

SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

The Bryn, Nr. Penley.

Prepared for the Gredington Estate
by Strutt & Parker
February 2010

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1.0 OVERVIEW

This statement has been prepared in support of the Planning Application submitted on behalf of the Gredington Estate for the conversion of the former agricultural buildings at The Bryn, Nr. Penley as identified on the location plan (Appendix A). The planning application is for the conversion of traditional farm buildings to five dwellings with associated landscaping.

This statement identifies the factors that have a bearing on the development proposal and explains how these relate to the site's physical and local context, Local Planning Guidance notes, the current adopted Unitary Development Plan and National Planning Policy considerations. It also sets out the Estate's need for the alteration of the site.

2.0 THE GREDINGTON ESTATE

The Estate currently comprises four let farms, a number of dwellings and two commercial properties and totals approximately 1,650 acres. The Estate lies to the west of Whitchurch, within the County of Wrexham.

3.0 BRYN FARM BUILDINGS

The Bryn is situated to the North of Gredington Hall and can be accessed via the A539 to the south, which links Overton and Whitchurch, or via the A525 to the North which links Wrexham and Whitchurch.

The traditional agricultural range at the Bryn extends to over 17,000 square feet, and is of brick and slate construction around an open yard. To the rear of the site are further modern steel portal buildings.

For the last 15 years the buildings and land at the Bryn have been occupied by an agricultural tenant and the holding has been run as a dairy unit.

Over more recent years the use of the traditional range as an asset to the holding has reduced as agricultural margins have become tighter and the need to be more efficient has become paramount. This economic pressure has seen a reduction in on farm labour as many processes have become mechanised. The need for spacious modern agricultural buildings has increased as a result of the need to accommodate modern machinery and processes.

Currently part of the traditional range at The Bryn houses the farm's milking parlour. To remain viable the dairy herd at the Bryn needs to expand but currently the size of the parlour is the limiting factor. The accommodation provided by the traditional range is not sufficient in terms of space or layout to permit expansion of the parlour in situ.

Even if the farming system at the Bryn were to move away from dairy, the accommodation provided by the traditional range is still not sufficient in terms of space, light and easy maintenance for the welfare of both agricultural workers and livestock.

Ultimately, the diminishing agricultural returns generated cannot sustain the traditional range and the cost of their upkeep, particularly where their use within the business is so limited. As such, it is not anticipated that the traditional range will ever form an integral part of a viable farming operation on site again, and is likely to become wholly redundant in the near future.

Going forwards the issues faced are two fold. Firstly, if not utilised the traditional range faces dilapidation and loss of integrity and stature. Secondly, any future farming operation on the holding will require the provision of more suitable modern agricultural buildings so to allow for increased size and viability.

Ultimately, the objective is to secure the continued farming of the Bryn with the provision of new modern agricultural buildings to meet modern requirements, and concurrently for the preservation of the traditional range in the most appropriate and viable manner.

To meet both these aims it is proposed that the traditional range is sympathetically developed for a use outside the scope of agriculture, allowing long term sustainability for its future preservation. It is further proposed that the development will be used to assist in funding the provision of modern agricultural buildings at The Bryn, but away from the new development. This arrangement would be mutually beneficial and would secure the future of the traditional range, whilst properly securing the needs of the agricultural land in the long term.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE USES

The agricultural use of the traditional buildings at Bryn Farm is winding down under the agricultural tenancy in place, which has increasingly found the size and layout of the traditional range a limiting factor in the battle to remain viable. It is by finding a use that requires the improvement of the buildings whilst generating an income that it will be possible to preserve and enhance the character of the buildings for the future.

As the accompanying Structural Appraisal sets out that the buildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion. It is important to establish a future use for the buildings that would not be detrimental to the surrounding area, and would have the least impact upon the open countryside.

We have investigated a number of possible alternative uses and have assessed these against the following criteria:

- a) The existing communication infrastructure;
- b) Demand and viability; and
- c) The sensitive nature of the area within the open countryside;

5.0 OPTIONS FOR FUTURE USE

5.1 COMMERCIAL

In October 2006 a marketing board was erected at another Estate site called Gredington Home Farm Buildings and this was followed by a series of 15 adverts placed in local and regional press over a period of 7 months. The last advert was placed on 20th April 2007 and since then the board remained in location for the life of the application. This marketing resulted in only 10 responses over this time (Appendix C). We ran a similar marketing campaign for the Joiner's Workshop (also a commercial Estate property) in the vicinity which has equally shown the lack of demand in the area for this type of unit (Appendix C).

Within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 114 hectares of employment land has been identified for this plan period. Generally facilities offered to users on specialist sites such as these outweigh the expensive alternative offered by converting properties such as the buildings at Bryn Farm. The cost of a sympathetic conversion to light industrial and/or office use would be substantially more than the cost of acquiring existing, better serviced purpose built office space located in more suitable and sustainable developments closer to Wrexham Town centre as directed by national planning policy.

5.2 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

The position of the buildings and its access limitations make this option unviable. As the accompanying access section of this report illustrates, any change of use of the buildings to a commercial use will require the existing access to be widened and upgraded to the standard of an adoptable highway due to the large vehicle size and volume of vehicular usage that this option would create. The cost of improving the adjacent road junction to adoptable standards would also make this option unviable. The site is not suitable for the large vehicles that would need to access the buildings as the site around the buildings is insufficient to accommodate the necessary vehicular turning space. Large vehicles would therefore not be able to enter and manoeuvre around the site in such a way which avoids reversing out on to the highway; or, a significant loss of attractive existing hedgerows. This lack of adequate space could be detrimental to highway safety as pedestrian and vehicle uses may conflict. A Heavy Industrial use also requires large openings and substantial alterations to the fabric of the buildings which

would destroy their aesthetic value and history as well as creating an undesirable intrusion into the landscape that would be detrimental to the integrity of both the traditional buildings and conservation area.

5.3 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/OFFICES

As highlighted in the access section of this report, the increased traffic movements from light industrial or office use would be detrimental to highway safety. In certain circumstances the benefit of employment within the rural economy can justify such an increase in traffic. However, in this case an increase in vehicular movements to the property would be very disruptive to local residents of Penley and not be supported comfortably by the local road network (LPG no 3). Occupiers may find the site difficult for the delivery of goods and also incur high distribution costs due to the rural location. As mentioned above the improvements needed to the junction with the highway would also make this option unviable.

Since 2006, our experience of marketing similar buildings for light industrial/workshop has failed to generate significant interest. These marketing campaigns ran for over 2 years as detailed in Appendix C.

5.4 EQUESTRIAN

In our experience, equestrian businesses are becoming increasingly unviable, with diminishing margins forcing several livery businesses on estates, (on which we are instructed) requesting to end their tenancies early. This diversification of agricultural property is now generally oversubscribed leaving no room for new businesses.

Conversion to an equine use is likely to increase the pressure on the agricultural land surrounding the buildings to be changed into paddock land and associated ménage facilities. This would result in the loss of agricultural land which will be detrimental to the rural economy and local wildlife. The openness of the countryside would also be under threat and we believe that this option would undermine the area's rural character within the wider landscape setting.

5.5 RESIDENTIAL

Residential conversion of the Bryn farm buildings is likely to result in the least amount of traffic movements of the options we have investigated. As stated in the access section of this report the proposed improvements to the existing access would improve the private road for the new and existing users of the access.

The structure of the building is well suited to residential conversion and would require minimal external alteration to provide individual units that would be in keeping with the character of the

surrounding area. Residential occupiers would safeguard the long term integrity of the buildings within the rural landscape and prevent the affected structures from becoming at risk. They would pay a greater level of attention to detail and employ greater levels of effort to maintain the buildings in good state of repair. The use of planning obligations and the removal of permitted developments rights can be used to negate detrimental change to the surrounding curtilage and visual appearance of the buildings.

5.6 RECREATIONAL/TOURISM

Conversion to this use would require minimal structural changes to be made and be more akin to residential conversion as above than office or light industrial. However, the position of the farm is not within an established location for tourism and is very remote. There is currently a lack of facilities for farm activities in the area making it very difficult to see demand for accommodation improve. There would be some increased traffic movements through this use but these would be seasonal.

People visiting Wrexham tend to stay in the centre and further accommodation in the wider Hanmer area would compete with existing hotels such as Hanmer Hotel and other numerous farmhouse bed and breakfasts. We consider there not to be substantial demand for holiday accommodation in the vicinity to justify this increase in supply.

The return from this use would not justify the cost of converting the units and improving the new access for the site. Identifying the possibility of an operator is also seen as unlikely and therefore we do not consider such use to be suitable for the re-use of Bryn Farm Buildings.

6.0 REVIEW OF PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

With reference to the policies H3, Local Planning Guidance Note no. 3 and National government advice, the relevant considerations are achieving a scheme that:

- Secures an appropriate form and density of development that sensitively relates to the locality;
- Respects the amenity of existing residents;
- Ensures a good environment for the occupiers of the proposed properties; ensures satisfactory access and parking arrangements;
- Preserves or enhances the sensitive nature of the buildings at Bryn farm within the open countryside.

The relevant policies provide for developments of this nature and consequently there should be no objection in principle to development on the site.

7.0 STRUCTURAL STABILITY

We have visited the site and made an inspection of the buildings and this has been detailed in the accompanying Structural Appraisal Report.

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

8.1 Overview

The requirements for the Design & Access Statement are detailed in TAN 12: Design (2009). A design and access statement (DAS) is required for all new residential development.

The following design principles and concepts have been applied to the proposed development

- i) Amount
- ii) Layout
- iii) Scale
- iv) Landscaping
- v) Appearance

Strutt & Parker has extensive experience in the design and conversion of similar buildings. In previous projects we have been able to demonstrate an understanding of the character that traditional buildings provide as valuable rural assets. The conversion scheme takes account of the guidance provided by Wrexham Borough Council in Local Planning Guidance Note 3 relating to the conversion of buildings in rural locations. Specifically the principles of inclusive design will be adopted to create a development that makes a positive contribution to the local community and residential environment.

The conversion of the buildings is contained within the existing footprint. All buildings are of substantial and sound construction. Associated outbuildings will be used for domestic storage and garaging wherever feasible.

8.2 Amount/Use

The application is for the conversion of an existing agricultural (Sui Generis) use to form 5 fully DDA compliant dwellings.

Internally the design has been executed around the constraints of the existing building, taking into account the current openings, heights and original truss positions. Planning has achieved the retention of the valuable historic fabric including the original trusses and overall spatial form of the barns.

Detailing such as steps within landing areas and split staircases, enable adequate head height on the first floor in the main barn without damage to the roof; or, having to substantially modify the existing floor heights. Roof trusses are to be retained where possible and will be visible from the ground floor by raising the ceilings slightly in between the roof structure. Where the trusses coincide with partition walls below, the walls are to be slightly off-centred so that the truss can remain visible entirely within one room rather than infilled and be of little value to either room

Sufficient parking space is provided via the large area of existing hardstanding which will be regularised to reduce the impact upon the site's rural setting.

The total area of the proposed conversion is no larger than the existing area used for agricultural use. No extensions are proposed and the remainder of the space will be retained for storage purposes.

The precise details of the proposal are detailed in the plans submitted as part of this application.

There are existing supplies of mains electricity and water to the site. The converted buildings would utilise electric heating systems. Sewage disposal would be by way of a self large contained bio disc treatment plant with soakaway drainage. Please reference the completed percolation tests.

Any existing traditional drainage features will be retained and repaired where possible. Soil and vent pipes will be positioned internally to avoid damage to the aesthetics of the buildings where possible.

Heating and ventilation systems will be designed to have minimal visual impact.

8.3 Layout

The layout is detailed on the plans accompanying this application.

The design of the spaces has been carefully considered to maximise natural light whilst providing privacy to neighbouring occupants. All new openings have been kept to an absolute minimum, but are sufficient to maintain acceptable levels of outlook.

Main entrances to accommodation are via existing door openings. This provides a good connection between the parking area and the existing buildings and enables level access.

The layout is detailed on the plans accompanying this application. The proposed design and detailing is in keeping with the surrounding built environment and the adjacent residential uses. The proposal incorporates sufficient separation distances to satisfy all council amenity and privacy standards.

There are no habitable windows upon main elevations to properties in the neighbouring vicinity which directly front any of the proposed main elevations within a 21 metre distance. Therefore, there should be no loss of outlook or impact upon privacy to any neighbouring residents through the conversion proposed.

The scheme presented provides no opportunity for unacceptable levels of overlooking and mitigates against all potential privacy and amenity concerns. Through the use of obscured glazing upon those windows to the southern elevation.

8.4 Scale

Existing heights of the 'U' shaped traditional range are –

Eaves – maximum 4.0m
Ridge – maximum 7.5 m

Existing heights of barn 2 are

Eaves – 4.5m
Ridge – 7.6m

These heights will be unchanged as part of the conversion proposed and no heightening of the existing roof void is proposed.

The width of the existing main building is 50 metres, which will remain the case thereafter.

The location of the proposed conversion is very well hidden by the existing layout. The site is partially screened by the landscape upon arriving to the site from Pigeon Lane. Consequently, there should be little if any associated impact upon the setting and character of the wider rural area.

The conversion will not result in any changes to the scale of the buildings being utilised as they will be utilised like for like. All new openings have been minimised and for all intents and purposes the design of the structure will remain relatively unchanged.

It is considered that the proposed development will result in no loss of light or overbearing being created to neighbouring resident's amenity as no increase in scale is proposed.

These points are illustrated within the plans submitted.

8.5 Landscaping

The proposed curtilage to each dwelling will be contained within the existing area of the farmstead, reducing the spread of gardens into the open countryside. A careful balance has been struck between the need to achieve some privacy to the new units while at the same time maintaining the open feel of a traditional farmstead.

The curtilage continues to run with the existing site boundary where possible and access is gained from the existing arrangement to minimise the impact upon the open countryside. Landscaping detailing will be implemented to adequately separate the modern agricultural building for the proposed residential scheme.

It is thought that no trees on site are subject to protection orders, but we have however made every effort to integrate the development into the landscape rather than the other way around. Therefore, all developments will be proposed to be sympathetic to the existing site as to prevent impact suffered.

It is proposed that any trees planted or hedging will be to match or compliment the existing, as previously stated the intention is to retain as much as possible, but inevitably these will be some minor infill sections.

Hard landscaping will be in keeping with the character of the site and area, reinforcing the rural dynamic of the site.

We feel that our proposals will further improve an already well established site, creating an attractive environment.

8.6 Appearance

All elevations shall remain predominantly unchanged. The traditional buildings of the farm will retain their original slate roof coverings, and our proposal seeks to maintain natural slate roofing where possible, the more modern buildings are to be removed. In order to achieve adequate light levels internally without disrupting the external elevations unnecessarily, some roof lights have been included in the proposals. These would be in the form of simple glazing with black structural elements rather than modern Velux roof lights which will be flush with the roof surface.

The elevations, constructed in traditional brick work, remain largely unaltered by our proposal by using all existing openings. Existing windows and features have been retained and where applicable previous blocked off openings are re-opened with new windows inserted to achieve symmetry. Large openings created since construction has been glazed to show evidence of the historic development and evolution of the building. These openings are to be simply glazed, with the glazing to be set within the opening and set back at least 100mm to show the main structural stone/brickwork of the barns. Their impact is reduced by the provision of timber framed windows and doors to lessen the residential feel and retain the agricultural character. Other features such as the ventilation openings will be glazed internally to ensure weather exclusion. New windows are to have the same glazing style as any existing windows of the barns. Any new doors will be of a traditional vertical matchboard type as indicated.

The submitted design is bespoke to the localised area and respectful of its chosen public realm. It incorporates massing and scaling appropriate to the associated plot size.

Any changes necessary to external walls will be implemented 'like for like' using appropriate rendering to match the proposed development to existing property and structure subject of conversion.

Replacement roof coverings will consist of new slate tiles over a replacement membrane. Black upvc rainwater gutters and downpipes shall be fitted.

Casement windows and solid timber doors will be provided. Internal walls will be concrete blockwork and plastered. Ceilings will be plasterboarded and skimmed.

Electricity and water supplies will be brought as existing and independently metered; and, thereafter connected to the services installations. A telecom duct will be provided into the building.

An oil fired central heating system will be provided with steel radiators suitably sized and located. Ventilation to toilets and bathrooms will be provided as required by building regulations.

A fire alarm system will be provided to satisfy current building regulations.

New outbuildings will be utilised for garaging/bin storage/storage sheds. As illustrated in accompanying plans.

8.7 Access

There is already existing access and parking facilities included on site which shall be regularised as part of the proposals.

The main access to the building will be via level thresholds.

Vehicular Access will utilise the existing arrangements with Pigeon Lane. This provides direct access. The existing sight lines and visibility splays are deemed to fall within acceptable limits for necessary access and egress. There should be no unacceptable impact upon local highway safety.

Existing entrances at ground floor level exceed 800mm in width; and, all paths exceed the minimum 1200 mm width allowing people in wheelchairs and pushchairs to pass each other within acceptable limits. The surfacing/pathways leading up to the immediate vicinity of these entrances would be formed by flush and level stone paving slabs not exceeding a 1 in 20 gradient; and, all cross falls will not exceed 1 in 50. There will be no steps leading up to the main entrances of any dwelling proposed. All entrance doors will be provided with a low level seal at the threshold in order to limit water ingress at this point. The surfacing around the perimeter of the building will be interrupted by planting/cobbles etc to avoid the hazards created by opening doors and windows, see diagram 6 "external hazards" Section M2 Approved Document M of the Building Regulations. Disabled Parking Provision will be specifically reserved off-street and located close to all dwellings so that they are capable of occupation by elderly or disabled people. It will therefore be possible for a wheelchair to travel from vehicle setting-down points to all dwelling entrances without the need to negotiate steps.

All external surfaces will be even and made of tactile paving appropriate for wheelchair users, people with visual impairments and people who are unsteady on their feet. Joints between paving

units will not exceed 10mm in width and 5 mm in depth. Any difference in levels between adjacent paving units will be no greater than 5mm. The edges of paths and hardstanding areas will include a raised kerb to assist blind or partially sighted users. Pedestrian and vehicular routes will be clearly distinguished; and, all surfaces will be firmly founded incorporating a slip-resistant finish suitable for use in most weather conditions. Paving and hardstanding used will be capable of withstanding the loads and volume of traffic it will carry.

Overall, the design proposed has been formed in accordance with good practice for dealing with adaptation, conversion and alterations to traditional farm buildings. Consideration has been given in order to minimise the effects of the conversion schemes on the building and surrounding structures by keeping alterations to a minimum.

The access described complies in full with Policies EC1, H3, EC9, GDP1, H5, CLF9, LPG 3 and LPG 16; along with, Planning Policy Wales (2002), MIPPS 01/2009, 02/2009, Circular 61/96 and TAN 12: Design (2009).

8.8 Environmental Sustainability

The general modifications outlined in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.7 take into account each proposed design solution is the most appropriate, both in terms of promoting environmental sustainability and preserving the historic and architectural importance of the existing building.

Given the general constraints of modifying elements of the existing building, careful consideration has been taken to sympathetically improve overall thermal performance and heat loss solutions in accordance with Part L of the building regulations. For example, thermal improvements will be made in areas which do not compromise key historical features as seen on the walls and flat roof ceiling. In addition the roof cavities in the main rafters will be thermally upgraded, coupled with the existing floor, which will be re-constructed to avoid rising damp and cater for service installations. General elemental 'U' values for these target areas will be significantly over specified to supplement the minimum improvements to the existing walls.

The overall design retains all elements and structural fabric of the existing building, which ensures minimum material waste to be taken off site for disposal and impact on the existing building.

There are existing supplies of mains electricity and water to the site. The converted buildings would utilise oil fired heating systems with the oil tanks located adjacent to the barns to minimise their aesthetic impact. Sewage disposal would be by way of a self contained bio disc treatment plant with soakaway drainage, which will produce clean water run off.

Any existing traditional drainage features will be retained and repaired where possible. Soil and vent pipes will be positioned internally to avoid damage to the aesthetics of the buildings where possible.

Please refer to accompanying percolation tests which demonstrate the acceptability of our proposals.

Heating and ventilation system will be designed to have a minimal visual impact on the setting of the barns.

The construction process will involve the use of local businesses around the area to source and fabricate materials, which will reduce transport emissions both to and from the site. Furthermore limiting the distance for transportation will ensure materials are readily available and delivered to site and no delays are incurred to the construction program.

The redevelopment of the former outbuildings will provide a sustainable and resourceful use for the building and avoid it falling into a state of deterioration.

The above details ensure full compliance Planning Policy Wales (2002), MIPPS 01/2009, 02/2009, Circular 61/96 and TAN 12: Design (2009).

8.9 Community Safety

The position of the existing building and proximity in relation to the front parking area provides an exposed open space allowing for natural surveillance across the main frontage. The proximity of existing dwelling and a low incident rate make this consideration minor.

The above details ensure full compliance with Planning Policy Wales (2002), MIPPS 01/2009, 02/2009, Circular 61/96 and TAN 12: Design (2009).

8.10 Movements to and from the development

(i) External Access

For highways access details related to construction of the new highway access please refer to section 4.7 of this statement.

There is already an existing access and parking facilities included on site which shall be enhanced as detailed in supporting plans.

(ii) Internal Access

Given the general nature of the building, Part M of the Building Regulations does not need to be fully enforced; nonetheless, provisions for disabled access will be implemented where possible.

The overall spatial layout provides generous circulation areas throughout the building suitable for unobstructed wheelchair manoeuvring to maximise flexibility for individuals with disabled needs. Detailed scaled furniture layouts have been indicated on the drawings to highlight the potential circulation areas in each room and space.

Internal doors within the building will be at a suitable width to facilitate wheelchair manoeuvre. Generally all doors into habitable rooms will have a minimum unobstructed opening of 750mm.

Switches and socket outlets in habitable rooms for lighting and other equipment will be located so that they are easily reachable. By way of complying with Part M1 this is generally between 450mm and 1200mm from finished floor level.

The above details ensure full compliance with, Planning Policy Wales (2002), MIPPS 01/2009, 02/2009, Circular 61/96 and TAN 12: Design (2009).

9.0 CONTEXT

- 9.1 The aspects of the development have been considered in relation to the following physical social, economic and policy contexts. These have been reviewed and evaluated as part of the design process to determine the most beneficial use for the building and specific design detail.

Physical

- 9.2 The proposed extension is designed to be complementary to its localised Public Realm and will not impose upon its distinct setting or character. The vernacular created and materials to be used in construction will be respectful of the chosen siting and distinct local parameters.

Social

- 9.3 The development will not result in any negative impact to neighbouring residents and presents a use which will conform to the parameters of the immediate and wider area.

Economic

- 9.4 There will be no negative impact upon the surrounding rural economy as the present structure is not a rural building and is an ancillary structure to the adjacent residential dwelling and its associate curtilage; as such it should be treated a householder application by the Council.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Since Bryn Farm buildings on the Gredington Estate became principally redundant for agricultural purposes it has become necessary to identify alternative uses in order to preserve and maintain these important traditional barns for the future. Our findings illustrate that residential conversion of the site would be of least impact to the area whilst also ensuring the preservation of the buildings and enhancement of the landscape. Such reuse would accord with the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan under policies H3 and Local Planning Guidance note 13.

Signed.....

Dated.....

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For and on behalf of Gredington Estate

APPENDIX A

Location Plan

APPENDIX B

Site Plan

APPENDIX C

Marketing Report

