

Design and Access Statement

Site Location

Land West of Bryn Offa, Fennant Road, Ponciau, Wrexham



Applicant

Mr Bridget McGuire

Dated

February 2016

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT inc. Parking Provision

Site: Land at West of Bryn Offa, Fennant Road, Ponciau, Wrexham

Applicant: Mr Bridget McGuire

Application for: The change of use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes to include the formation of additional hard standing, utility / dayroom ancillary to the use of 2 no. chalets, 2 no. touring caravans, parking area, landscaping.

1. Brief & Design Process.

1.1. The applicant seeks permission to provide 2 no. residential family gypsy pitches with utility/day-room, to meet a recognised essential need for such facilities in the area to facilitate a gypsy lifestyle, and a recognised shortage of traveller pitches in Wrexham.

1.2. Mrs B McGuire and her husband moved to the Ruthin Road site from the Wrexham Maelor Hospital site some 32 years ago where she has brought up her 5 children. However, she separated from her husband some 20 years ago and has continued to live at the Council's site at Ruthin Road. Her 75 year old mother Kathleen Berry subsequently moved in with her following the death of her father.

Her son, Francis also lives with her but regularly travels for work to help support the family. Francis is married with 2 children but is currently separated, however the children regularly visit and stay over.

There is regularly an over-crowding situation at Ruthin Road and Mrs McGuire is regularly suffering from ill health through the stress of the living situation. Also the site has become overcrowded and her and the family are suffering regular abuse and noise from other travellers on the site.

Her Mother, Kathleen Berry has been forced to go into a nursing home until alternative accommodation can be found. She is very unsettled being away from her family and it is imperative alternative accommodation can be found, preferably in the area, which is the basis of the application. Mrs McGuire and family own the land in Fennant Road which is the subject of this application. Also attached are letters in support of both Mrs McGuire and her mother's ill health.

- 1.3. This application is following a previous planning refusal ref: ESC P/2015/0203. The reasons for refusal were 'The use requires the formation of suitable visibility splays at the point of vehicular access, and these splays will either cross land that is not within the control of the applicant, or it involves the loss of a native hedgerow adjacent to Fennant Road. To allow the use with a substandard access would be unacceptable and undesirable as this would be detrimental the safety of all road users including the occupants of the site contrary to Policy GDP1d) of the UDP. Also the provision of splays within the control of the applicant will cause the loss of important ecological habitats and landscape features, and site screening in connection with the use, contrary to Policies GDP1 a) and h) and EC6 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan.
- 1.4. Following a site visit and consultation with the client the site layout has been determined to best meet the applicant's requirements and has been designed with reference to the standards defined in 'Planning for Traveller Sites March 2012' and 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide May 2008' defined in Gypsy and Travellers Needs Assessment 2012.
- 1.5. The proposed caravans will conform to the definitions within Section 29 (1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and Section 13 (1) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 although an illustrative site plan is provided.
- 1.6. This statement describes the application site, and the detailed proposals for the provision of a gypsy and travellers site. It provides a summary of supporting evidence to demonstrate that the site is both suitable for, and capable of

development. It assesses the site proposals against relevant local and national 'planning policy'.

- 1.7. The design and access statement has followed the advice contained in the Guidance document published by C.A.B.E. (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), Government's advisor on architecture, 'Design and Access Statements'.
- 1.8. The design process explains how the physical characteristics of the proposal has been informed by a process which has included the following steps:-
 - Assessment
 - Involvement
 - Evaluation
 - Design
- 1.9. There are six headings of analysis which the guide recommends to be covered under the 'Design' and 'Access'.

2. Design and Access Explained

Design

- 2.1. **Use:** What the chalets, utility building and spaces will be used for.
- 2.2. **Amount:** How much would be built on site.
- 2.3. **Layout:** How the chalets, tourer's and vehicles will be arranged on the site public and the relationship between them and the buildings and spaces around the site.
- 2.4. **Scale:** How big the chalets and amenity building would be (their height, width and length).
- 2.5. **Landscaping:** How open spaces outside the site will be protected by screen planting to enhance and protect the character of the area.

- 2.6. **Appearance:** What the chalets, amenity building and spaces look like, for example building materials, landscape and chalet construction.

Access

- 2.7. **Vehicular and Transport Links:** Why the access points and routes have been chosen, and how the site responds to road layout and public transport provision.
- 2.8. **Inclusive Access:** How occupants and visitors can get to and move around the site regardless of age and disability.

3. Main Planning Considerations

- 3.1. Under normal circumstances, the application would be determined primarily in accordance with the planning policies in the Development Plan, i.e:-
- Planning Policy for traveller sites 2012
 - F.U.D.P 2000 – 2015
 - Gypsy Needs and Travellers Assessment 2013
 - North West Wales G.T.A.A
 - Planning Policy Wales 2014
- 3.2. National Planning Policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would also be of direct relevance.
- 3.3. Consequently the proposed site could significantly assist in meeting the required need for additional accommodation.
- 3.4. The remainder of this Statement:-
- Describes the application site and the proposals for its development;
 - Assesses the application against the PPW 2014 “presumption in favour of sustainable development”
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.
 - The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the nearby residents.
 - The Drainage arrangements
 - Whether gypsy and personal arrangements outweigh any harm arising from

the proposal

- The councils under-provision for traveller accommodation
- Safety and Road Access provision.

4. The Application Site

The application site extends to approximately 1500m² in area. It is located alongside Fennant Road, Ponciau. Fennant Road is the main access road for Ponciau off the main Wrexham to Ruabon Road (B5605). The site is located to the West of 1 – 4 Bryn Offa.

It is enclosed by very high coniferous hedging to all boundaries, which are in the applicant's ownership.

The site itself is level with Fennant Road from where it gains pedestrian and vehicular access, but it rises steeply towards Bryn Offa, effectively creating a naturally screened bowl that protects it and prevents noise from emanating to points outside. The elevated land was previously allotments and horse paddock.

The site has a history of quasi domestic uses and has been used by caravans. Water and Electric Services are readily available and drainage will be to a bio-disc treatment plant and surface water harvesting.

3. The Proposal

The proposal is for 2 no. mobile homes and 2 no. touring caravans. One is for Mrs McGuire, her son and family, the other for her mother. The touring caravans will be used by the family for gypsy and traveller purposes.

Access will be through the existing entrance directly on to Fennant Road. Visibility is good in both directions and the intention is to create a site that is completely safe for everyone. The entrance can be gated but this will be set back so that vehicles / caravans can enter the site and stop clear of the highway. The access apron will be tarmaced. The speed limit on Fennant Road is restricted to 20 mph.

A portable amenity structure to provide washing space, shower, and toilets as detailed on the plans submitted with this application, the toilets and showers will be drained to a bio-disc, sewerage treatment plant, located in the corner of the site. The drainage system will also accommodate the drainage from the dayroom.

4. General Considerations

The applicant's vision for the site is the creation of a site for 2 no. family homes that are attractive, functional and safe for residents and does not adversely affect anyone living nearby or further afield.

It has a history of uses that have left it unattractive, scarred and generally brown field in appearance, character and use. The proposals will make good use of an abandoned site that meets the family needs and accords with the aims of the Welsh Government to ensure that adequate accommodation is available for the gypsy and travelling community. It will also meet the planning policy criteria of the Council which aims to meet the Traveller need whilst not hurting anything of acknowledged importance or setting a precedent that would make it difficult to resist later less acceptable proposals.

5. Accessibility

The site will be accessed via the existing entrance directly from Fennant Road. Visibility in both directions is good but it will be widened and set back from Fennant Road to whatever standard the highways engineers require to make it completely safe for use by all vehicles and traffic passing by. Hedges have been cut back to provide the adequate visibility requirement.

The footpath opposite is wide and pedestrians can walk past the site without danger. The road is well lit and the site will not generate any type or quantity of traffic that will endanger life.

The access apron will be surfaced with tarmac to define it for passers by, to improve its appearance and to ensure that no loose material is carried into the highway to cause a danger to traffic or pedestrians.

Within the site the road will be kerbed and surfaced with pavements to ensure that it is attractive but also to prevent it potholing and causing danger to pedestrians, vehicles and children on bikes. Gulleys will be installed to prevent ponding and water running into the public highway.

All roads and surfaces will be flat to allow access for disabled visitors, parents with children or people with learning difficulties and they will be suitable for use by all the emergency services in terms of layout, design and alignment.

6. Environmental Sustainability

The site and the designed scheme are completely sustainable in terms of location, design criteria and materials. The site in essence is a brown field site that is constrained by its terrain and every aspect of the layout has been designed to make the most efficient use of the land. It will not generate any significant waste during construction and the families will all participate in the local authority recycling regime as part of their normal day to day domestic activity.

The site is on the edge of the village where it is convenient for all services such as schools, shops, medical services and local bus services. The approach roads are all good offering quick access to the national roads network, trains and airports. This is important to the traveller community who seek work all over the country and frequently have visitors from other countries.

No damage will be inflicted on the surrounding habitat and the enclosed nature of the site will be complemented with new planting to screen it and prevent erosion on the bank batter to the East. Hedges have been previously cut back during the winter period to provide additional visibility on Fennant Road.

All Travellers are conscious of the need to save and protect resources and they use communal washing / socialising facilities as much as possible. Water is harvested for washing vehicles and watering stock and the waste water system will be a state of the art unit designed to the most modern standards of cleanliness and efficiency.

Modern chalets and caravans are built of sustainably sourced materials and because of their limited size and technically advanced construction they are far more thermally efficient than houses. They are placed on a 500mm plinth to improve insulation, protect against damp and to take account of any consequences of climate change.

The whole site will be more environmentally sustainable than the equivalent conventional homes and residential layouts.

7. Character

Traveller sites have a character of their own in that they invariably incorporate space for touring caravans, vehicles and visiting relatives. This site will acknowledge this important cultural aspect of the occupant's lives but it will also reflect the growing move towards the use of chalet accommodation and the benefits this brings in terms of health, especially for older and young children, comfort and visual appearance.

Whilst some Travellers have assimilated into the mainstream community the majority need to be on sites where they can enjoy the constant interaction of their families and friends. This can only be found on sites like this where they are away from

conventional house dwellers, where conflicts sometimes arise, and are free to drift in and out as work and family life demands.

The site is almost completely enclosed by vegetation and hidden from the road so it is not visually intrusive. The proposed chalets are only single storey and so it and the caravans will be easily assimilated into the background. Although there is existing hedge planting along its boundaries, additional landscaping will be provided so that no detrimental visual impact will be incurred. The character of the street scene and the area generally, which includes houses, and fields will not be altered.

In terms of density the scheme proposed, for a single extended family site is designed to make efficient use of the available land whilst not creating a congested development that looks uncomfortable or unnatural. It will only generate a modest amount of activity and the amenity of adjoining residents will not be adversely affected visually or by noise, smells, light dazzle, in any way.

8. Community Safety

This scheme will have no implications for community safety. The site will be occupied by a single extended family who only wish to work and live normally. The internal layout of the site will enable each building to be secure and ensure that all the family and their pets are safe.

9. Movement to, from and within the Development

The site is conveniently located for all local services including schools, shops, medical services, including hospitals, sources of work and public transport.

The access will be safer than the existing arrangement because it will be surfaced and improved and there will be more than adequate parking within the site for the family members living there and anyone visiting. Visitor parking spaces will be provided and will be disabled friendly.

The internal driveway will easily accommodate the small amount of traffic generated by the residential use proposed and it has been designed to enable emergency vehicles to access all plots.

Public transport can easily be accessed and there are easy and convenient links to the motorway network, railways and airports.

10. Conclusion

The submitted scheme meets the five objectives of good design in that it offers very good and safer access into the site. It is environmentally sustainable, seeking to make efficient and beneficial use of resources whilst improving the environment and amenity of local people. It reflects the special character of traveller culture, offering them better, healthier and safer accommodation but at the same time having no impact on the surrounding community or street scene.

It will be convenient for all modes of public transport and has been designed to ensure that it promotes internal and community safety.

The proposals have been carefully and considerably designed. There is a serious shortfall in Traveller accommodation in the Wrexham district and the Ruthin Road site is overcrowded. This application will assist the council's shortfall and provide accommodation for a family's desperate need,

11. Wrexham County LDP

Inspectors Comments

The Plan fails to make reasonable provision to meet the identified needs of the gypsy and traveller community. Its approach fails to have proper regard to national policy and is likely to lead to future instances of unauthorised encampments which give rise to problems of poor living conditions for occupiers and lead to tensions between the settled and the traveller communities.