



PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Caravan Site

at

Land off A539, Hanmer



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PROJECT

Caravan Site, Land off A539, Hanmer

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This statement is to accompany an application by C L Edwards & Son for a touring caravan site. The site is situated approximately ½ mile to the north-east of the village of Hanmer in Wrexham.
- 1.2. It is proposed to create a touring caravan site with 38 pitches and a shower/toilet block.
- 1.3. The site extends to approximately 1.96ha and comprises an arable field and area of scrub.

2 THE SITE AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1. The site is located approximately ½ mile to the north-east of the village of Hanmer off the A539, and 10 miles south-west of Wrexham. The site consists of part of a medium scale arable field with boundary hedge and a small area of scrubland. The site is slightly sloping and a topographical survey has been submitted with the application.
- 2.2. The surrounding area is predominantly agricultural with arable cropping and grassland on smaller fields. There are small areas of woodland and water bodies in the surrounding area. There is an existing pond to the east of the site in part of the field not included in the site area. Croxton Pool is situated on the opposite side of the A539 to the site. It is understood that this has been used for fishing.

Figure 1: Aerial view of the site (Google Earth)



The proposed development

- 2.3. It is proposed to create a touring caravan site on part of the arable field closest to the road. This will consist of 38 serviced touring caravan pitches with an amenity block providing toilets, showers and washing up facilities. A waste collection point and chemical toilet disposal point will be located next to the amenity block.
- 2.4. The pitches will be located in a herringbone type layout around an internal access road. The pitches are to the north, east and one row to the southern side of the site. There are no pitches along the road side. The pitches will be divided by dwarf border hedges and each pitch will have its own water and electricity hook-up. Each site will have space to park one vehicle.
- 2.5. The pitches will be constructed of Grassforce GF50 grass reinforced sustainable drainage system. This offers a permeable ground reinforcement paver system for siting the caravans. The grid units will be filled in with grass. A Gridforce brochure will be submitted with the application.

3 POLICY AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy

- 3.1. Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 was adopted in December 2018 and is the key national land use planning policy document for Wales. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the Welsh Government's land use planning policies with the aim to translate the Government's commitment to sustainable development within the planning system. This is highlighted in the Introduction at paragraph 1.2, which details that the *"primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales"*, this should be considered during plan-making and decision-taking.
- 3.2. PPW provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 1.17). In this regard, it details that Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits of a proposed development are considered in the decision-making process, recognising that, in doing so, there may be occasions when one benefit of a development proposal outweighs others. Key factors in the Local Planning Authority's assessment process include:

- **Economic Considerations**

Economic considerations include job creation, regeneration, growth of important economic sectors and rural diversification. PPW specifically identifies in paragraph 5.5.1 that "Tourism involves a wide range of activities, facilities and types of development and is vital to economic prosperity and job creation in many parts of Wales. Tourism can be a catalyst for regeneration, improvement of the built environment and environmental protection". The importance of tourism to the economy of rural areas is highlighted in paragraph 5.5.3, which identifies that tourism related development "is an essential element in providing for a healthy and diverse economy". The proposed development will help diversify the economic base of the local area, ensuring a broader financial base and economic resilience. Tourism is also a key economic sector of the Welsh economy and the proposal represents a sustainable growth opportunity for the sector in the local area. Local economic benefits arising from the proposed development also include additional jobs in both the construction phase and the operation of the scheme, and increased custom for local services and facilities from occupants of the proposed accommodation such as the Hamner Arms in Hamner. It is evident, therefore, that the economic benefits of tourism related developments, should be given significant weight in the determination of planning applications such as this.

- **Social Considerations**

Social considerations include access to employment opportunities and how proposals support the development of more equal and more cohesive communities.

Tourism development can play an important role in ensuring the sustainability of local communities. They act as key catalysts for the local economy, providing and supporting community services and facilities, whilst also offering people from outside the area an opportunity to stay and enjoy an area of high quality countryside.

Planning Policy Wales therefore states, in paragraph 5.5.2, that “The planning system encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion, while recognising the needs of visitors and those of local communities”.

- **Cultural Considerations**

Cultural considerations can include how far the proposal supports the provision of jobs and economic activity and how the area’s distinctive offer, including the Welsh language and landscape, is promoted.

In this regard, it is considered that the proposed development will result in cultural benefits by enabling people to visit, and immerse themselves in, the local area. The culture of the area will therefore result in significant benefits, including enhanced job opportunities, economic activity and the enjoyment and recognition of the area’s language, history, landscape and other cultural experiences.

- **Environmental Considerations**

Environmental considerations include how important features of the natural and built environment are protected and enhanced, how environmental risks are prevented or appropriately managed and how efficient and most appropriate use of materials is made.

The development proposal protects the natural environment by utilising a site currently of limited ecological value, whilst the site’s proposed layout and planting scheme minimise the proposed development’s visual impact. In addition, existing trees and hedgerows on the site will be retained and additional planting will take place to enhance the ecological value of the area.

The landscape impact and ecological implications of the proposed development are considered further in the following section of this statement. Nonetheless, as will be noted, no unacceptable adverse environmental impacts have been identified as arising from the proposed development.

Local Planning Policy

- 3.3. The Local Development Plan is still being prepared and policies within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2005) provides the current policies.

- 3.4. The most relevant policy in relation to this application Policy CLF10 which sets out that *'New touring caravan and camping sites, and extensions to existing sites, will only be permitted where:- a) the site is unobtrusive and well screened without the need for additional strategic landscaping; and b) the site is not located within a green barrier or Special Landscape Area; and c) the site is used for touring purposes only and is not used for the storage of caravans which are not in use'*.
- 3.5. The plan recognises that holiday and touring caravan and camping sites are an important part of the self-catering holiday sector, and can make a useful contribution to the rural economy; and that there may be a demand for additional sites, or extensions to existing sites, during the Plan period although sites do need to be controlled to ensure they are not obtrusive. Access to the main road network is also important to ensure there is no danger or inconvenience to other road users.
- 3.6. The proposal relates to the creation of a new touring caravan site with 38 pitches. The site is within an enclosed arable field with boundary hedges and hedgerow trees. There is a line of trees in the corner where the only permanent feature (amenity block) is to be erected. Woodland to the south-east of the site also help to prevent views into the site. There will be additional planting within the site which will further reduce any adverse visual impact.

Economic Considerations

- 3.7. Leisure and tourism play an important role in sustaining the economy. This is recognised by national and local policy.
- 3.8. According to a 2019 Report prepared for the UK Caravan and Camping Alliance (UKCCA) the UK holiday park and campsite sector makes a substantial contribution to the UK tourism economy, generating £9.3bn in visitor expenditure, equivalent to £5.3bn GVA and supporting 171,448 FTE jobs. The UK holiday park and campsite sector accounted for 8% of the tourism sector's GVA. Visitors to UK holiday parks and campsites stayed up to 74% longer and spent up to 60% more than the national tourism average. Average spending by visitors staying in rented or touring accommodation is £101 per day – more than a typical tourist. The findings of the report reinforce the importance of holiday parks and campsites to the country's tourism economy.
- 3.9. In Wales the holiday park and campsite sector generated £1.33bn in visitor expenditure equivalent to \$761.4m GVA; supported 24,677 jobs; accounted for 15% of the tourism sector's GVA. Visitors stayed up to 82% longer and spent up to £83% more than the national tourism average.

- 3.10. The importance of the tourism industry to the Welsh economy is identified in the Welsh Government's "Partnership for Growth: Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020", which sets out the Welsh Government's aspirations for the tourism industry in Wales and recognises that tourism benefits many sectors of the economy including transport, retail and agriculture. Ken Skates, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism (Welsh Government) provides detailed information in this regard in a written statement entitled "Economic Benefits of Tourism to Wales" dated 3rd November 2015 and identifies strong growth prospects for tourism in Wales. The statement outlines that 2014 "was a record breaking year for Wales's tourism industry with domestic staying visitors to Wales peaking at over 10m trips in 2014 - with spend up 9% over the last two years; and trips from international visitors increasing by 9% since 2012 - and spend up 6%". The statement further identifies that "since 2005 tourism has seen high growth in employment in Wales, out-performing all priority sectors in Wales with half of all 16 to 24 year olds employed in the priority sectors in Wales now employed in tourism. Tourism also provides the highest proportion of employment for women in these priority sectors".
- 3.11. In addition to the economic impacts there are also community and social benefits. Camping and caravanning promotes healthy and active lifestyles and helps people to engage with the outdoors and nature.
- 3.12. The importance of holiday parks, camping and caravan sites in the UK has been highlighted by the current Coronavirus (Covid 19) Pandemic which has severely restricted the opportunity for foreign holidays. Since the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions many camping and caravan sites have seen unprecedented demand. This coupled with some sites having to reduce capacity to comply with social distancing measures has seen demand outstrip supply in some areas. The ongoing threat of the coronavirus outbreak and the potential for other serious future outbreaks will see a continuation of the demand for UK holidays. This will be further exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, particularly a no deal Brexit.

4 DESIGN, ACCESS AND LANDSCAPING

Design and Layout

- 4.1 The site has been designed to accommodate 38 touring pitches with an internal access track around the site and the pitches all accessed directly off this track. The pitches are to the north, east and one row to the southern side of the site. There are no pitches along the road side. The pitches will be divided by dwarf border hedges. Each pitch will have a designated parking place, water supply point and electric hook up. A grass amenity area will be provided in the centre of the site.
- 4.2 The pitches will be constructed of Grassforce GF50 grass reinforced sustainable drainage system. This offers a permeable ground reinforcement paver system for siting the caravans. The grid units will be filled in with grass. This will provide sustainable drainage for the pitches.
- 4.3 Lighting will be provided by 600mm high black bollard lights with polycarbonate diffuser and E27 60W bulbs. These will be located at points along the access track and will provide enough light to guide campers at night but not cause light pollution.
- 4.4 There will be an amenity block to the south-west corner of the site providing toilets, showers and washing up facilities. There are disabled facilities. A waste collection point and chemical toilet disposal point will be located next to the amenity block. This will be of timber clad appearance with plain tiled roof.
- 4.5 It is proposed to use a bio-disk system to take the foul drainage from the amenity block. A reed bed system or drainage field will then be used to outfall to the existing pond

Access

- 4.6 The caravan site will be accessed by the current field access off the A539 which will be improved as part of the scheme. There is a 2.4m x 212m visibility splay to the south and 2.4m x 116m visibility splay to the north. The first part of the access track of the road will be bitumen macadam vehicle crossing to highways specification.
- 4.7 The internal access track around the site will be 3.7m wide permeable vehicle access.

Appearance, Landscaping and Ecology

- 4.8 The only permanent structure on the site will be the amenity block which will have a timber clad appearance. There are existing trees in addition to the hedge in this corner of the site which will help to screen the building. The existing hedges and trees within the site will be retained and additional planting will take place to reduce any views of the caravans.
- 4.9 The pitches will be divided by dwarf hedges. Tree planting will take place around the caravan pitches and to the front of the site between the pitches and the road. This will help to screen the site and reduce visual impact as well as improving privacy for people staying on the site.
- 4.10 An ecology survey and report has been carried by Elite Ecology which makes several recommendations to ensure there is no ecological impact and to advise biodiversity enhancements. Recommendations include the creation of wildlife corridors for species such as badgers, planting a small area of wildlife meadow, and creating opportunities for species by including hedgehog boxes, a bumblebee box and bug hotel.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This statement is submitted in support of an application for a caravan site on land off the A539, Hanmer. The site is currently part of an arable field approximately ½ mile from the village. It is proposed to provide 38 touring caravan pitches, amenity block, access track and landscaping.
- 5.2 The proposed development involves the creation of tourist accommodation in the form of a touring caravan site which is a use allowed under the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan. The site will be located with an arable field and screened by existing hedges and trees. Further planting will also take place within the site. Tourist accommodation is also supported under National Planning Policy.
- 5.3 Tourist accommodation is important to the Welsh economy and creates income and jobs, in addition to social benefits. The demand for caravan sites in Wales is increasing and this will be fuelled by the current coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic and uncertainty surrounding Brexit.
- 5.4 It is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to unacceptably adverse impacts on the environment, local amenities or other interests of acknowledged importance.