

Cadnant Planning

Rackery Farm, Burton, Rossett, LL12 0AE
Planning Statement
Mr Andrew Jones
May 2018.001

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is submitted as a justification statement for the change of use of land for the siting of 3 safari tents and creation of associated parking area on land at Rackery Farm, Wrexham.
- 1.2 The application is submitted to provide a small-scale farm diversification business to support the overall business of the farm. The intention is to have a rural retreat on a working farm.
- 1.3 Rackery Retreat is proposed to be a luxury glamping site at the North East corner of Wales adjoining the Cheshire border. Andrew and Jenny Jones currently operate a 110 head milking dairy herd with 80 followers with the help of son-in-law David. Current market and industry conditions call for an action of diversification to enable the farm to become sustainable and support two families in the future.
- 1.4 Rackery Retreat will be a luxury glamping site consisting of three unique Safari tents situated in a large paddock a safe distance from the working farm. The applicants plan to create an experience where families and couples can enjoy the outdoor space available and support some local businesses such as restaurants and shops.
- 1.5 Rackery Retreat will target young families and couples wanting to escape city life for a short break in the countryside exploring the outdoors and nature in a tranquil environment during the summer months.
- 1.6 The glamping site will be run by Andrew and Jenny Jones who are currently 58 and 56 years old respectively. Both are recently finding the demands of dairy farming quite onerous particularly as Andrew Jones has recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. They have been looking for a business opportunity which will be slightly less physically demanding than dairy farming but that will still form an integral part of the overall business, which is supported by the next generation.
- 1.7 Having researched the glamping industry extensively and attended several seminars/ exhibitions both Andrew and Jenny feel that this opportunity will aid the sustainability of the dairy farm. Furthermore, this will provide an opportunity for families and children to explore the North Wales countryside which the farm is nestled within. The glamping site will also provide additional local employment.

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- 1.8 The applicants feel the location of the tents is ideal for tranquillity and isolation with the added benefit of not being overlooked by anybody. Success will be measured by occupation rates and customer feedback with the intention to provide all customers with a premium experience and exceed their expectations.
- 1.9 Setting aside the personal reasons for Mr Jones needing to diversify the business, the proposal complies with National Planning Policy which provides clear support for farm diversification schemes.
- 1.10 This statement will set out the proposed development, outline the planning policy context under which it can be supported and conclude with the main considerations in approving this proposal.

2. The site and context

- 2.1 The application site is identified as land on Rackery Farm, which is a working family farm in the rural area to the north of Llay, Wrexham. The application site is currently agricultural land which has been grazed consistently by sheep and cattle as part of the agricultural holding of Rackery Farm. The site is accessible via an existing agricultural access road, ensuring that the proposal can be delivered with minimal need for additional infrastructure. The following aerial photographs identify the application site in the context of its wider and immediate surroundings.

Fig. 2.1 Aerial image identifying the application site within its wider setting

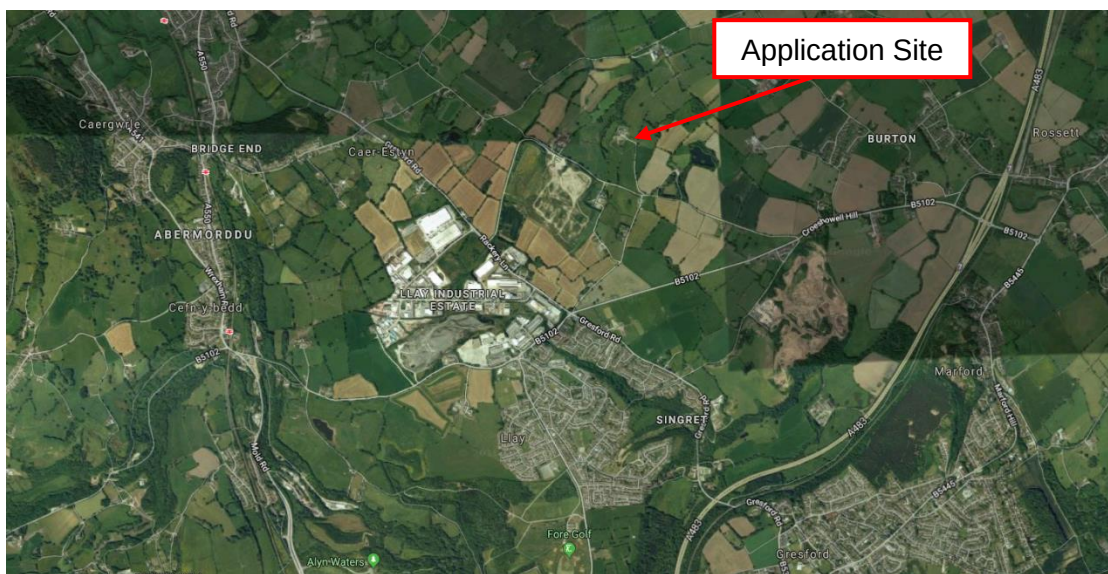
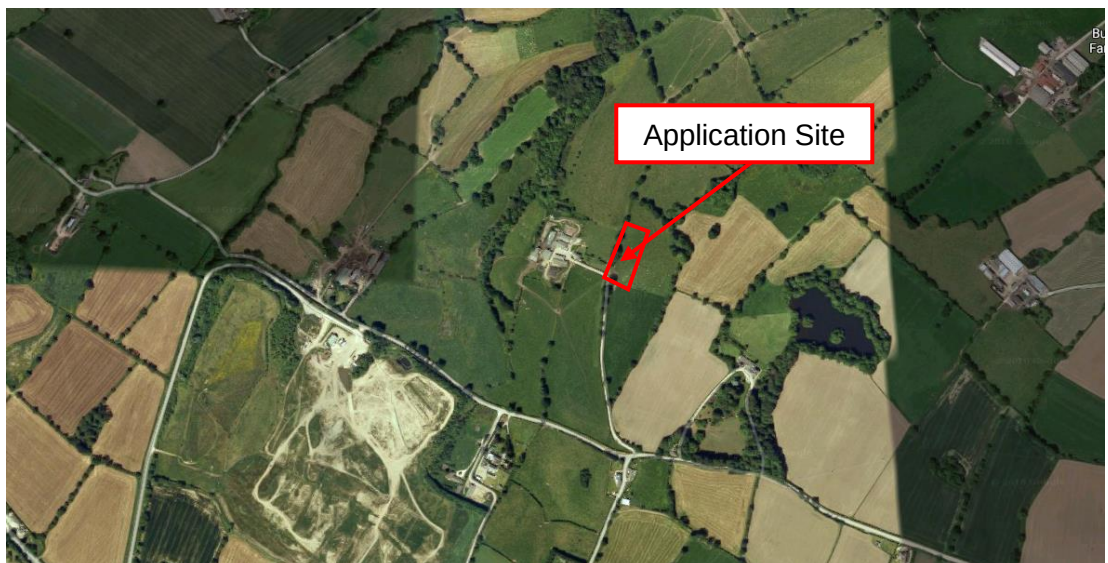


Fig. 2.2 Aerial image identifying the application site within its immediate setting



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- 2.2 The site is considered to be well connected and sustainable. It is in close proximity to the settlement of Llay, Bridge End, Burton and Gresford. It is well connected to the local highway network being in close proximity to the A483. There are also train stations at Bridge End, Hope and Cefn-y-Bedd, which allow travel from further afield via public transport. The site owners would provide pick up and drop off to these stations on request. In addition, there are bus stops within 1.2km which provide regular connections to surrounding settlements including Llay, Rosset and Wrexham.

3. The proposed development

- 3.1 The application seeks consent for the change of use of land for the siting of 3 safari tents as a form of holiday accommodation and ancillary facilities including formation of car parking facilities and access path. The units have been tightly laid out against the western part of the field and will be fenced off so that the remainder of the field will remain in use for agriculture. The units will be well related to the farm buildings and existing roads and will not have an individual curtilage, as is the norm with on-farm safari tents.
- 3.2 There is an existing Public Right of Way which follows the western boundary of the site. This will be safeguarded and maintained as part of the proposal. The units will therefore be well connected to the Public Right of Way Network allowing the site users to join into all the surrounding footpaths.

Fig. 3.1 Extract of proposed plan



- 3.3 The following image provides an example of the safari tents. This clarifies that they are non-permanent structures which can be easily dismantled and stored on the farm when not in use. They are therefore non-permanent structures, much the same as glamping pods, conventional tents or touring caravans.

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Fig. 3.2 Photograph example of safari tent



4. Policy context

National planning policy and guidance

- 4.1 In terms of the principle of the change of use of the land for the provision of high quality tourism accommodation of a type which is unique; Chapter 11 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 9, November 2016) offers guidance on Tourism, Sport and Recreation.
- 4.2 PPW identifies in paragraph 11.1.1 that tourism is a major element in the Welsh economy, particularly in rural and coastal areas. Tourism is a significant and growing source of employment and investment, based on the country's cultural and environmental diversity. Tourism can be a catalyst for environmental protection, regeneration and improvement in both rural and urban areas.
- 4.3 The Welsh Government's aim for tourism are outlined in paragraph 11.1.2 of PPW. It states that the aim is for tourism to grow in a sustainable way and to make an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales.
- 4.4 PPW guides to encourage sustainable tourism in Wales, maximising its economic and employment benefits, promoting tourism in all seasons, and encouraging its development in non-traditional destinations, while safeguarding the environment, and the interests of local communities and to manage change in the tourism sector in ways which respect the integrity of the natural, built and cultural environment to provide for economic growth employment and environmental conservation.
- 4.5 Paragraph 11.1.7 state that; *'In rural areas, tourism-related development is an essential element in providing for a healthy, diverse, local and national economy. It can contribute to the provision and maintenance of facilities for local communities. Here too development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment and to the needs of visitors and local community'*.
- 4.6 Paragraph 11.1.4 acknowledges that tourism involves a wide range of activities, facilities and types of development throughout Wales. It goes on to state that the *'planning system should encourage sustainable tourism in ways which enable it to contribute to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion, recognising the needs of visitors and those of local communities.'*

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- 4.7 Consideration should be given to *‘the scale and broad distribution of existing facilities... and provide for the accommodation and management of future needs in ways which limit negative environmental impacts (including the consequences of climate change), protecting the landscape, biodiversity, the coast, the historic environment and areas of special interest, and the interests of local communities’*.
- 4.8 The guidance also identifies that development plans should have regard to the objectives of rural diversification.
- 4.9 Tourism facilities should be provided in both rural and urban areas and should be sensitive to the needs of users, attractive, well designed, well maintained, protected from crime and vandalism, safe and accessible by people whose mobility is restricted and by a variety of sustainable means of travel, particularly walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4.10 Guidance provided within paragraph 11.2.1 and 11.2.7 guides that development plans should take into account the environmental, economic and social implications of likely future changes in the provision of these facilities and have regard to objectives for rural diversification. It also states that development plan should encourage the diversification of farm enterprises and other parts of the rural economy for appropriate tourism, sport, recreation and leisure uses. Adequate safeguards for the character and appearance of the countryside, particularly its landscape, biodiversity and local amenity value should be provided.
- 4.11 The planning authority’s role in helping to sustain the rural economy is further acknowledged in Chapter 7 of PPW.
- 4.12 The guidance states at paragraph 7.1.1 that: *‘For planning purposes the Welsh Government defines economic development as development of land and buildings for activities that generate wealth, jobs and incomes. Economic land uses include the traditional employment land uses (offices, research and development, industry and warehousing), as well as uses such as retail, tourism, and public services. The construction and energy sectors are also important to the economy and are sensitive to planning policies.’*
- 4.13 Paragraph 7.1.2 states that; *‘It is essential that the planning system considers, and makes provision for, the needs of the entire economy and not just those uses defined under parts B1-B8 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order.’*

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- 4.14 Paragraph 7.2.2 of Chapter 7 of PPW now advises that; *'Local planning authorities are required to ensure that the economic benefits associated with a proposed development are understood and that these are given equal consideration with social and environmental issues in the decision-making process, and should recognise that there will be occasions when the economic benefits will outweigh social and environmental considerations.'*
- 4.15 Paragraph 7.3.1 guides that; *'Small-scale enterprises have a vital role in promoting healthy economic activity in rural areas, which can contribute to both local and national competitiveness. New business in rural areas are essential to sustain and improve rural communities, but developments which only offer short-term economic gain may not be appropriate. Local authorities should encourage the growth of self employment and micro businesses in rural areas by adopting a supportive and flexible approach from home working.'*
- 4.16 Paragraph 7.3.3 of PPW advises that; *'Local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to development associated with farm diversification in rural areas, irrespective of whether farms are served by public transport. While initial consideration should be given to adapting existing farm buildings, the provision of a sensitively designed new building on a working farm within existing farm complexes may be appropriate where a conversion opportunity does not exist.'*
- 4.17 Finally, the guidance makes it clear that the expansion of existing businesses located in the open countryside should be supported provided there are no unacceptable impacts on local amenity. This submission makes it clear that there are no unacceptable impacts on local amenity arising from the diversification proposal for the siting of 3 safari tents on land at Rackery Farm.
- 4.18 It is clear therefore that the up-to-date guidance in PPW provides the appropriate context against which farm diversification schemes should be considered. This is evident be assessments made throughout other North Wales Planning Authorities where out-of-date UDP guidance is weighed against the more relevant advice in PPW.

Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (July 2010)

- 4.19 Technical Advice Note 6 'Sustainable Rural Communities' gives advice on sustainable forms of development within rural Wales and paragraph 2.1.1 states; *'The planning system has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of sustainable rural*

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communities. It can help to ensure that appropriate development takes place in the right place at the right time by making sufficient land available to provide homes and employment opportunities for local people, helping to sustain rural services.'

4.20 Paragraph 3.1.1 of TAN 6 advises that; *'Strong rural economies are essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. 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'*.

4.21 The advice then goes on to state that planning authorities should support the diversification of the rural economy as a way to provide local employment opportunities, to increase local economic prosperity and to minimise the need to travel for employment.

4.22 Section 3.7 of TAN 6 relates to Farm diversification and states that;

(3.7.1)'When considering planning applications for farm diversification projects, planning authorities should consider the nature and scale of activity taking a proportionate approach to the availability of public transport and the need for improvements to local highway network. While initial consideration should be given to converting existing buildings for employment use, sensitively located and deigned new buildings will also often be appropriate.'

(3.7.2) 'Many economic activities can be sustainably located on farms. Small on-farm operations such as food and timber processing and food packing, together with service (e.g. offices, workshop facilities, equipment hire and maintenance), sports and recreation services, and the production of non-food crops and renewable energy, are likely to be appropriate uses'.

Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism (adopted 13th October 1997)

4.23 Technical Advice Note 13 supplements PPW and provides guidance on tourism development.

4.24 Paragraph 4 identifies that tourism makes a major contribution to the Welsh economy, provides employment in a wide variety of occupations and can bring benefits to local economies and communities in urban and rural areas. It is subject to change in the type of holiday taken and the length of the holiday season.

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- 4.25 TAN 13 advises that tourism facilities should be provided in both rural and urban areas and should be sensitive to the needs of users, attractive, well designed, well maintained, protected from crime and vandalism, safe and accessible by people whose mobility is restricted and by a variety of sustainable means of travel, particularly walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4.26 It is considered that PPW, TAN 6 and TAN 13 all support the principle of tourism development as a method of farm diversification. It is considered therefore that national policy provides a presumption in favour of the principle of suitable small-scale tourism enterprise businesses such as the proposed safari tents in support of the business itself and the wider rural economy.

The Development Plan

- 4.27 The proposal would currently be assessed against planning policy and guidance contained within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005). It is however important to note that the UDP policies were intended to cover the period 1996-2011 and are now somewhat outdated. There are no policies relating to glamping which is a form of camping which has emerged and developed since UDP adoption.
- 4.28 Policy CLF9 relates to visitor accommodation outside settlement and this states that; *'Visitor accommodation outside settlement limits will only be permitted through the conversion of existing buildings and by extensions to existing serviced and self-serviced accommodation.*

The conversion of existing buildings will only be permitted where:-

- a) the building is of pre-1948, brick/stone, and slate/tile construction; and*
- b) the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new structure; and*
- c) any inherent characteristics of merit in the building are retained; and*
- d) the proposed accommodation and the resulting curtilage does not constitute an undesirable intrusion into the landscape, create access problems, nor require the provision of services at public cost; and*
- e) the floor plan of the existing building must be sufficient to create a habitable unit without extension.*

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Extensions to existing serviced and selfserviced accommodation will only be permitted where:-

a) existing buildings are fully utilised and incapable of further adaptation; and

b) the proposed extension is appropriate in scale and design to the existing building, and does not have an adverse impact on the local landscape, green barrier or other features of acknowledged importance.

4.29 In line with this policy, all farm buildings are used by the farm for agricultural purposes, therefore there are no existing buildings which could provide a suitable conversion project. The buildings on the farm are all also modern agricultural buildings and would therefore neither be suitable for conversion into visitor accommodation. It is therefore considered, that the proposed safari units are a suitable non-permanent solution, which when assessed in line with Policy E6 of the UDP and national planning policy, including TAN 6, support suitable schemes for farm diversification. The proposal can therefore be supported.

4.30 As the scheme is for small-scale farm diversification, it is considered that the most relevant policy to consider the application against is Policy E6 which relates to ‘*Small Farm-Based or Related Employment Operations*’. The policy states that and must now also be read within the context of more recent guidance in PPW;

‘Small on-farm operations such as food processing and packing, together with services to other farms, such as workshop facilities and equipment hire and maintenance, should be located within existing farm buildings. Where it can be shown that no suitable buildings are available for such operations, the erection of a new building will be permitted, provided that:-

a) the building adjoins, and forms a logical extension to the existing farm complex;

b) the building will not result in a detrimental intrusion in the landscape;

c) the building does not exceed 300 square metres in area.’

4.31 This policy, when considered in the context of TAN 6 and PPW supports farm diversification - where no other buildings are available for diversification; small scale extensions to an existing farm complex can be permitted. The farm consists of a farmhouse and several buildings which are all in operation as part of the agricultural use.

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4.32 The emerging Wrexham LDP also shows significant support towards farm diversification including small scale tourism development. LDP Objective SO2: aims to *support a vibrant, diverse and competitive local economy that provides a range of job opportunities to enable new and existing businesses to grow in Wrexham County Borough.*

4.33 Paragraph 5.58 of the LDP then states that;

'In recognition of the contribution farm diversification and small-scale tourism/business projects can make to the economy in rural areas, the Plan contains Policy EM4 (employment development outside settlement limits) and EM5 (visitor accommodation outside settlement limits), to support, in principle the re-use of buildings in rural areas, small scale rural tourism and business development, subject to specific criteria.'

Wrexham County Borough Destination Management Action Plan 2018-20

4.34 On the 8th May 2018, the Executive Board Members unanimously backed plans to implement the Wrexham County Borough Council Destination Management Action Plan 2018-20; a three year plan that aims to build upon visitor experience in the county borough and the ways in which this can be achieved.

4.35 It is the second plan of its kind to outline tourism plans for the Wrexham area, with a five year Destination Management Plan created and subsequently implemented in 2011/2012.

4.36 The Destination Management Plan states that; *'the last five years have seen development in the accommodation sector but Wrexham County still lacks any destination hotels with quality spa facilities – although has three on its periphery (Lion Quays, Grosvenor Pulford and Carden Park). **There are opportunities for further accommodation development** – for example, more town serviced accommodation in Wrexham town centre (probably relatively small scale – e.g. boutique guesthouse - or budget/mid-scale), **and quality rural accommodation – boutique bed and breakfast, glamping, and self-catering. For tourism to continue to develop, it is important that there is adequate supply and range of accommodation throughout the county.'***

4.37 The Destination Management Plan makes it clear that Wrexham County Borough Council will be supporting glamping developments in light of the Action Plan. The Action

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Plan sets out points to achieve the objectives of the Management Plan. Under the section 'Sense of Place', 'Accommodation development and welcome', the Action Plan states that it will *'Encourage accommodation development – both in the town but also in the broader area. Diverse accommodation needs for broad audience, including alternative accommodation such as glamping'* during the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. Wrexham County Borough Council are set to project lead this action, and therefore it is considered that with a suitable farm diversification scheme such as the proposed development, there should be support to encourage this scheme to come forward. This can be supported by policy E6, TAN 6 and PPW.

5. Main considerations

- 5.1 As set out within this statement, this application is for the change of use of land for the siting of 3 safari tents. As detailed within the planning policy section, the UDP is out-dated and does not have a policy specific to glamping. Emerging LDP policies are also unclear as to how glamping sites, as part of a farm diversifications scheme, should be considered.
- 5.2 The safari tents are proposed as a form of farm diversification to support the business at Rackery Farm and to help the business in transition from one generation to the next.
- 5.3 Andrew Jones, the farm owner/ manager has farmed the land over his lifetime. The farm supports 2 full-time workers and 4 part-time workers. Andrew Jones has now been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and struggles with the day to day tasks of running the farm and therefore will shortly need to rely on the next generation employed by the farm to carry out tasks such as milking the cows. To enable the farm to carry on fully functional and viable in the longer term, the farm requires a diversified additional income stream to support the additional wages required as the next generation become more involved in the farm business.
- 5.4 The farm consists of a farm house and several modern agricultural buildings. None of the other buildings on the farm are capable of conversion for a use other than farming. All of the other buildings are also in full functional use by the farm. Therefore, there are no buildings which could be converted in preference to a new build or camping proposal. The relevant UDP policy to assess this proposal against is Policy E6 and the more up to date guidance set out in PPW and TAN 6, which allow small on-farm operations to diversity farm income in accordance with UDP Policy E6.
- 5.5 As a summary it is important to note that:
- The units adjoin and form a logical extension to the existing farm complex. They make use of the existing access road and are located in a safe and convenient location whereby they do not conflict with the use of the farm.
 - Visitors will have their own amenity area, but no residential curtilage, away from farm equipment and the main sheds of the farm but close enough to appreciate the "on-farm" holiday experience.
 - The Safari tents will not result in a detrimental intrusion in the landscape and will not be prominent features in the landscape.
 - The units gross floorspace does not exceed 300 square metres in area as required by policy E6.

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- 5.6 The units are semi-permanent and are designed to integrate into the countryside and be dismantled when not in use. The dark green colours and timber supports will blend into the backdrop of existing landscaping. The bases are semi-permanent and can be fully removed when not in use.
- 5.7 A number of other Local Planning Authorities throughout North Wales have had to assess glamping proposals as part of farm diversification schemes over recent years. Those Authorities have been faced with a similar conflict between outdated Local Plan or UDP policies and the more up-to-date advice within PPW. In those cases, a planning balance has been used where more up-to-date guidance within PPW takes precedence. For example, an application in Conwy CBC for the change of use of land for the siting of 3 yurts for rural breaks, development of associated shower/ WC block and car parking area together with the installation of a septic tank in part of the Conwy Valley Special Landscape Area was approved having assessed this balance (Appendix 1).
- 5.8 In that case the planning officers concluded that PPW paragraph 7.3.3 states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to farm diversification proposals, including sensitively designed new buildings within existing farm complexes. TAN 6 paragraph 3.7 states that when considering planning applications for farm diversification projects, planning authorities should consider the nature and scale of activity, taking a proportionate approach to the availability of public transport and the need for highway improvements.
- 5.9 The committee report in that instance further clarified that whilst the application was strictly a departure from Development Plan policies, officers considered that the following factors provided sufficient material considerations to over-ride the policy concern: *(note: in that case the structures were canvas yurts to be left up all-year round)*
- i) The canvas yurt structures would be less visually intrusive than caravans;
 - ii) The yurts would be sited in an unobtrusive location, well spaced apart and 'blended' into the existing landscaping (hedgerow and other vegetation screening);
 - iii) The scale of the proposal is commensurate with a farm diversification project;
 - iv) The yurts would supplement and support the existing farm enterprise at the site;
 - v) The nature of the proposal is unlikely to be replicated on a large scale;

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- 5.10 The same principles should be applied here and, for reference a full copy of the committee report is Appended 1 of this statement. It should be noted that the report makes reference to another, similar farm diversification scheme, also permitted. Clearly there is a balance to be achieved between the need to support farm diversification and the need to protect the countryside for its own sake. However, in this case we believe that the planning balance falls firmly in favour of the development.
- 5.11 The Destination Management Plan makes it clear that Wrexham County Borough Council will be supporting glamping developments in light of the Action Plan. The Action Plan states that it will *'Encourage accommodation development – both in the town but also in the broader area. Diverse accommodation needs for broad audience, including alternative accommodation such as glamping'* during the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. The adoption of the new Destination Management Plan is an important material consideration. It is considered that with a suitable farm diversification scheme such as the proposed development, there should be support to encourage this scheme to come forward. This proposal can be supported by policy E6, TAN 6 and PPW.
- 5.12 In view of the foregoing, it is considered that this small scale safari tent development should be supported in light of the special justification and support for farm diversification within PPW and that little weight should be attached to the outdated, more generic tourism policies set out within the UDP.

APPENDIX 1

**Committee Report: Application 0/40059 Land at
Ffrith Galed, Llanddoged, Conwy**

CODE No: 0/40059

EXPIRY DATE: 02/10/2013

APPLICANT: Dylan & Jo Jones & Robertson

PROPOSAL: Change of use of land for the siting of 3 yurts for rural breaks, development of associated shower/WC block and car parking area together with the installation of a septic tank

SITE: Ffrith Galed, Bryn Saith Road, Llanddoged, Llanrwst, Conwy, LL26 0BX

WARD: Eglwysbach

RECOMMENDATION

- A) Minded to grant conditional planning permission, subject to the provision of a Section 106 Planning Obligation to require highway improvements.
- B) To authorise the Development and Building Control Manager to consider any representation made in the light of further publicity and to issue the decision following the expiry of the statutory publicity period.

SITE/LOCATION

1. The site is located in the open countryside, approximately 500m south of the minor settlement of Llanddoged and 600m northeast of Llanrwst. It lies within a Special Landscape Area (Conwy Valley) designated in the Conwy LDP.
2. Ffrith Galed is a small holding and base for DGJ Solutions, which is a welding and fabrication business operated by the applicants. The associated farm land is rented to neighbouring farmers.
3. Ffrith Galed is located approximately mid-way along Ffordd Bryn Saith, which is a narrow single track lane (adopted highway), with no formal passing places, leading from Llanddoged to the A548. The highway leads downwards towards the A548, but the access is restricted with a hairpin bend. A public footpath runs from the roadway along the southeast side of the site (LMN/36).

PROPOSAL

4. The application seeks planning permission for the siting of 3 yurts within the fields to the northwest of Ffrith Galed, together with an associated shower/WC block (timber construction), car parking area and the installation of a septic tank. The proposed yurts are domed structures, made of a wooden frame and roof, which is covered in fabric covering an area of approximately 28.3 square metres (6m diameter, 2.9m in height to crown).
5. Each yurt would provide accommodation for up to 5 persons, with sleeping, eating and basic kitchen facilities, but no toilet/sanitary facilities. Parking would be provided at the entrance to the field and adjacent to proposed shower block and the yurts would be linked by new footpaths. Foul sewage from the shower/WC block would be discharged into a septic tank, whilst surface water would drain into a soakaway.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM APPLICANT/AGENT

6. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) states that the yurts are not permanent structures and can be assembled and unassembled on site within approximately an hour. The yurts would be sited on the land all year round to make beneficial use from the all year round tourism within the area. The applicants have already diversified the site for DGJ Solutions fabrication business and the huts would complement and supplement the existing enterprise.
7. The DAS considers that the yurts would offer a unique experience and give a good opportunity to develop a new but growing camping idea. The site would be self catering to encourage visitors to existing businesses within the local area for food and drink.
8. A business plan has been submitted which states that the diversification will bring in a higher income, enabling the family to stay in their home and the Welsh speaking community. Research into existing 'Glamping' businesses shows that there was on average 74% occupancy, which demonstrates a high level of demand for this type of tourist accommodation.
9. Non-car based transport will be encouraged and as one of the owners will be employed full time in the business, there is no need for additional employees, and any necessary supplies etc. will be incorporated into existing journeys. Visitors will be encouraged to use non-car modes of transport (provided with maps, public transport timetables). Llanddoged has a bus stop less than one mile away. It is expected that there will be only 1 car per yurt.
10. Letters of support from two local businesses (1868 Racing, Maenan Abbey Hotel) have been submitted as part of the application, stating that the proposal will benefit local business by attracting tourism to the area and that other 'Glamping' and yurt sites within North Wales have proved successful.
11. Details of the septic tank and associated porosity tests have been submitted.

PLANNING HISTORY

12. No planning history.

SITE CONSTRAINTS

13. Within designated Special Landscape Area (Conwy Valley)
PROW (Ref:PROW/NOV07)
FOOTPATH (Ref:LMN/36)

CONSULTATIONS

14.
 - a) **Community Council:** No objection in principle, but have concerns regarding:
 - Distance between the 3 yurts spread over the fields.
 - Possibility that more yurts will be applied for in the future.
 - Traffic on single land with no passing places.
 - Users of public footpaths and dogs of lead being hazard to visitors.
 - Is it possible to restrict the number of yurts to a maximum of 3?
 - b) **Natural Resources Wales:** No comments.
 - c) **Welsh Water:** Response awaited.
 - d) **Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales:** No objection provided that the materials for the yurts are less prominent. The canvas should ideally be a softer green or earth colours, but not white.

- e) **Highway Officer:** Originally raised highway safety concerns due to the likely increase in traffic on the 1.5km length of single track highway with no formal passing places, the risk of vehicles reversing for long distances on the narrow road, with poor horizontal alignment, and the substandard junction onto A548. Subsequently raises no objection, provided that 3 no. passing bays can be provided within the highway.
- f) **Landscape Officer:** The three yurts are well spaced out over the site and are reached by foot through the proposed wildflower meadow. Mature vegetation to the north and north east provides substantial screening. The proposal is low key and will not impact on landscape or visual amenity. No objection to the proposal.
- g) **Policy Section:** States that a similar application for 2 Shepherd's Huts (Tyddyn Ddu, ref.0/40120) has set a precedent for this type of minor tourism diversification scheme. The business case needs to be considered in balance with TOU/1 and TOU/4, which states that new tourist accommodation in the rural area is sited on an existing site which currently offers tourism accommodation. However, due to the scale, type and lifespan of the development, it is considered acceptable if conditioned accordingly.
- h) **Destination Manager:** Supportive of the application, as it would further diversify the tourism product on offer.
- i) **Countryside Officer:** Response awaited.
- j) **Environment Services:** Response awaited.

REPRESENTATIONS

15. The application has been advertised by site notice and in the local press (as development departing from the Development Plan). Any further representations received by the date of the Committee will be reported in the Addendum. 5 letters of objection have been received so far, which make the following points:
- The single track road (Ffordd Bryn Saith) is totally unsuitable to any more traffic other than the residents' cars that travel on it at present. It would take a further 4 passing places at least to make it safe.
 - The Council does not maintain the hedges, which become overgrown and any additional traffic would become hazard
 - There are no pavements and concerns regarding pedestrian safety (children, ramblers, horse riders).
 - The current road is in a poor state of repair and not maintained by the Council.

PLANNING POLICIES

16. Planning Policy Wales 6th Ed Feb 2014
Technical Advice Notes:
6 Planning and Sustainable Rural Communities
13 Tourism
18 Transport
- Conwy LDP
TOU/1 Sustainable Tourism
TOU/2 New Sustainable Tourism and Recreational Development
TOU/4 Chalet, Caravan and Camping Sites
NTE/4 The Landscape and Protecting Special Landscape Areas

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle

17. No toilet/washing facilities are provided within the proposed yurts, but they are substantially bigger and more permanent than a tent. The yurts may also have associated timber platforms or decking areas. The proposal is assessed against Policies TOU/1, TOU/2, TOU/4 and NTE/4 of the Conwy LDP.
18. TOU/2 (2) states that new high quality holiday accommodation will only be supported where it forms an ancillary or complementary part of an existing or proposed new tourism development scheme and meets various criteria. In this case, the development does not comply with this Development Plan policy, because the proposed yurts are not part of any existing or proposed tourism development scheme. Members will be aware that Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions on planning application should be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
19. The explanatory text to Policy TOU/4 acknowledges that caravan, chalet and camp sites are an important offer of holiday accommodation, which can be crucial to the success of the tourism economy. However, it cautions that such sites are often seen as being visually intrusive, and that past intensification of sites has visually affected a small number of rural locations.
20. Planning Policy Wales paragraph 7.3.3 states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to farm diversification proposals, including sensitively designed new buildings within existing farm complexes. TAN6 paragraph 3.7 states that when considering planning applications for farm diversification projects, planning authorities should consider the nature and scale of activity, taking a proportionate approach to the availability of public transport and the need for highway improvements.
21. Whilst the application is strictly a departure from Policy TOU/2, Officers consider that the following factors provide sufficient material considerations to over-ride the policy concern:
 - i) The canvas yurt structures would be less visually intrusive than caravans;
 - ii) The yurts would be sited in an unobtrusive location, well spaced apart and 'blended' into the existing landscaping (hedgerow and other vegetation screening);
 - iii) The scale of the proposal is commensurate with a farm diversification project;
 - iv) The yurts would supplement and support the existing farm enterprise at the site;
 - v) The nature of the proposal is unlikely to be replicated on a large scale;
 - vi) Planning permission was granted in November 2013 for the siting of 2 Shepherd Huts at Tyddyn Du, Llanrwst (0/40120), as a departure application. The current application has similarities as a type of small scale rural tourism diversification scheme.
 - vii) The applicant has confirmed that they are willing to enter into a Section 106 Planning Obligation to require the provision of 3 no. passing bays along the highway, which is considered to be a benefit to all highway users.
22. The decision to grant planning permission for a 'departure' application should not be considered lightly. However, Officers consider that in this case, the material considerations listed above provide sufficient grounds for over-riding the policy concerns.

Design/Visual Impact

23. As noted above, the yurts are considered to be less visually intrusive than caravans. The yurts would be well-screened in the landscape by the undulating nature of the surrounding topography and mature trees and hedges. The Landscape Officer raised no objections to

the proposal and considered that the proposal would not result in any significant detrimental impact on the wider designated Special Landscape Area. Some occasional glimpses of the yurts may be visible from elevated sections of the minor road to the south, but the visual impacts from this direction would be minor due to their small scale and the presence of nearby buildings/dwellings.

Residential Amenity

24. There are no close neighbouring residential properties, except for Ffrith Galed, which is owned by the applicant.

Highway Considerations

25. The DAS predicts that visitors will access the site from Llanrwst and is within close proximity to local bus routes. The applicant intends to encourage non-car modes of travel and does not anticipate more than one car per yurt. The site is not easily accessible by public transport, although there is a bus stop in Llanddodged. TAN6 advises local planning authorities to take a proportionate approach when considering transport needs in relation to farm diversification proposals.
26. The Highway Officer originally raised concerns due to the likely increase in traffic on the 1.5km length of single track highway with no formal passing places. He considered that there is a risk of vehicles reversing for long distances on the narrow road, with poor horizontal alignment and there is a substandard junction onto the A548. However, the Highway Officer subsequently raises no objection, provided that 3 no. passing bays can be provided within the highway. The proposed improvements to the highway to provide passing bays will benefit all highway users, including other residents.

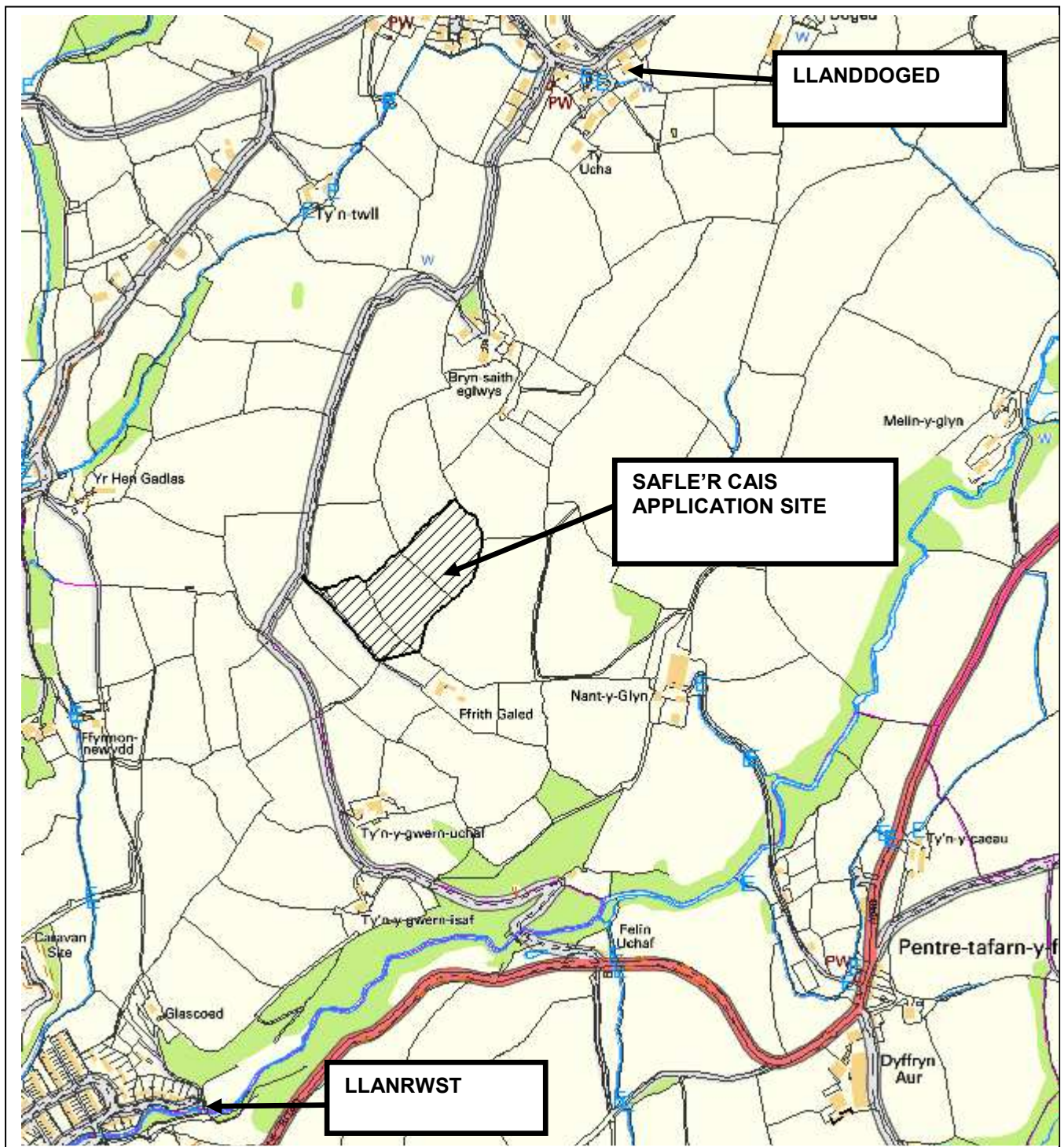
CONCLUSIONS

27. The application is contrary to LDP Policy TOU/2 on new holiday accommodation. However, in this case, Officers consider that there are over-riding material considerations to justify granting planning permission for this small scale rural tourism diversification scheme, subject to the provision of a Section 106 Planning Obligation to require highway improvements. The application has been advertised in the local press under departure procedures.

RECOMMENDATION

- A) Minded to grant conditional planning permission, subject to the provision of a Section 106 Planning Obligation to require highway improvements.
- B) To authorise the Development and Building Control Manager to consider any representation made in the light of further publicity and to issue the decision following the expiry of the statutory publicity period.

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