

Design and Access Statement

Based on the guidelines for Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure)
(Amendment) (Wales) Order 2009

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Demolition of existing garages and construction of new training building and associated residential accommodation.

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Design Principles and Concepts

The purpose of the proposal is to provide a training centre with accommodation for the Kronospan Ltd. complex in Chirk.

- Training Centre with dedicated training rooms and canteen for the accommodation
- Accommodation block with 27 single rooms and associated laundry and plant rooms.

The principle at the centre of this design is to create a training centre directly associated with the Kronospan main site operation but that sits comfortably within the landscape and is clearly subordinate to the existing stone farmhouse at Bryn Hyfryd.

Location and Existing Buildings

The site, Bryn Hyfryd, is located to the north of Chirk:

- on the B5070
- within the settlement boundary
- outside the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site but within the Pontcysyllte WHS buffer zone

Previously a farmhouse, the existing stone-built house is currently a private residence. There are two existing outbuildings, both disused. One is stone built, the other is of modern block construction. In the proposal, both outbuildings are to be demolished but the house is not affected and will continue in its present use.



Figure 1: existing house

The main house is accessed directly off the B5070. The site is bounded by a track to the south and a gas governor and sewage plant to the west - all in the ownership of Welsh Water. The farmland to the north is in the ownership of Kronospan. The main Kronospan plant is south of the track.

It is proposed that the new development is accessed off the track. A right-of-way has been obtained from Welsh Water to allow such access subject to some conditions to ensure the safe use of the track.



Figure 2: existing garages, from west

Character

The site lies on the northern boundary of the Chirk Settlement and therefore lies on the edge of the built-up area. Immediately to the north is rural landscape.



Figure 3: detail of chimney

The existing house is of predominantly stone construction with a modern extension to the rear that is pebble-dashed. The outbuildings are both stone and block construction and lie to the west, to the rear of the site.

With its slate roof and solidly coherent front facade facing the road directly, the main house is the dominant element of the site. The site falls over 3m from east to west so the existing outbuildings are barely visible from the road.

The proposal seeks to maintain this dominance of the main house with the training centre and accommodation sitting to the rear, lower part of the site.¹

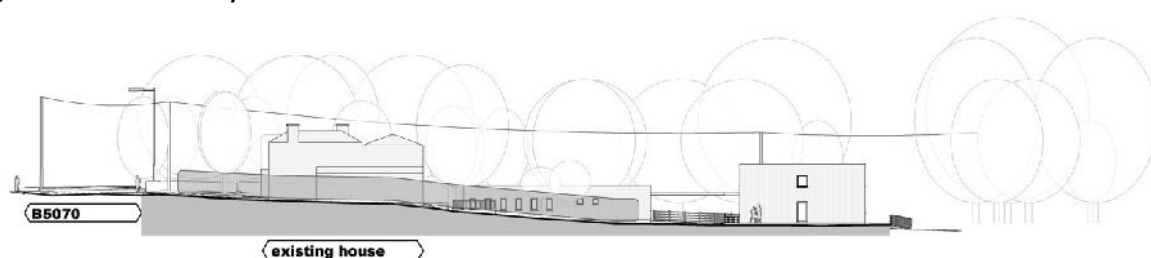


Figure 4: site section

The simple, clean lines allow the main house's windows, chimneys and stone detailing to draw the eye away from it. The buildings deliberately sit as low as possible in the landscape. The flat roof keeps the profile simple and low - to have used a pitched roof would have made the profile significantly more prominent from the north and also more obtrusive from the Crogen Road.

The substantial hedges to the north of the site, along the boundary to the fields, are retained. These substantially screen the new buildings from the road. The existing outbuildings are not even visible from the road.

Appearance

The building sits low in the landscape and the materials are chosen to compliment the colours and textures of the landscape. The predominant material will be red cedar boarding, laid vertically.



Figure 5: vertical red cedar cladding

¹ Refer to drawing 1081-210

As a natural material, it has a far more varied finish than, say, a rendered or metal cladding so will blend into the background and foreground of planning very effectively.

The detailing along the flashings, copings and windows, as small and defined areas of artificial materials, would be dark grey to emphasise the difference between it and the natural materials.

Community Safety

There are no public facilities within the development. It is a place of work and residence in association with that work. No antisocial activities are anticipated and any such activities would be dealt with severely as a matter of course.

No other impact on community safety is anticipated.

Pontcysyllte WHS buffer zone

The site lies level and is 3m below the road. It is not visible from the canal, nor does it have any impact on the sense of arrival to the WHS, especially in the context of the adjacent industrial site.

Environmental sustainability

As the building area is less than 1,000m² and the site area is less than 0.5 hectares, a BREAAAM assessment is not required.²

It is proposed that the building will be of modular or prefabricated construction cutting down on waste and time on site. Inasmuch as the building will be assembled on site, it could be disassembled in a similar fashion for re-use elsewhere.

Although a matter for detail design, it is envisaged that as many of the construction materials and products as possible will be sourced from the Kronospan range and used within the building, and all possible wood waste from the site recycled within the Kronospan manufacturing process.

The primary environmental gain will be in the reduction of travel to and from the site and other accommodation. Trainees and instructors access the site directly through the northeast gate of the Kronospan site and can be ferried to and from the site by minibus.

The site itself is well served by transport links:

- Bus stops adjacent to the site provide direct connections to Wrexham, Ruabon, Gobowen and Oswestry.
- Chirk Railway Station is located less than a mile southwest of the site with regular services on the Holyhead/Birmingham and Holyhead/Cardiff Central lines.
- The town centre is walking distance away and there are convenience shops close by.
- Cycle lanes are provided with side of the B5070.

² Building area 822m², site area 0.25 hectares (2,430m²)

Movement to, from and within the development

The training facility itself is directly associated with the plant operation and is not a public facility. Access would primarily be on foot via a turnstile by the existing north eastern gate. The accommodation unit is also directly associated with the plant and training facility.

The site is well served by local transport links, as described in the Environmental Sustainability section

Access from the B5070

The existing gate from the house to the B5070³ has good visibility south (toward town) but is bounded by a dense hedge, some 1.5m tall, to the north which restricts visibility severely. It is not possible to use this route to access the development without substantial works to the road and hedge.



Figure 6: existing house access gate

The existing asphalted track to the south of the site is in the ownership of Welsh Water and is used to access their water works to the west, as well as the gas governor immediately to the west of the site and emergency access to the north boundary of the Kronospan site.

Agreement has been reached with Welsh Water⁴ to allow for use of the track to access the development subject to some conditions relating to the safe shared use of the track. Defined crossing points are provided, along with timber post & rail fencing to encourage the use of the crossing point. A passing place is also provided as the track narrows as it progresses west.



Figure 7: existing track to south of site

³ 40mph speed limit in this area

⁴ A Certificate B is included in the application and the Notice No.1 served on Welsh Water.

At its junction with the B5070, the track has good visibility south towards town but somewhat restricted visibility north. The hedge along the front of the house will be trimmed to 900mm height, to allow for some growth, and have a maximum height of 1m. The small leylandii immediately within the boundary will be removed.

Type and frequency of vehicular use

Parking for any residents will be in the main factory car park, although there will be some drop-off traffic. There will be some movements for deliveries associated with the accommodation - laundry, etc.

- **Type of Vehicles:** While the purpose of the access is described above, the actual vehicles are difficult to define. General access would be envisaged for cars and some delivery vans up to box-van type.
- **Frequency of use:** Daily access for delivery vans and cars. A minibus may also be used to transport people from the site to the facility through the adjacent gate in the perimeter fence.



Figure 8: approach on B5070 from north

During the construction phase, access will be required for materials deliveries and a crane to place the modular units.

Access within the development

Although it is envisaged that all the users of the accommodation will be site workers and therefore able-bodied, a wheelchair accessible room with en-suite shower room, has been provided on the ground floor of the accommodation block in line with Part M requirements. This would cater for the possibility of an Instructor or trainee requiring such facilities.

The Training Centre itself will have a number of administrative staff. Shared wheelchair accessible WC facilities are provided.

The building allows for level access throughout by careful management of the levels of the site.

As the parking for the development is in the main site car park, only 4 spaces are provided within the site to allow for visitors or deliveries. One of the 4 spaces is designated for disabled people, closest to the building, with a clear accessible route to the entrance.

The routes around the building, other than between the drop-off area and the front entrance, are 1.5m width as they will be intermittently used and generally in the same direction.

Pre-application advice

Pre-planning meeting

A meeting was held with David Williams, Wrexham Planning Officer, and representatives from the Applicant and their Architect⁵ on 23rd October 2012, where it was confirmed that a pre-planning application would not be required.

- The development was described in broad terms and the site selection procedure explained- although Kronospan have a substantial industrial compound, the Bryn Hyfryd site lies outside the industrial curtilage but within the settlement boundary.
- A number of site layout options were presented, with the preference being to keep the higher portion of the building to the north and west, i.e. away from the road and house and as close to the existing trees to the Kronospan site boundary. Although it has been possible to keep the two-storey element to the west, it has not been possible to have the stepped building for form the accommodation block as there are two substantial sewer lines running east to west on the site boundaries⁶, severely restricting the buildable area. *This has also meant the reduction from 30 to 27 rooms.*

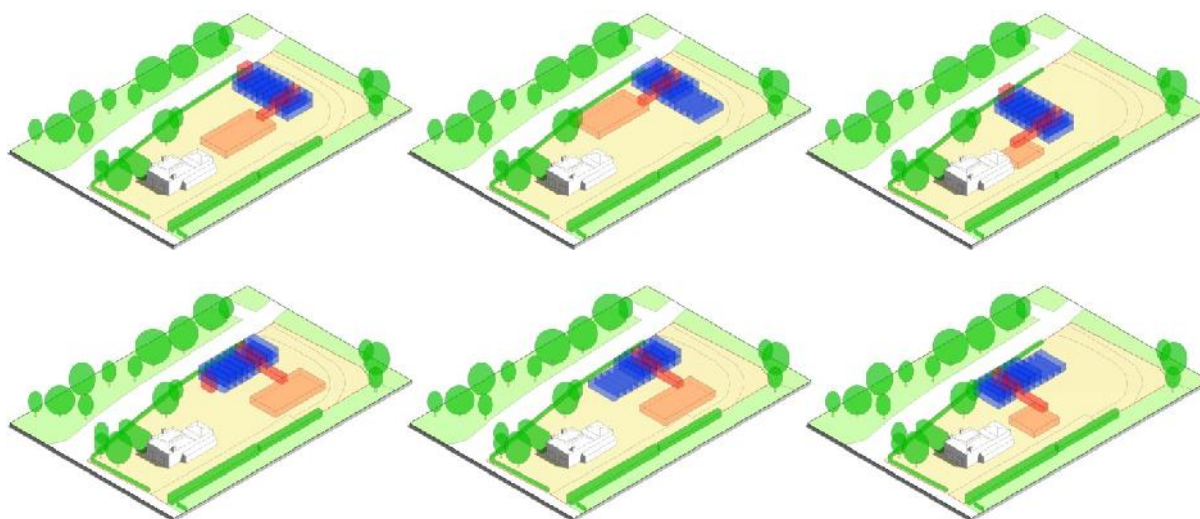


Figure 9: site layout options presented to Planning Officer at pre-application meeting

- The Planning Officer expressed a desire that a strong elevation be presented to the track to discourage parking in front of the development. This has been designed into the development. The drop-off area has been located as far into the development from the road as possible and will be clearly marked as a passing place/drop-off. The reception area has good visibility of the drop-off, entrance and parking areas so transgressions can be spotted and dealt with.
- That a flat roof would be preferable to a pitched roof was discussed, for the reasons described in the Character section above.
- It was proposed that an ecological report may not be required but that it would be confirmed at a later date. It was subsequently decided to go ahead with a preliminary

⁵ Mike McKenna & John Thompson from Kronospan, Marc Roberts from Lovelock Mitchell Architects.

⁶ Refer to drawing 1081 210 - site access and cutaway 3D

protected species report anyway, as the consequences for the development of the discovery of bats would be severe. The report is included as an appendix to the DAS and - although no evidence of bats was found - a bat roost will be provided to the north-western corner of the site at the suggestion of the Ecologist.

Informal telephone discussions with Planning Officers

Kevin Hughes has been very helpful in coordinating the information requirements for the application and in providing the contacts with the other departments within the Council. Peter Douthwaite in the Highways department was consulted by telephone about the access from the track to the B5070 and it was due to his advice that the hedge to the corner of the garden is being reduced in height. The Biodiversity Officer, Emma Broad, has been given a summary of the Preliminary Bat Survey and we are confident that the survey will be acceptable

Tree Survey

The Arboricultural Officer, Moray Simpson, has asked for a Tree survey & Arboricultural Impact Assessment and *this will be provided shortly after this application is submitted*⁷. This is, of course, a standard requirement⁸ of the planning application but, as the house is currently a residential property and there are no tree preservation orders on the site, there would have been no restrictions on any works done to the trees prior to the application.

The initial assessment of the Arboriculturalist is that *“the apple trees are pretty poor quality and can’t be seen from outside the site boundary and are not really worth retaining in the long term. Replacement trees would be a better option. The removal of the conifers should not be an issue as they offer no visual significance to the landscape quality and setting of the locale.”* This is an initial assessment only and the site will be subject to a full BS 5837 assessment and, if necessary, tree protection plan.

Landscaping

Although a “small scale development”, it is understood that a landscaping plan may be requested as a condition of the planning application, under Local Planning Guidance Note 7, especially with reference to the telegraph lines and drainage.

⁷ Alistair Henderson, M. Arbor A C.Env, of Tree Solutions Ltd.

⁸ Local Planning Guidance Note 17, Trees and Development.

Additional site photographs



Figure 10: view of existing garages from east



Figure 11: view of existing house and junction from junction to Crogen



Figure 12: view east, toward B5070, from the Welsh Water track showing the access to Kronospan on the right hand side of the picture



Figure 13: access to main Kronospan site from track, into which a new pedestrian gate will be inserted

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