose to run through an extended tourism season.
- 3.4. Both the units will be constructed in an agricultural vernacular style with a 45° roof pitch and untreated timber cladding so that they silver off naturally to sit in harmony within the landscape. The prefabricated structures from a Welsh company imitate a traditional agricultural structure, reflecting the ongoing farming practice, and the history of the family farm and the Welsh countryside in which it is set.
- 3.5. It is proposed that the units would be serviced by a Package treatment plant with a drainage field as shown on site plan GRO-P-002. Specifications are attached at Appendix B.
- 3.6. The units are intended for couples and small families, each for 2-4 people, and the proposal would accommodate a maximum of 8 people on site at any time.
- 3.7. As shown on the plans, the glamping plots would all be south facing to make the most of the rural views. The proposed glamping plots would not be directly visible to any of the nearby neighbours.
- 3.8. It is noted that the position of the units has been altered since the pre-application for a number of beneficial reasons. They are in the same field and still utilise existing access point but have been moved further from the public footpath in respect to comments received from pre-app, and they are now sited in a lower lying, less prominent part of the field. As before, the site is surrounded by mature hedgerows and trees but to the east, south and west, and the farm complex is instead to the north. The natural screening of foliage remains directly south of the units.
- 3.9. The parking area has also been changed to the bottom of field rather than the top of the field where the footpath is so no longer an issue in relation to vehicle access. This will accommodate up to 4 vehicles. Access for the guests will be via the existing main entrance Gronwen Farm. No additional hard standing is proposed as part of the application. The parking area and footpaths will both be geocell with gravel on top which enables work to be carried out near root protection areas. Specifications for this area included at Appendix C.
- 3.10. In order to enhance the wildlife value of the farm and to improve overall biodiversity, the landowner is committed to a number of measures at detailed in the Ecology Statement and shown on the biodiversity enhancement plan within that document. Proposed biodiversity improvement measures comprise landscaping around the glamping plots including wildflower planting with paths mown through it for guests to enjoy along with the views and natural rural surrounding to be the defining feature of the site. Additionally, reinforcements to the hedgerows and a number of measures to benefit local wildlife including bat boxes and Hibernaculums.
- 3.11. Each plot will have a mains electric and water connection from the farm.
- 3.12. In terms of waste, separate refuse and recycling storage facilities will be located at the car park, and collection will be at the road end/site entrance on the allocated day, to be organised by the applicant/site manager who would put a contract in place with a waste management company.

4. Planning History

- 4.1. None of relevance
- 4.2. A preapplication submission was made in relation to this tourist accommodation proposal in September 2023. Officer Jenni Perkins provided a letter of response dated 15th November 2023 ref ENQ/2023 /0206. This response has guided the application submission. A copy of the pre app response is attached at Appendix D.

5. Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1. The relevant planning policies are contained in Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013 - 2028,
- 5.2. The pre-application feedback confirmed that the LPA consider the following policies of relevance:

The Planning Policy Wales Ed. 11
Technical Advice Note 6 – Planning for sustainable rural communities
Technical Advice Note 12 –Design
Technical Advice Note 13 – Tourism

Adopted Unitary Development Plan Policies
PS2 - Broad Location of Development (Not materially affect countryside, landscape, townscape, open space, natural environment)
GDP1 - Development Objectives (General Development Principles)
EC5 – Special Landscape Areas
EC6 – Biodiversity and Development
EC 14 - Protection of Controlled Waters
CLF10 - Touring Caravan and Camping Sites
T8 - Parking

Draft Local Development Plan
SP12 - Design Principles & Masterplanning Framework
SP14 – Natural Environment
NE1 - International and Nationally Designated Nature Conservation Sites
NE2 - Locally Designated Sites of Nature Conservation and Geological Importance.
T1 - Managing Transport Impacts
EM5 - Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlement Limits
NE5 – Special Landscape Areas

Local Planning Guidance Notes
LPG 16 – Parking Standards
LPG 30 – Design
LPG 32 – Biodiversity and Development
LPG 33 – Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage site

6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1. The key issues in relation to this application are considered to be the overall principle of the development, visual impact, residential amenity, environmental considerations and access.

Principle of development

- 6.2 When considering proposals for the glamping use on this site, the pre-application advice provided in November 2023 confirmed that the proposal is most relevant under Policy GDP1, EC5, EC6 and CLF10. However, as the new LDP has since been adopted, Policy EM5 and NE5 of the Adopted Local Development Plan are also particularly relevant.
- 6.3 It is recognised that the site is located in the open countryside in planning policy terms. Indeed, this is fundamental to the nature of the proposals and the tourist offer proposed.
- 6.4 In accordance with EM5, the proposal should be supported in principle due to the site being unobtrusive and well screened where the scale, form and location of the development does not have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside and is not used for any storage of caravans or similar. While it falls under a Special Landscape Area, this is deemed to be negated due to the low impact, small scale nature of the development.

The planning officer providing pre-application advice observed that *"The site of the proposed huts would appear to be relatively unobtrusive and related well to existing landscaping features. To the north, south and west, the site is surrounded by mature hedgerows and trees, and to east, the farm complex itself. The site is within a Special Landscape Area, however, owing to the unobtrusive location of the site, to the degree of non-permanency of the moveable huts, to the natural landscaping screening the site, and to the small scale of the huts and associated use, the proposal may be acceptable subject to compliance with Policy EC5. "*

- 6.5 As in Policy EC5, NE5 of the newly adopted plan, states that Within Special Landscape Areas, Priority will be given to protecting, managing and enhancing the character and quality. This small-scale business proposal is designed with a low impact appearance on the natural landscape with a traditional agricultural structure reflecting the ongoing farming practice. As required to conform to this policy, it has been subject to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention has been paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints. Measures to protect and enhance the character and quality of these features are included within the ecology section later.
- 6.6 In accordance with Policy PS2 Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment. This proposal demonstrates how the proposed development will assimilate into, conserve and enhance the landscape, please see the associated landscaping scheme submitted at the end of the ecology survey.
- 6.7 This approach of sustainable development which through contextual awareness conserves and enhances the World Heritage Site is in accordance with LPG33. The scale of the development is such that it could not be seen from the World Heritage Site. Furthermore, the proposal would engage with and deliver benefits to the local communities around the Site, attract visitors to the area; and generate income that adds value to the local economy.
- 6.8 TAN 6 states that a strong rural economy can also help to promote social inclusion and provide the financial resources necessary to support local services and maintain attractive and diverse natural environments and landscapes.
- 6.9 The development would generate a healthy spend into the local economy. It is estimated that the combined spend from the units would be circa £88,038 per year based on 60% occupancy calculated on an average of 3 people staying per unit with a £67* per head per day spend.

*Visit Wales average visitor spend per day per head.

The development would create a new employment position for 16 hrs per week. This calculation is based upon 2-3 changeovers per week per unit. $2 \times 2-4 \text{ person units} = 0.6 \text{ FTE}$. This role involves changeovers, cleaning, re-stocking, and all laundry services for the holiday lets.

- 6.10. These policies broadly conform with the advice in paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) which states planning policies and decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.
- 6.11. The proposed development has been conceived and designed to fully comply with the requirements of these noted policy considerations. The principle aim of the proposals is to provide diversification and an additional income stream to support the family who own and operate Gronwen Farm as a livestock farm.
- 6.12. Glamping, camping and outdoor British stays is a substantially growing market. Other options in the nearby locality offer a more mid range option of glamping. The family run farm stay glamping experience proposed in this application is considered to be a unique proposition for the area.
- 6.13. There are no potential buildings suitable for conversion to holiday accommodation currently and furthermore the applicants' aim is to provide an outdoors experience enabling guests to submerge themselves in their surroundings and incorporate alpaca walks in the future as a way to enjoy the farm as well. This would not be achievable in a building or indeed in a town or village setting. The proposed location is suitable for the use in accordance with TAN 6 and will support services in the nearby villages through drawing in modest but additional trade to the local economy and, of course, bolstering the economic position of the applicants who are local residents.
- 6.14. TAN 12 requires development to sustain the distinctive quality, character and diversity of the local area through high quality sustainable design which reinforces the character of Wrexham's built environment and creates attractive places. It is concerned with promoting high quality design, enhancing biodiversity, achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources and taking account of siting, layout, scale and massing as well as landscaping and green infrastructure. The proposed development is designed to assimilate into, conserve and enhance the landscape, see landscaping and habitat enhancement scheme submitted as required by policy SP12.
- 6.15. Overall, it is considered that the principle of the use and development proposed in this application duly accords with the 'in principle' requirements of the key local plan and TAN policies, along with guidance notes.

Visual impact

- 6.16. The site is located within the Countryside in a Special Landscape Area and within the catchment of River Dee/Bala Lake SAC but is not within any other designated landscape.
- 6.17. The proposed unit sites are screened to the north by the farm complex and the east, west and south by established trees and hedgerow thereby establishing a great visual and noise barrier.
- 6.18. Visual impact of the development on the surrounding landscape would be minimal, and further enhanced by subtle landscaping and a planting scheme.
- 6.19. The units will be entirely clad in timber allowing the structures to sit in harmony with the natural

landscape deemed appropriate to rural settings in the locality. No overhead exterior lighting would be used or installed on the site to minimise disturbance and enhance the dark sky experience. All internal lights will be low wattage with a warm hue in order to maintain dark skies and local tranquillity. The natural surroundings of the meadow will be retained with no additional hardstanding and limited landscaping. Overall, it is considered that the visual impact of the proposals would be minimal, temporary in nature and in accordance with the relevant design policies.

Residential amenity

- 6.20 The distance to nearby neighbours and the topography of the land are such that there would be no direct overlooking or risk of disturbance.
- 6.21 No overhead exterior lighting would be used or installed on the site to minimise disturbance and protect the dark sky experience. All internal lights will be low wattage with a warm hue in order to maintain dark skies and local tranquillity.
- 6.22 The units are situated well within the owner's landholding and as fully insulated structures there is minimal chance of noise impact from the development

Environmental Considerations

- l) Ecology
As noted by the planning officer on the pre application:

The application should demonstrate that there would be no harm to Protected Species or their habitats in accordance with Policy EC6 of the UDP. In order to comply with LPG 32, a scheme of biodiversity enhancements should also be provided demonstrating a Biodiversity Nett Gain.

- 6.23 EC6 states that damage should be kept to a minimum, and compensatory measures should be provided, SP14 of the adopted plan elaborates development will need to conserve and enhance valued countryside, landscapes, wildlife and significant geological sites. NE5 of the adopted plan further stipulates that developments with SLAs must include measures to protect and enhance the character and quality of the particular landscape features for which the SLA has been designated. Measures to improve the biodiversity value of sites and enhance its natural conservation interest and landscape quality are required by all of these policies and these include:
 - o Bat boxes and bird boxes
 - o No use of external lighting used and sensitive internal lighting design,
 - o Planting of new wild meadow will increase the biodiversity of the area and hedgerow reinforcements will improve terrestrial habitat and movement corridors
 - o Trees at entrance to be protected with non-dig cellular confinement system to ensure no compaction and continuous gaseous exchange maintained.

Further detailing on Ecology survey and habitat enhancement plan

- 6.24 The site is dominated by a short cattle ley on a medium term cycle improved grassland, this is a common habitat at local regional and national levels, its affect upon the local species population is minimal. The proposal is small and will have minimal impact upon protected species and designated habitats within the wider region. The glamping use will enhance the profitability of the

farm enabling the applicants to fund environmental improvement.

- 6.25. The proposed glamping use will utilise the existing access and will not deliver any additional permanent built floorspace. It will not negatively impact on any extant trees or hedgerows.
- 6.26. These biodiversity enhancing measures will significantly more than offset any disturbance to biodiversity caused by the minimal loss of grazing grass proposed addressing the requirements of national planning policy and legislation.

II) Drainage

- 6.27. The development area proposed is minimal and any surface water run-off from the units will discharge through permeable surfaces straight into the ground. All paths will be permeable to assist with rainwater drainage. The site will be serviced by a package treatment plant with an associated drainage field which would be located as shown on Site Plan GRO-P-002.
- 6.28. To ensure compliance with Policy EC14, there is the intention to complete the nutrient neutrality calculator once this becomes available from Wrexham council. To further reduce phosphate levels, the applicants are able to replace the existing septic tank on the farm to a more ecological package treatment plant to further reduce impact on the SAC. Thus, there are no planning concerns in relation to surface or foul drainage.

Access and Highways Safety

- 6.29. Policy GDP1 of the Unitary Development Plan states that new development should be safe and accessible. It is proposed that the development be accessed via the existing main entrance to Gronwen Farm and therefore is a safe and established access point. As a maximum of 8 guests are expected at any one time, the volume of cars will not be material to the local road network.
- 6.30. Parking provision is allocated onsite with safe space for manoeuvring which accords with the requirements of Local Plan Policy T1. There are to be enough spaces for 4 cars at any one time.
- 6.31. T1 in the Draft Local Development Plan requires that, in assessing specific applications, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be or have been taken up given the type of development and its location. Whilst this location and the nature of the use is likely to attract customers to arrive mainly by car, the Applicants are keen to implement measures such as encouraging the use of bicycles by providing safe storage.
- 6.32. There are pubs, shops and amenities within walking and cycling distance in Trevor and guests would be advised on how to access the local area on foot or by bike to promote alternative and sustainable modes of transport. This includes a guidance provided in the cabins with things to do in the local area and ways to travel there. In accordance with GDP1, there are a number of footpaths direct from the site which here lead to Garth and an abundance of excellent walking options. Ruabon train station is circa 3 miles from the site.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 The application seeks planning permission for the following:

Change use of land into tourist accommodation in the form of 2 temporary hut units

- 7.2 The proposals will provide rustic, low impact tourist accommodation within the farm setting which will support the diversification and economic security of the farm. The proposed use provides socio-economic benefits supporting the local economy.
- 7.3 The structures proposed are of appropriate design and scale to the rural setting and are temporary and moveable. The site is well contained and landscape impact is not an issue of concern. There will be minimal loss of habitat and this will be significantly enhanced by management and planting proposals within the applicants landholding.
- 7.4 This Planning, Design and Access Statement summarises the relevant planning policy considerations and confirms that the proposals are acceptable in accordance with the provisions of the relevant planning policies of the Adopted Unitary Development Plan and Draft Local Development Plan, and the guidance of the National Policy and Local Planning Guidance Notes. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Site Photographs

Appendix B – Package Treatment Plant specifications

Appendix C – Parking area permeable geocell specifications

Appendix D – Pre-application advice, ref – ENQ/2023 /0206