

Planning and Landscape Statement

**Planning Statement to Support
Planning Application (P/2018/0750)
for
Public Car Park Improvements
at
Erddig House, Wrexham**



The National Trust Wales

Ref 2973 November 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement is prepared to support a planning application for improvements to the public car park and visitor access at Erddig House, Wrexham. The focus of the project is to promote visitor growth, visitor safety, welcome and members value and to enhance and improve the existing orchard car park..

The Lingard Farrow Styles landscape dwgs referred to in this Statement includes:

Tree Survey 2882-12-15-09-02 A

Landscape Masterplan 2973-015

Hard landscape layout 2973-001F

Site Context 2882-12-21-15-01

2.0 EXISTING SITE AND TREES

The site is currently an existing car park set within an orchard area and is enclosed to the north and west with a 2.5m high brick wall, which is a listed structure. (photo no 5)

As part of the initial site analysis a tree survey was conducted in accordance with BS 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction- Recommendations'. The existing trees are top fruit varieties with mainly Grade B and C value together with coppiced Hazels. The majority of existing trees will be retained in the proposed scheme and these are indicated in the Landscape Layout. Of the existing trees and hedges 34no will be retained. The displaced smaller tree specimens, where appropriate, will be replanted within the new layout. All retained trees will be protected in accordance with the BS requirements during the construction stage.

In addition, a Phase One Ecological Assessment has been carried out, the results of which have been submitted with the planning application.

3.0 THE NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

Erddig Hall sits on a dramatic escarpment above the winding Clywedog River. Erddig tells the 250-year story of a gentry's family relationship with its servants. Erddig came into the care of National Trust in 1973. In the last 17 years Erddig has seen its visitor numbers more than double and this has not been matched by any significant investment in infrastructure.

National visitor growth and infrastructure research has identified Erddig as a Tier 1 property for future growth, due to the significant urban audience on its doorstep.

The property growth plan is based on a trend which would see the property reach the Vision XS frontier point of 258,500 visitors (the effective market saturation point for the property as a leading 'Secondary' property) per annum in 2032. However, in order to minimise the need for significant infrastructure spend on all visitor facilities to serve the

increase, delivering this growth is reliant on spreading the increased volume of visitors across the whole year.

Trials in 2016 and 2017 have shown that there is significant growth potential in the winter months at Erddig due to its sizeable population within 40 minutes of the property. The lengthened Christmas programme in 2016/17 for example, increased visitors to the property by 42% on a month to month comparison over two years. 2017/18 figures have been affected by 16 days closure due to the weather, with several days closed solely on the poor and unsafe condition of the car park. 2018/19 visitor figures will again be severely affected by this, being that we have already closed the property over the 2018 bank holiday Easter weekend due to the car park being in a flooded, unsafe state.

The current car park is a grass surface facility which means that due to heavy usage and weather conditions it is unsightly, muddy and with large sections unusable during the colder, wetter periods of the year.

To best optimise the business and take advantage of the growth opportunities within the shoulder seasons, without incurring knock on impacts and necessitating significant costs on other visitor facilities, making the car park fit for purpose outside of the driest months is key. Quite simply, the current car park cannot serve the existing visitor volume never mind the projected growth when so many spaces are unusable for such a large part of the year.

Unfortunately Erddig's grass surface car park has required high levels of ongoing management and maintenance and been the cause of several visitor complaints. Alongside complaints the property staff have endured high frequency instances of visitor's vehicles becoming 'stuck' and needing to be pushed or pulled out of our car park. This in itself has prompted many health and safety and service questions.

Visitor growth work has identified a number of ways in which we can grow our visitor numbers using our current car parking facility. We have trialled a number of options suggested to us however; the calculations do not consider the fact that our car park is unusable after periods of rainfall.

There are 327,983 households within a 40 minute drive of Erddig, 33% of which are 'in fit'. There are currently 99,189 members (43,793 memberships) surrounding Erddig and membership penetration is 13% (8.8% nationally and 5.98% in Wales). With regards to visitor growth (non-members), membership growth and attracting repeat visits from existing members there is great potential amongst all nearby postal towns so long as our infrastructure and facilities are fit to welcome visitors reliably year round.

Erddig currently operates using two car parking areas and one coach park area. One parking area is referred to as the 'walled car park', labelled below as 'fig1'. One is referred to as the outer car park, labelled below as 'fig 2'. The coach park is shown labelled 'fig 3'.

The 'walled car park' is 0.28 HA in size currently consists of around 97 grass surface car parking spaces. In addition to these, there are 10 tarmac disabled spaces and 1 tarmac electric car charging point space.

The 'outer car park' is comprised of around 146 grass surface car parking spaces and is 0.79 HA in size.



Investment in outdoors, sports and wellbeing programs has been one of the catalysts for Erddig estate and parkland becoming increasingly popular with the local community. 2020/2021 NT125 3 year programming plan sees Erddig changing our way of thinking and working as we look to the future of the property and reflecting on what we mean to our visitors and the local community. We aim to be a location for reflection, a sanctuary of wellbeing and a place of self-challenge and achievement.

Currently the carpark is over capacity at 183,757 visitors per annum, if all spaces are fully in use at all times. This is an increase of 10177 on our current projection for 2018/19.

The vision for Erddig is to have a car parking facility is that the facility should function sustainably while offering a high quality standard of design and practicality.

Erddig has projected the following growth over the coming 3 years:

Year	Total budgeted visitor numbers
2018/19	173,580
2019/20	181,500
2020/21	190,237

A master-planning exercise undertaken in 2016/17 showed that both from a conservation impact and visitor impact point of view the current car park location is the most appropriate to serve a visitor volume up to the 'Secondary' property market saturation.

**Visitor feedback
2018 survey results**

Source	Comment
VS	The car park was very muddy
VS	The car parking arrangements just weren't up to the mark that day. It was a sunny day during the Easter holidays, yet the field car parking area was not open - maybe because the ground was too boggy, but there were no staff available to guide visitors to the little parking that was there. We ended up parking in the coach parking area - but there was no staff to tell us not to! People were parking on verges etc. There just wasn't enough room. Maybe Erddig needs some more hard standing parking.
VS	it had been very wet and most of the car park was in a real state not enough hard standing parking spaces !!
VS	The car park was very muddy, it would be better to have fewer grassy areas and more hard standing.
VS	The car park was a quagmire. Needs upgrading before it gets too bad.
VS	Car parking was very boggy and muddy due to it being on grass, I nearly slipped over when I got out of the car. Proper gravelled areas would prevent this. Cars also seemed to park where they wanted as there didn't appear to be marked bays, we ended up with a car parked very close to our door, we had to reverse put our son back in the car.
VS	Accepting that the weather has been particularly wet, the car park was very muddy and slippery.
VS	The car parks are very muddy this time of year and could do with having an all- weather surface
VS	Our only criticism would be the parking. Given the wet weather we've been having the bottom car park where we had to park (top car park taped off), wasn't ideal and the car took a little shove to get off the grass.
VS	Maybe some ground protection for the car park as it was very muddy everywhere.
VS	That day because of heavy rain the grass Car park was turning to mud.
VS	Some places in the car park were very muddy & we were afraid to park in case we got stuck.
VS	Car park was very muddy due to the rain. There needed to be some mats, duck boards or hard standing as myself and friends had to push our cars off the car park onto the tarmac.

The site is currently a car park and has been so for over the past 40 years, its nearby location to the grounds and entrance means it is the preferred location for current parking. Its location is well screened from surrounding views especially when approaching the property from the entrance drives. The site is seen foremost as a car

park and for it to become fit for the future then its redevelopment is essential for the property, otherwise it may have to consider closing to visitors during winter periods.

Alternative sites on the estate have been considered but due to tenancy agreements, topography, ground conditions and historic landscape considerations it was deemed that retaining the existing car park is the most sympathetic option. Removal of existing trees is not a decision that has been taken lightly and the brief was to retain the established and healthy trees wherever practicable without impinging upon too much upon parking spaces.

The proposal does show a number of new fruit trees to be planted within the site which will increase the overall numbers of trees. The head gardener has considered the type and variety of trees to be planted which, once established, will retain the feel of an orchard. The property is also undergoing a scheme of fruit tree planting and over 100 apple and pear trees have been planted on the estate creating a museum orchard of Welsh varieties, working with the Welsh Perry and Cider Society. A further site has been identified as having potential to plant as an orchard and this is being considered.

Although there remain some very old fruit trees within the area, that carry a high degree of Traditional orchard biodiversity, these are ageing and won't continue forever. Planned propagation and replanting of these is now urgently required and extremely important. Most of the other trees in the car park are excess planting from other projects over the last 40 years. They are suffering from the compaction caused by vehicles and pedestrians and declining. They have little value apart from tree coverage. The Trust's head gardener has no qualms about their removal to facilitate the car park project, in fact it will give the opportunity to plant new trees propagated from the existing old varieties and for us to incorporate new local Marcherland and Welsh varieties of fruit trees. Basically, within the garden team, we have such a greater knowledge of fruit trees and varieties now, than ever before. We can therefore assure a much better result to the replacement planting and with new designated planting positions reduce the level of compaction damage. Alongside the fruit trees we are also increasing the number and extent of hedges within the car park area, in line with another highlighted area of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, therefore increasing the biodiversity of the site still further.

The redesign of the outer car park will transform approximately 146 spaces from an unsafe and unsightly grass surface that is not fit for purpose to robust to a fully functioning 175 car parking spaces that can be used all year round.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1996 - 2011) adopted in February 2005 sets out the local circumstances; based on national policy, on how parking/transport matters will be considered. The following UDP policies are relevant:

Strategic Policy PS8: Transport.

Policy PS8 states "The transport network will be developed by providing an integrated range of travel options to and from principal residential, commercial, employment and education centres by making the best use of the existing road and rail network,

including, where necessary, the provision of facilities for both passenger and freight interchange and by the encouragement of public transport, cycling and walking”.

The scheme meets the requirements of PS8, providing cycle facilities and making the best use of the existing road network. The remote nature of Erddig makes public transport a difficult option but is encouraged by National Trust through marketing and communications where practical.

Policy GDP1: Development Objectives.

The scheme is considered to meet the requirements of GDP1 where applicable to operational development in an existing car park. The scheme makes the best use of the existing road and rail network (a); takes account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout (b); ensures safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access (d); safeguards sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest (h); ensure that the development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding (i) and in (k) securing the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

The scheme represents a considerable investment by National Trust to an existing tourism site, and helping to bring forward economic, social and environmental well-being.

Policy T8: Parking.

The scheme is considered to meet the requirements of key policy T8, providing on site development that meets the requirements of the Council’s current parking standards.

Policy EC4: Trees and Hedgerows.

The scheme is considered to meet the requirements of policy EC4 ensuring that the proposals “provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, and wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape”.

Policy EC13: Surface Water and New Developments.

This policy states that “Development which would result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the water environment due to additional surface water run-off will not be permitted”. A scheme has been brought forward that will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the water environment, by appropriate surface water run-off. The scheme thus meets policy requirements.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Local Planning Guidance (LPG) Notes 16 – Parking Standards

This guidance note explains the parking standards the Council applies to new development. It amplifies Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies and will be a

material consideration in the determination of planning applications. We note LPG16 was formally adopted for use by the Executive Board in July 2018.

The scheme has been developed with conscience to LPG16, although we understand this applies standards to new development and change of use. Erddig is a suis-generis use class and outside land uses (within Figure A to D in LPG16) (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)). We note that LPG16 states “parking requirements will be determined on the basis of local circumstances and the potential demand for parking associated with that use”.

We would also note the subject application at Erddig is not new development, nor change of use, but seeking operational development within an existing car park.

We note that LPG policy statement (iii) states that “Additional spaces may be required where the demand for parking arising from a new use is likely to be greater than that from the existing use”. The subject application relates to an existing car park, with no new use, but increased demand from the existing tourism use at Erddig.

The scheme brings forward a small increase in car parking provision, within an existing car park that is appropriate for the local circumstances and parking demand associated with the use of the property. The scheme brings forward cycle provision, and a layout that meets the requirements of LPG16.

5.0 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The landscape analysis carried out by Lingard Farrow Styles in 2015 identifies a number of key opportunities and constraints. These are shown on drawing no. 2882-12-21-15-01 and include:

- Views out to prominent landscape features.
- Long distance views into the site.
- Existing historic assets.
- Historic views to be retained and enhanced.
- Heritage orchard trees to be retained
- Existing vehicle circulation system.
- Ground conditions.
- Visitor movement from car park to entrance.
- Public footpath links.

6.0 LANDSCAPE DESIGN RATIONAL

Lingard Farrow Styles dwg no 2973-015

The proposed scheme encompasses a number of expected measurable post -project benefits which include|:

1. Improved income generation. Erddig will be able to sustain growth up to car park capacity which will allow the property to welcome additional visitors every year. This

growth will be spread substantially throughout the season, enable by a weatherproof car parking facility.

2. Improved visitor welcome. It is expected Erddig will see a decrease in car park complaints and an increase in overall service.

3. Improved relationships between local community and the National Trust. Better facilities for users of the wider estate. This will offer a sense of place, information and improved NT profile to those not entering through the pay barrier.

The landscape scheme recognises the importance of retaining the historic long-distance views from the enclosed gardens to the surrounding landscape, together with the retention of existing heritage orchard trees and the 'organic' orchard character.

New structure tree and hedge planting is proposed throughout to retain and enhance the existing orchard character and use. (photo no 6). The proposed scheme will therefore retain the existing character of a car park set within an orchard.

7.0 HARD LANDSCAPE MATERIALS

Lingard Farrow Styles dwg no 2973-001F

The main consideration is to provide a hard wearing surface to the car park whilst minimising the visual impact. This will be achieved with the use of a SUDS gravel filled mesh to the parking bays and a chipping finish to the bitmac road. It is envisaged that in time some of the gravel areas will be colonised with native ground cover plants. The grass areas between the groups of car bays have been maximised to further reduce the visual impact.

The main materials for the scheme includes:

- SUDS compliant free draining bitmac road
- Aggregate pc conc conservation paving
- Aggregate pc conc conservation kerbs
- SUDS compliant gravel filled grid mesh to the parking bays.

8.0 PLANTING SCHEME

It is proposed to plant heritage variety fruit trees together with native hedgerow plants. There will be an opportunity to include espalier trained fruit trees within the car park areas and against the existing garden boundary wall. Around the main pedestrian access area there is an opportunity to plant a range of bee friendly herbaceous and shrubs to enhance the wild life considerations and provide plant interest around the visitor 'milling' area.

Where possible all proposed planting will have a wildlife value and will have local provenance. This is particularly important given the current bio security issues. Urgent management work is required to the existing 'character' trees to reduce mistletoe growth to an acceptable level in line with traditional orchard management.

All new planting and maintenance of the landscape infrastructure will be undertaken by The National Trust garden team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter Styles', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter Styles, Dip Hort; Dip LA; FLI; FRSA

Lingard Farrow Styles

9.0 APPENDIX

9.1 SITE PHOTOS

1. View to south west illustrating poorly drained ground conditions.



2. View looking north to enclosed garden viewing gate.



3. General view of existing car park looking west.



4. View looking north to existing landscape.



5. Existing historic wall on north boundary.



6. View looking west to existing hedges.



7. Existing compost area looking north west.



8. General view looking west across site.



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