

Design & Access Statement

Site Address: Site at Gittins Yard, Johnstown, Wrexham, LL14 1NG

Date: July 2011 (Revised 31st October 2011)

Applicants Details

Name: Wrexham County Borough Council.

Address: Guild Hall
Wrexham

Post Code: LL11 1WL

Tel: 01978 292000

Agents Details

Name: Wrexham County Borough Council. (Assets & Economic Dev)

Address: Crown Buildings, Chester Street,
Wrexham.

Post Code: LL11 1WP

Tel: 01978 297180

Fax: 01978 297202

Description of Development/General:

Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) has declared a policy to provide new affordable housing in dedicated sites around the County Borough.

This application relates to the site identified by the Housing Department at the address above.

Pre-application Consultation:

Pre-application consultations have taken place between ISP Architects/WCBC and David Williams of the Planning Department, and Peter Douthwaite of the Highways Department.

1) Appraisal of the context of the proposed development

a) Introduction

This Design and Access Statement should be read in support of the outline planning application for a residential development at site at Gittins Yard, Johnstown, Wrexham. This statement responds to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2009.

The statement should be read giving full regard to the applications' documentation including the attached appendices and proposed drawings.

b) Physical context

The application site consists of a parcel of land located at the centre of a shopping and residential area in Johnstown. The site is currently vacant.

The aerial photograph below identifies the application site in context of its surroundings.



Design & Access Statement



Johnstown lies South West of Wrexham County Borough and within the settlement limit as defined by the current Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996 – 2011 (Map 4).

The application site is partly within a residential area of single and two storey dwellings making the land appropriate for residential development. It is also on the boundary between Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog, another large urban village in Wrexham. There are also commercial buildings in the vicinity of the site, namely the local Fire Station, a motor repair site and offices.

The site backs on to a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is designated by Welsh Assembly Ministers under the recommendations of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). There is a strong possibility that the SAC may provide habitats for species such as Great Crested Newts which are a protected species.

An analysis of the surrounding area identifies that the existing buildings surrounding the application site are made of traditional materials including facing brick and render to walls, with slate roofs and a mix of UPVC and timber to windows and doors. Existing site boundaries are of low level brick walling to the front producing a sense of openness.

The design process has also ensured that the proposed development will be in-keeping and complimentary to the current design of the built form surrounding the application site.

Design & Access Statement

In terms of topography, the site itself is fairly flat but is located on the hill winding from Johnstown up to Rhosllanerchrugog. There are therefore retaining walls to the boundaries, and the adjacent site levels to the west of the site are higher, and lower to the east.

In preparation of the application, discussions have been undertaken with the Planning Department and the Highways Department in order to present a scheme that fits well within the application site and also has a positive effect on the amenity of the surrounding homeowners.

c) Social Context

It is considered that the proposed development will offer additional housing within the existing residential area.

The area includes a good range of community facilities and services including a post office, shops, public houses and a pharmacy. Adjacent to the site is the local Fire Station.

Furthermore the site is located within an accessible location as identified in the 'access' section of this statement making the location appropriate for residential development as well as complying with the aims of national and local planning policy in terms of ensuring that new development is accessible by sustainable transport methods.

d) Economic Context

Given that the proposal is for residential development it is not considered that the development will lead to any significant economic benefits in the long term. However in the short-term the proposal will provide employment for those contracted to build the new dwellings.

e) Policy Context

The policy guidance which has been taken into account in relation to the design of the proposed development is set out within Planning Policy Wales, MIPPS 01/2008 and the following Technical Advice Notes:

Technical Advice Note 2, Planning And Affordable Housing (2006)

Technical Advice Note 5, Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2009)

The development plan consists of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (1996 – 2011) which was adopted in 2005.

The application site is identified as an urban village in the Wrexham UDP. The larger urban villages such as Cefn Mawr, Chirk, Gwersyllt and Rhos, are identified as important centres for convenience goods shopping, attracting a high proportion of walk-in trade from relatively small local catchment areas. Urban Villages 'comprise the larger settlements to the north, west and south of Wrexham Town. While their range of services is narrower than Wrexham, they are capable of supporting some additional growth, particularly on derelict or underused land', as defined in the Wrexham UDP.

Design & Access Statement

As our development site is located in the centre of an existing residential area, on a central road in Johnstown, development growth is suitable. We believe this site can be considered as such and is in accordance with the UDP objectives.

The proposed development consists of 5 affordable dwellings of 3 bed houses and 6 affordable dwellings of 2 bed apartments.

Policy H7 allows the council to negotiate with developers to provide affordable housing on their schemes of 25 or more dwellings where a proven lack of affordable housing has been identified. This scheme has 100% provision of affordable housing.

The proposed development also fully considers the guidance contained with Policy PS1, PS2, and PS4 of the plan;

Policy PS1 New development for housing, employment, and community services will be directed to within defined settlement limits/employment areas.

Policy PS2 Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.

Policy PS4 Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.

Biodiversity Conservation Policy EC6:

Development either within or close to sites of biodiversity interest will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site. Where such development is permitted, damage should be kept to a minimum, and compensatory measures should be provided. Measures to improve the biodiversity value of sites and enhance their natural conservation interest and landscape quality including the establishment of local nature reserves, will be supported.

Our site is adjacent to a Special Area of Conservation, where it is likely habitat is provided to various species including the protected Great Crested Newt. Part of the existing yard is not included in our proposed scheme, and this is to be offered as a compensatory Mitigation area for nature conservation in accordance with Policy EC6. The maintenance/up keep of this area of land shall remain the responsibility of the developer.

At Full Planning Permission Application Stage, the developer/ applicant should have a full Ecological Assessment and Protected Species Survey carried out on the site to determine if any protected species do use the site for their habitat. This Assessment and survey should include any details and recommendations for how mitigation and protection will be carried out on the site before and during any construction works to comply with Tan 5 and CCW.

The design section of this statement will identify the main design elements of the proposed development and identify how they reflect the character and appearance of the settlement and surrounding area as well as compliance with the above identified policies.

2) ACCESSIBILITY **(a) Policy Approach**

Design & Access Statement

The following section of the statement aims to identify the national and local planning policy guidance that has been taken into consideration with regards to the means of access to and from the proposed development.

- **National Planning Policy Wales**

CABE defines Inclusive Design as an effort that '*aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. It enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities*'.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) as amended by MIPPS 01/2008 'Design' is the principal planning document of the Welsh Assembly Government, which sets out the context for the consideration and evaluation of all types of development.

The main thrust of PPW is to promote sustainable development by ensuring that the planning system provides for an adequate and continuous supply of land, available and suitable for development to meet society's needs in a way that is consistent with overall sustainability principles.

PPW seeks to promote resource-efficient settlements that minimize land-take and urban sprawl, locates development so as to minimize the demand for travel, ensure that all communities have good quality housing for their needs in safe neighborhoods, promote access to employment, shopping, education, health, community, leisure and sports facilities and open space.

PPW advises that all Local Authorities should consider the issue of accessibility for all, including the needs of those with visual and hearing impairments and those with limited mobility such as wheelchair users, elderly people and people with young children.

PPW, paragraph 2.3.2 advises to locate development so as to minimize the demand for travel, especially by private car.

TAN 18: Transport has also been taken into consideration. The main aim of TAN 18 is to ensure that new development is located where there is, or will be, good access by public transport, walking and cycling thereby minimizing the need for travel and fostering social inclusion.

Paragraph 2.4 of TAN 18 identifies that the inter-relationship between land use planning and transport is complex and varied. The development of land is dependant, in part, upon transport infrastructure and services to function efficiently. By influencing the location, scale, density and mix of land uses and new development, land use planning can help reduce the need to travel and length of journeys, whilst making it easier for people to walk, cycle or use public transport.

TAN 18 also considers people with disabilities. TAN 18 identifies that it is important to consider their needs in terms of parking, in particular ensuring that adequate numbers of suitably designed parking spaces are provided in appropriate locations.

- **Local Planning Approach** - **Wrexham UDP – Section 10**

Policy T8 of the plan refers to highway and parking provision and states that;

Design & Access Statement

Development granted planning permission will be required to provide vehicle parking spaces either on site or nearby, in accordance with the Council's current parking standards. Special regard will be paid to the following factors, as appropriate:-

- a) the availability of public transport nearby,*
- b) proximity to public car parking,*
- c) proximity to local services and facilities,*
- d) road safety hazards and amenity considerations arising from on-street parking in the vicinity of the site.*

b) Locational criteria and detailed design considerations

The application site is accessible by a range of transport methods including private and public transport.

The access road width is to be 5m in width with a pedestrian footpath to one side as shown on the submitted site plan. Adequate visibility and awareness splays already exist in both directions to the entrance of the site which has been retained. A vehicular turning point has also been placed within the site.

1.5 private car parking spaces plus have been provided to each plot. Local Planning Guidance Note 16 asks for 2 bed dwellings to have 2 parking spaces each and these are set as maximum values. The UDP Monitoring report shows that 21% of households in Johnstown do not own a car at all. The site also has good public transport links and plenty of local amenities within walking distance of the site. Therefore we feel it is justified to provide the minimum amount of spaces to this development.

In terms of accessing the site by public transport, the nearest bus stop is located approximately a 5 min walk from the site on Maelor Road. The stop is used for bus services 3 & 4 which provide a direct link to and from Wrexham Town centre. The plan below identifies the location of the nearest bus stops to the development site.



Design & Access Statement

In terms of inclusive access the internal layout of the dwellings will comply with buildings regulations and will include plenty of circulation space. More specifically the following issues have been addressed:

- Approach:

The approach to the new dwellings will offer clear and flat access (1:20) from the car parking areas to each dwelling. Level (1:20) and ramped approach (1:15) can be provided to the dwellings.

- Horizontal Circulation:

Sufficient clear widths are provided to door openings and corridors with ample clear door opening widths for wheelchair access.

- Toilet Facilities :

The bathroom has been designed of a sufficient size to ensure that it could be converted in the future to an accessible bathroom as defined by the BS 8300:2009 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Code of practice

It is therefore considered that the proposed development will be accessible by all its users and therefore complies with policy GDP1 of the Wrexham UDP.

c) How access is to be maintained

Once the site is developed the access can be maintained through the imposition of planning conditions requiring the access to be provided in accordance with the approved plans and for the parking and circulation space to be maintained.

3. DESIGN

a) Policy Approach

The following identified planning policy frameworks have influence the design of the proposed development.

- **National Planning Policy**

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) as amended by MIPPS 01/2008 'Design' and TAN 12 are the principal planning documents of the Welsh Assembly Government, which sets out the context for the consideration and evaluation of all types of development.

The main thrust of both documents is to promote sustainable development by ensuring that the planning system provides for an adequate and continuous supply of land, available and suitable for development to meet society's needs in a way that is consistent with overall sustainability principles.

PPW seeks to promote resource-efficient settlements that minimize land-take and urban sprawl, locates development so as to minimize the demand for travel, ensure that all communities have good quality housing for their needs in safe neighborhoods, promote access to employment, shopping, education, health, community, leisure and sports facilities and open space.

Design & Access Statement

It is identified in paragraph 2.9.1 of MIPPS 01/2008 that;

'Design is taken to mean the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment. To create sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics, and include the social, environmental and economic aspects of the development, including its construction, operation and management, and its relationship to its surroundings'.

Paragraph 2.9.3 identifies that;

'Good design is also inclusive design. The principles of inclusive design are that it places people at the heart of the design process, acknowledges diversity and difference, offers choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users, provides for flexibility in use, and, provides buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone'.

In terms of the development relationship with its surroundings, paragraph 2.9.8 identifies that;

'The visual appearance of proposed development, its scale and its relationship to its surroundings and context are material planning considerations. Local Planning Authorities should reject poor building and contextual designs. However, they should not attempt to impose a particular architectural.'

TAN 12 has offered guidance to the contents of this Design and Access Statement.

- **Local Planning Policy**
- **Wrexham UDP**

Policy GDP1 outlines the general development principles for all new developments:-

- a)** Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.
- b)** Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.
- c)** Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.
- d)** Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.
- e)** Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.
- f)** Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odor or vibration arising from development.
- g)** Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.

Design & Access Statement

h) Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.

i) Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.

j) Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.

k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

The following design principles and concepts have been applied to the proposed development which ensures that the development conforms to national and local planning policy;

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The development and all individual dwellings are to fulfill the current Building Regulation standards in terms of environmental sustainability and also to meet Code Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes Assessment procedure.

Not only it is proposed to implement energy efficiency measures to fulfill Building Regulation standards and to reduce energy demand and carbon emissions but the potential to implement other measures including Landscape/townscape setting, biodiversity and local environment, sustainable materials, water, waste management, climate resilience and sustainable building standards has been considered as part of the design process:

- *Landscape/townscape setting:*

The proposed development is a disused plot on the border of Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog. Adjacent to the site is the local fire station, offices and a residential area. The site itself already has a vehicular access directly off the main B5426 Gutter Hill Road.

- *Biodiversity and local environment:*

There is an existing area of self sown trees and scrub to the site. The bulk of the trees are of low value but form part of a landscaped buffer between Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog. Our proposal has retained the trees along the boundary of the site with the Fire Station and trees to the rear of the site will also be retained for the shared landscaped area for occupants.

- *Energy efficiency/carbon reduction:*

The development and all individual dwellings are to fulfill the current Building Regulation standards and also meet Code Level 4 of the "The Code for Sustainable Homes" Standards. Structures will be detailed to have high insulation levels and good air tightness values. Low energy light fittings will be used throughout the development, and subject to the full design and SAP calculations results, Photovoltaic's may be introduced to the roof planes.

- *Sustainable Materials:*

Locally sourced sustainable materials with a low environmental impact are to be used for the development. All timber used will be sourced from sustainable managed forests and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Design & Access Statement

- *Water:*

Permeable surfaces are proposed to all surfaces of footpaths and car parking areas. We have been advised by the Environment Agency that the site does not lie in a flood zone.

- *Waste Management:*

Appropriate facilities for sorting, storing and recycling of waste are to be included on each plot. WCBC Refuse department have confirmed that there is a Local Authority recycle collection scheme already in place on the estate.

- *Climate Resilience:*

The development and all individual dwellings are to fulfill the current Building Regulation standards, which means u-values of the building envelope as well as air tightness measurements have to be in accordance to standards set out in the Building Regulations 2000, Conservation of fuel and power, Part L2A.

- *Sustainable Building Standards:*

National recognized and quality assured standards have been used to demonstrate that environmentally sustainability design solutions (as set out above) have been incorporated into the new development. These include but are not limited to the aforementioned Code for Sustainable Homes Standards.

5. CHARACTER

As already identified the design process included an analysis of the context of the application site. This analysis has informed the design process and as such it is considered that the presented scheme offers development that compliments the character of the surrounding area.

The aim has been to design a development that is in-keeping with the existing features of the area and to ensure the enhancement of the character of the area by preserving existing spatial arrangements.

- *Layout*

The buildings have been placed towards the front, rear and middle of the site which enables the site to retain the landscaping to the side of the site running along the east boundary. Some car parking is placed in the middle of the buildings to aid natural surveillance in line with Secured by Design principles.

- *Appearance*

The aim has been to design a development that is in-keeping with the existing features of the established residential area. The materials and design features for the proposed scheme are to reflect the existing style. The existing boundary brick wall to the front of the site will be rebuilt as a boundary wall (low level).

Design & Access Statement

- *Amount*

The amount of dwellings proposed reflects the constraints imposed by existing buildings and is in line with the density of surrounding existing development and WCBC Planning Guidance note 21 'Space around Dwellings'.

The buildings on the site are proposed to be 2 storey as the site is relatively flat. We feel that this is acceptable as there is no standard ridge line of existing housing due to the increasing site levels up the hill. There are no existing buildings that immediately neighbour the eastern rear of our site as 14- 27 Gutter Hill are all located directly off the road. The proposal includes for a green buffer between our eastern boundary and the existing dwellings and all required amenity distances have been achieved in accordance with Local Planning Guidance Note 21: Space around Dwellings.

- *Landscaping*

We have retained as much of the existing landscaping as possible to keep the green buffer zone. Self sewn trees and scrub in the middle of the site will be removed in order to provide the building plots and parking areas. Landscaping will be provided around the parking areas, and trees retained to the rear of the site will provide attractive shared garden areas for the occupants.

6. COMMUNITY SAFETY

During the design progress, design measures such as layout, appearance and landscaping have been carefully assessed to help to prevent crime. It is proposed that the fully designed scheme will be assessed under the Secured by Design scheme and the recommendations adhered to.

The following safety measures have been implemented as part of the design process:-

- security through natural surveillance: overlooking of communal car parking areas from habitable room windows.
- a sense of ownership through clearly defined boundaries between private and public areas
- adequate street lighting for all communal areas including car parking
- External environment to be designed to avoid inadvertent creation of opportunities for crime through, for example, providing hiding places or facilitating access to the upper floors of buildings. The positioning and choice of planting in a way to minimize the potential for such problems.

7. MOVEMENT TO, FROM AND WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT

Matters relating to accessing the proposed development has been dealt with in detail in section 2 of this statement.

In terms of design, the proposed site layout has been carefully designed to ensure that the site's future users can effectively access the site.

Design & Access Statement

This statement has identified that all Design and Access matters have been fully considered at the design stage and that the scheme presented offers a sustainable form of development that compliments its surroundings and a form of development that will be accessible by all its users.

For the reasons set out above it is therefore concluded that the proposed development can be supported to allow the offer of affordable residential opportunities within the site at Gittins Yard, Johnstown, Wrexham.

Appendices

- 1) **Code for Sustainable Homes Pre-Assessment Estimator**
(ISP Architects Ltd, Alison Jones, August 2011)

- 2) **Arboricultural Implications Assessment**
(Environment Department, Arboricultural Section, March 2010)