

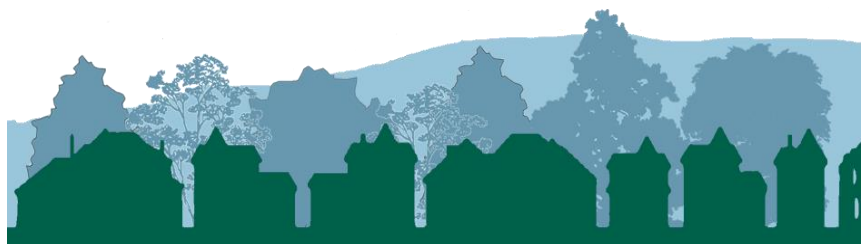
Planning, Design and Access Statement

Alexandra, Blackwood Road, Garth, Wrexham



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Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Application Site and Proposed Development
3. Information Submitted in Support of Planning Application
4. Planning Policy
5. Pre-Application Discussions
6. Accessibility
7. Environmental Sustainability
8. Character
9. Community Safety
10. Movement To, From and Within the development
11. Conclusion

Appendices

1. Photographs of Existing Site
2. Pre-Application Response [Wrexham Planning – 12th September 2013]
3. Pre-Assessment [Code for Sustainable Homes (1st September 2013)]
4. Ecological Assessment [Ecological Design Consultants ref 0801/Garth/RP/-R1-V1 September 2013]
5. Photograph of Proposed Brick Sample – Terca Heritage Blend
6. Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment [Tree Consultants ref 13/AIA/WXM/124 9th October 2013]
7. Drawing No H/01 - Existing Site / Location Plan
8. Drawing No H/02 rev A - Proposed Floor Plans
9. Drawing No H/03 rev A - Proposed Elevations
10. Drawing No H/04 - Proposed Site Plan
11. Drawing No H/05 rev A - Proposed Garage Plans

Note 1 - see paragraph 2.4 and section 5.3 of *Technical Advice Note 12: Design*, and paragraphs 2.18 to 2.21 of *Design and Access Statements in Wales*.

Note 2 - *Policy Clarification Letter CL-03-10: Design and Access Statements* - clarifies the duties on planning authorities to ensure that submitted Design and Access Statements contain all the information required by the legislation before validating planning applications.

Note 3 - Section A3 of *Technical Advice Note 12: Design* provides more detailed guidance on what Design and Access Statements should include.

Note 4 - The Equality Act 2010, which was passed in April 2010, consolidates and replaces previous equality legislation concerning discrimination including the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005.

1. Introduction

1.1 Since June 2009, Design and Access Statements are a statutory requirement with most applications for planning permission having to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement¹. In Wales, a Design and Access Statement is required with any householder planning application. A Design and Access Statement explains in detail how the design process for a proposed development has evolved. This includes the development's visual appearance, its scale and its relationship to the local surroundings and wider context.

1.2 The Statement has two inter-related elements. One is the design element, which explains the vision and design aspirations for the proposed development scheme; it shows how the scheme's design responds to the site, and to the physical character and context of the surrounding area. The other is the access element, which explains how issues relating to access have been dealt with; it shows how the proposed development will address the principles of inclusive design while responding to factors such as the existing topography of the site or constraints such as the shape of an existing building.

1.3 This Statement details the planning policy issues in relation to the proposed development and goes on to demonstrate how the five objectives of good design² have been applied to the proposed scheme and how it is compatible with the site's surroundings. The five objectives are as follows:-

- Accessibility
- Environmental Sustainability
- Character
- Community Safety
- Movement To, From and Within the Development

1.4 It is submitted in support of an application in relation to the demolition of an existing building and the erection of a proposed replacement dwelling on a site known as Alexandra, Blackwood Road, Garth, Wrexham.

¹*The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 PART 2 Applications - Article 7*

²*Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 12: Design*

2. The Application Site and Proposed Development

2.1 The application site is located off Blackwood Road in Garth 8 miles west of the town of Wrexham. It is located in the open countryside and outside any settlement limits as identified within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan and, importantly, within the recently designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Photo 1 – Existing Site Access

2.2 The existing property [see Photographs in Appendix 1] consists of the following:-

- timber clad main building with one bedroom, living room, kitchen / diner and bathroom;
- timber shed;
- concrete block outbuilding; and
- garage, which has been converted to another bedroom.

2.3 There is also a small caravan on site. It is clear that the existing property is habitable. A structural survey should not be required to demonstrate this.

Although in a reasonable condition, the existing property is very small and not appropriate in terms of scale and modern use to be considered suitable for family accommodation.

2.4 The proposed development consists of a two storey replacement dwelling with living room, kitchen / diner, small utility / cloaks and small home office on the ground floor together with three bedrooms [one en suite] and family bathroom on first floor. The site utilises the existing access of Blackwood Road.

3. Information Submitted in Support of Planning Application

3.1 In summary, the following have been submitted in support of this resubmitted planning application:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement
- Existing Site Photographs
- Pre-Assessment [Code for Sustainable Homes]
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Ecological Assessment [Ecological Design Consultants]
- Drawing No H/01 - Existing Site / Location Plan
- Drawing No H/02 rev A - Proposed Floor Plans
- Drawing No H/03 rev A - Proposed Elevations
- Drawing No H/04 - Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing No H/05 rev A- Proposed Garage Plans

4. Planning Policy

4.1 In consideration of the proposed development scheme the following local and national planning policy and guidance have been taken into account:-

- Wrexham Unitary Development Plan: May 2006 [Policies PS2, PS3, GDP1, EC4, EC5, H10 and T8]
- Local Planning Guidance Note 6: Access To and Use of Buildings
- Local Planning Guidance Note 7: Landscape and Development
- Local Planning Guidance Note 13 – Housing in the Countryside
- Local Planning Guidance Note 16: Parking Standards
- Local Planning Guidance Note 17: Trees and Development

- Local Planning Guidance Note 30: Design
- Planning Policy Wales [PPW] - Welsh Assembly Government [Edition 5 November 2012]
- PPW Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning [2009]
- PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design [2009]
- PPW Technical Advice Note 18: Transport [2007]
- Manual for Streets 2 - Department for Transport [2010]

4.2 Both PPG Wales and Wrexham Unitary Development Plan policies allow for the possibility of replacement dwellings in the countryside [Policy H10] subject to GDP1 [detailed development criteria] and ensuring that the important characteristics of the Special Landscape Area [as shown in the Wrexham UDP but since designated an Area of Outstanding Beauty] in which the site is located is not compromised. In light of this, a key consideration has been the scale of the proposed dwelling in relation to that which it replaces. The policy explanation to H10 refers to, ‘ .. *the replacement dwelling reflects the form, bulk, height and character of the existing dwelling*’ and Local Planning Guidance Note 13 – Housing in the Countryside refers to, ‘ .. *the floor area of the replacement dwelling should not be more than one third larger than the existing dwelling ..*’. However, these statements refer to situations when the local planning authority is presented with a proposal to replace an existing dwelling which is of a scale that affords a level of reasonable existing accommodation – possibly even up to three bedrooms with other standard family accommodation - with a larger proposal where up to a third larger may be appropriate subject of course to GDP1 and while meeting the aim, ‘ .. *to achieve a level of accommodation consistent with meeting residents’ reasonable aspirations while safeguarding the countryside from unnecessary and out of scale development*’ [Local Planning Guidance Note 13 – Housing in the Countryside].

4.3 Of course, the above is a sensible approach when considering a replacement proposal to replace a much larger existing property than the one under consideration in this instance. However, ‘Alexandra’, the existing dwelling, is unusually small [as described above], too small to provide appropriate residential accommodation for a family, and conforming to the above statements is not possible in attempting to provide a modest modern three bedroom dwelling.

A larger than usual replacement proposal is, therefore, sensible and acceptable in this circumstance. It is important to recognise that the proposed replacement dwelling is not any larger than what is usually considered acceptable in a rural location.

4.4 In light of the above it is, therefore, considered that in principle the scale of the replacement dwelling is acceptable in policy terms [UDP Policy H10 and Local Planning Guidance Note 13 – Housing in the Countryside]. This has been confirmed through pre-application discussions with the local planning authority. The remaining ‘detailed’ policies and guidance are considered in discussion of the six objectives relating to Design and Access.

5. Pre-Application Discussions

5.1 In early September, a pre-application enquiry was submitted to Wrexham Local Planning Authority explaining the above sentiments and seeking to establish how a replacement dwelling proposal may be considered should an application be submitted. At that time, the applicant had an option to purchase but with a contractual requirement to submit an application within three weeks. A response from the Local Planning Authority was received on 12th September, 2013 [see Appendix 2] stating that, in general:

‘The existing dwelling appears to be in a habitable condition and provided that were also the case when a formal application was submitted, then a proposal for a replacement dwelling would be acceptable in principle.’

5.2 With reference to LPG Note 13 - Housing in the Countryside and the location within the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the advice considered that although the proposed replacement scheme would be approximately 350% larger than the existing dwelling, there is ‘*scope to depart from LPG advice*’. It was acknowledged that:

‘There is at present two other detached two storey residential properties along the lane and in this context the proposal in its scale and set back from the lane would not be out of character. The existing dwelling is extremely small, therefore, it would also be reasonable to apply LPG13 more flexibly in order to provide additional living space, particularly as the existing dwelling is of no

architectural merit and the proposals present an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the site. I would, therefore, be prepared to support a dwelling of the size and form proposed.

5.3 The advice was positive in commenting upon the detailed design of the dwelling, use of materials, need for sensitive boundary treatment and the requirements for supporting information. Further discussion with the potential case officer has continued in relation to the detailed design of the dwelling and use of materials.

6. Accessibility

6.1 The replacement proposal will use the existing access off Blackwood Road. The access will lead into a small turning area and parking for a minimum of four cars with an adjacent double garage in accord with local planning guidance³. The access, parking and turning areas will be constructed to a standard suitable for domestic traffic and be finished with local loose stone aggregate to retain the rural appearance.

6.2 The site and the proposed replacement dwelling have been assessed in accord with local planning guidance.⁴ The internal arrangements are compliant to design guidance and any duty under the Equality Act 2010 [which incorporates the Disability Discrimination Act 1995].

7. Environmental Sustainability

7.1 There are a number of issues for consideration within this objective and the local planning authority to comply with UDP Policy GDP1:-

Code for Sustainable Homes

7.2 In accord with Welsh Government requirements for new residential dwellings, a Pre-Assessment Report has been submitted in support of the application [see Appendix 3] which demonstrates that the replacement dwelling

³ Local Planning Guidance Note 16 – Parking Standards

⁴ Local Planning Guidance Note 6 – Access To and the Use of Buildings

will be built to a minimum Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and that a minimum of 1 credit under 'Ene1 - Dwelling Emission Rate' has been achieved for both dwellings in accordance with the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes.⁵

Ecology

7.3 An initial meeting on site with the Ecological Consultant has established that there appears to be only a historic use by bats. Nevertheless, an Ecological Assessment (see Appendix 4) has been undertaken in accord with national planning guidance⁶ which establishes that there is no evidence of bat or bird activity in the existing dwelling or associated buildings all of which are to be demolished. The ecological assessment concluded:

'... the proposed demolition of the chalet and the construction of a new dwelling, if carried out in a bat and bird friendly manner and in accordance with the recommendations given will have no long term impact on the favourable conservation status for the species recorded.'

7.4 Conditions can be attached to ensure that this will be the case and that, in particular, the stated recommendations for both demolition and new construction will be adhered to.

8. Character

8.1 The character of the area is defined by open countryside interspersed by single residential dwellings and some farm buildings. Blackwood Road runs south west to northeast along the edge of a large woodland known as Black Wood. There are a number of considerations in relation to this objective – scale and design, use of materials, trees and landscape.

Scale and Design

8.2 Following detailed discussions with the client and his architect, the proposed scheme is purposely designed for its rural locality and location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in terms of scale and use of appropriate materials and comfortably sits in a large site well screened from Blackwood Road. It

⁵ Code for Sustainable Homes: Technical Guide November 2010 Version 3

⁶ TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning [Planning Policy Wales - Welsh Assembly Government]

should not be considered as an unnecessary and out of scale development in the countryside. Certainly, it has been designed with reference to this sensitive location and the need to limit the size, bulk and visual impact of the replacement dwelling. It will be in keeping with the large property known as 'Ruckminni' which was also a replacement dwelling located on a much more prominent site.

8.3 In essence the proposed replacement dwelling will occupy a footprint with modest proportions with low eaves line, slated pitched roofs with one small dormer window on the front elevation and three on the rear to reflect the rural context of the site. A 'small in depth' two storey front gable element has been introduced to add interest and reduce the bulk and massing of the replacement dwelling. Window design has been changed on this small projecting gable – using the same design as for the home office. The proposed detached garage will replace the existing garage / outbuildings currently located on the site.

Materials

8.4 It is proposed to use Terca - Heritage Blend facing brick [see Appendix 5: Photograph of Proposed Brick Sample] which will give the appearance of rough cut hand-made bricks and together with the use of natural slate for the roof will ensure that the proposed replacement dwelling will not look like a newly completed modern building but will add to the character of its rural location. Windows and doors will be white upvc but with a rural design [see Appendix 9: Drawing No H/03 – Proposed Elevations]. Rainwater goods will be black upvc round.

Trees

8.5 There are no statutory protected trees on site. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment / Method Statement [see Appendix 6] has been prepared and submitted in support of this application. It identifies all significant trees on site [based upon the principles of BS 5837: 2012 – see Appendix 1 to the report] and assesses the potential impact from development [demolition and new construction] upon the trees [see Appendix 3 to that report]. It sets out the methodology and protection measures for all works within close proximity to retained trees as indicated in its Tree Protection Plan [see Appendix 4 and 5 to that report]. The report states that:

‘The development requires the removal of tree number 2 in order to accommodate the proposed new driveway and one pine tree within group 1 that is located to the south of the existing access. There will be no significant adverse impact on the character and setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty when these trees are removed as tree number 2 is a small insignificant tree that is not visible from any location outside the site boundary and loss of the pine tree within group 1 will be largely unnoticed due to the amount of surrounding mature tree cover.

8.6 The proposal will be implemented in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837: 2012 and all visually prominent trees are being retained. Compliance with the Arboricultural Method Statement will be subject to condition and ensure compliance to the Council’s local planning guidance⁷ and Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Policies GDP1 and EC4 and Note 17 – Trees and Development.

Landscaping

8.7 As previously stated, the site is located within the open countryside and in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Although it is an existing residential site, it is important that the replacement proposal is sensitively treated. Scale, design and use of materials have been dealt with elsewhere in this statement. There are a number of prominent existing features on the site that require retention and enhancement. The frontage of the site along Blackwood Road has an existing small and attractive stone wall which will be retained with unwanted growth removed. In addition, there are a number of trees along this boundary which will also be retained – two dead trees will be removed [see Appendix 6 –Tree Constraints Plan].

8.8 The rear boundary is open and requires landscape treatment. It is proposed to erect a post and rail fence along this boundary supplemented with a hedge of native species.

⁷ Local Planning Guidance Note 17 - Trees and Development - Wrexham County Borough Council

8.9 All the above proposed hard and soft landscape treatment is in accord with the Council's local planning guidance⁸ and Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Policies GDP1 and EC4. It is considered that the retention of important site features and the introduction of supplementary planting will add to the character of the Special Landscape Area and area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [UDP Policy EC5 refers].

9. Community Safety

9.1 The existing dwelling on site has been unoccupied for some time which has not been ideal. The submitted proposal is for a replacement dwelling and will not result in any community safety issues, in fact, will result in a permanent residential use.

10. Movement To, From and Within the Development

10.1 Access to the site is off Blackwood Road, a country road on the hillside above the small settlement of Garth which is approached from the Acrefair to Llangollen road [A539]. Buses run to a regular timetable along the A539 and bus stops in either direction are located in Trevor approximately 2K to the southeast. There is a train station located in Ruabon approximately 7K to the east. Although Blackwood Road is subject to the national speed limit [60 mph], it is a small country road and actual speed limits would average 25 / 30 mph. Ample car parking is provided on site which will ensure that there will not be any on road parking. In accord with local planning advice⁹ and to ensure resident / highway safety, a parking / turning area is proposed on site. This will ensure that occupiers of the property will not reverse out on to Blackwood Road.

10.2 Refuse collection and fire access can be easily gained from Blackwood Road and no particular on site requirements are needed for these specialist operations of vehicles.

⁸ Local Planning Guidance Note 7 - Landscape and Development - Wrexham County Borough Council

⁹ Local Planning Guidance Note 16 – Parking Standards

11. Conclusion

11.1 The replacement dwelling provides for an effective and efficient reuse of this site, responding successfully to the rural locality. Its scale, design and use of materials contribute to the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is, therefore, considered that the development proposal complies with the Council's Policies contained within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan and takes into account advice contained in the relevant local and national planning guidance. In light of the above, this application is commended to the Council.

References

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4. Local Planning Guidance Note 6: Access to and use of Buildings – Wrexham County Borough Council
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