Llangau
Access Road to Cyrchynan Ucha
Llanarmon D C
LL20 7LL

Planning & Listed Building Consent – Repairs & Alteration to Cottage

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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Repairs and Alterations to
Llangau, Access Road to Cyrchynan Ucha, Llanarmon D C, LL20 7LL

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1. Introduction

This Design & Access Statement accompanies an application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for essential repairs and improvements with minor alterations to the cottage at Llangau, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog LL20 7 LL . Llangau is a Grade II listed cottage.

A **concurrent application** seeks Full Planning Permission for the erection of a new ancillary artist's studio building within the curtilage of Llangau, intended to supplement the functioning of the relatively small cottage while leaving it untouched by expansion.

The purpose of this statement is to explain the design rationale, appearance and access arrangements for the alterations, and to demonstrate how the proposal responds to site context, heritage considerations, pre-application advice and relevant planning policy.

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2. Site and Context

Llangau is a small rural cottage located within the Ceiriog Valley, accessed via a narrow rural lane and steep access track, set within an open upland landscape. The site reflects a traditional rural pattern of a modest dwelling historically associated with agricultural use.

The curtilage includes:

- the listed cottage (principal building);
- the remains of an attached agricultural barn, now surviving as a stone ruin;
- areas of previously disturbed ground close to the access lane, currently used for parking and access.

The cottage and attached barn first appear on an Ordnance Survey map in 1980 following a survey of 1874. The Listing Record says it was built in the 19C but it could easily have been built earlier. It is sited to shelter in the lee of the steeply sloping land to the south and west. It was extended southward by John Jones, the grandfather of one of the current owners, in the early 1900s, and this extension appears first on an OS Map surveyed in 1910. At some time the south gable was clad in corrugated iron as the wall must have been inadequate to resist the fierce south westerly wind driven rain.

The barn was in a dangerous condition by the late 1970s and was made safe by taking down the roof and upper part of the walls. Its ruin remains an important element in the setting. In

addition to figs 1-7 below, for more information on Llangau see the separate **Heritage Statement** and **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal** for the cottage.

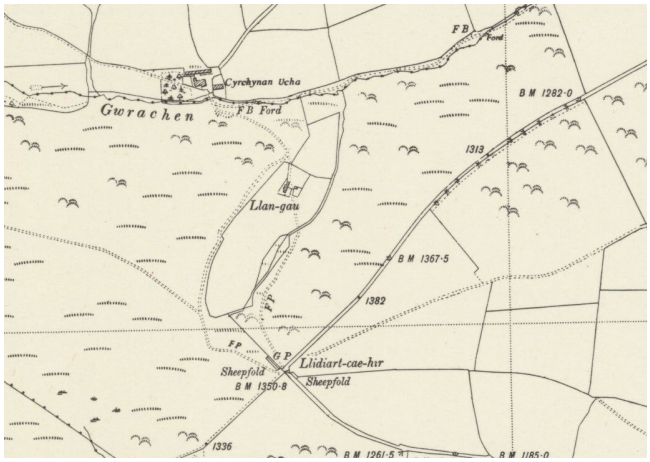


Fig 1 Denbighshire OS map 1954

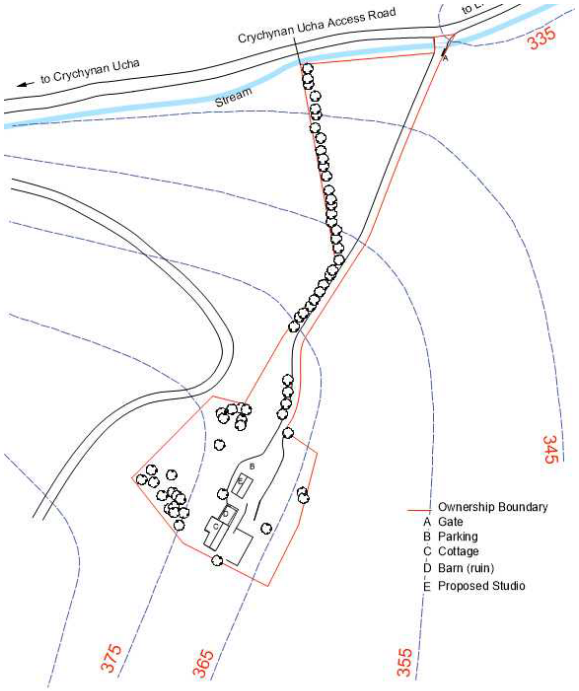


Fig 2 Location Plan



Fig 3 Views of Llangau from the road to Llanrhaeadr to East- this is the only publicly accessible route from which the site is visible



Fig 4 View of the cottage and parking area -the proposed site for Studio - from the access track (north)



Fig 5 View of the cottage and parking area beyond -the proposed site for studio barn - from the southern boundary



Fig 6 View of the cottage from the lower garden area to the east



Fig 7 View of the back of the cottage (west)

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3. The Brief and Design Objectives

Currently the cottage is difficult to inhabit, especially in colder and wetter weather. The building is draughty and uninsulated. There is no electricity or gas supply. The lighting is by paraffin lamps or candles, which is not only labour intensive, but presents a fire hazard. The only heating is by bottled gas fires and one open solid fuel fire in a broken-down cast-iron fireplace/range. Ther is no inside WC nor a bathroom. There is running cold water, supplied by use of a hand pump, but the hot water system, which relied on a Raeburn stove is not functioning, because the damp conditions had caused premature deterioration of the stove. Many of the rooms lack daylight and do not enjoy the views of the fine landscape as well as they could.

The roof and chimney stack are in a reasonable condition but some slates have slipped, and there is hole in the chimney at high level under the roof above the South Bedroom. The plaster throughout has deteriorated because of the damp conditions. The poor comfort conditions dissuade the use of the cottage which in turn exacerbates the deterioration of the fabric, so continuing a vicious cycle. The kitchen floor is cracked, and very difficult to clean.

The overarching brief is to make the cottage habitable to basic modern standards while touching its fabric as delicately as possible.

The key design objectives are:

- to maintain the character of the listed cottage**;**
- to provide the dwelling with the basic amenities required of a modern home

- to leave untouched as much of the fabric as is possible while fulfilling the brief. That includes the treatment of the barn ruin
- to use materials that follow the best current environmental practice while being in sympathy with the simplicity of approach to materials of the cottage's construction
- to install solar photovoltaic panels at distance from the cottage to provide essential power (these are part of the separate concurrent application mentioned in the introduction)
- to minimise visual, landscape and ecological impact;

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4. Design Evolution and Proposals

Interior arrangement
Ideas for enlargement of the cottage to the rear were explored with the aim of introducing a little more spatial generosity, eg by moving the stairs out of the living room to a rear extension that would extend the planform of the existing pantry southwards. These trial proposals would also bring evening light into the living room.

However, the impact on the existing fabric of these designs would be considerable, leaving aside the cost. Once it was decided to stay within the footprint the options for adding an internal bathroom became limited, leading to the current plan form.

The internal partitions are simple studwork lined with woodwool boards and not gypsum plasterboard for reasons of environmental performance.

Fabric
In line with current imperative of sustainability, it is essential to increase the thermal performance of the roof walls and, where sensible, the ground floor.

Roof
The option was considered to undertake a wholesale replacement of the roof, adding sarking felt and installing maximum thickness of insulation. On further inspection two factors drove the decision to leave the roof largely undisturbed, with only essential slipped slate repair and adding as much insulation as allowed by the slim existing rafters. Firstly, the roof is in reasonable condition with not need for imminent replacement. Secondly, the preliminary ecological appraisal (included in the documents) has raised the possibility of nesting species being disturbed by roof removal and replacement. The key issue with retention is the lack of sarking, making the fabric vulnerable to wind and driving rain, which can be fierce in this location. Originally the roof had torching under the slates (lime based mortar applied under the slates along the batten lines) but this has mostly crumbled. The proposal is therefore to staple breathing membrane between the rafters as tight to the edges such that it will be retained in place by the insulation batts. There will be slight sag between the rafters allowing any ingressed water to drain away provided the membrane is dressed to outside at the bottom. Further insulation in the form of wood fibre insulation boards will be fixed underneath the rafters to be skim coated with lime plaster for a paint finish.

Walls
The walls have huge thermal mass and applying insulation inside will be the most effective for warming the rooms up in a reasonable time, while reducing energy consumption generally.. .The options are either to fix some kind of insulation board inside or to use an insulating plaster. The plaster on the walls needs so much repair as to amount to replacement. It is therefore proposed to use insulating plater, which is particularly effective on rough stonework . Diathonite is a well-tired, sustainable and breathable solution and is proposed to be applied to a nominal 50mm of depth.

Floors
As noted above the kitchen floor is in poor condition. The proposal is to take it up and lay new quarry tile of a similar colour on a limecrete base with foam glass insulation. A heating mesh is to be placed under the tiles powered by solar PVs (part of a concurrent planning application) to regulate the minimum temperature of the cottage through the year to minimise humidity risk. The Living Room and the Pantry floors are in good condition and are to be left undisturbed.

New Windows
The original cottage had small windows to the east, one from the kitchen and one from the room above, and to the west,one in the pantry. The south wall had the massive hearth and fireplace – we don't know if there were windows to one or both sides. The north wall was blank, shared with the barn. The south extension was given one window to the east in the ground floor parlour and one to the south in the first floor bedroom.

It is proposed to install one window on the south gable in the ground floor Living Room, and one each on the ground floor and first floor in the north gable. These will be high performance double glazed timber windows.

Services
The existing plumbing is to be renewed with

- a larger cold water tank installed at high level under the roof in the North Bedroom
- a hot water cylinder fed from the cw tank and heated by a coil connected to the wood burner with back boiler plus an immersion heater linked to the solar electricity
- the above feeding a new kitchen sink and the bathroom
- a composting WC is proposed

We do not propose to install a whole house power or lighting circuit. There will be a bank socket outlets in the pantry from to allow charging of portable lamps – to replicate the traditional means of lighting by oil lamps and candles.

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5. Access and Movement

No changes are proposed to the existing site access or parking arrangements.

The two front doors to the cottage each have two steps. The rear door has a small threshold step of ca 10cm reached from a small brick patio. We propose to re-lay the paviours to create small slope at 1 in 15 to allow barrier free access to the dwelling.

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6. Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

The proposal adopts a low-impact, fabric-first approach:

- A limecrete floor (eg the Sublime system by Ty Mawr, the renowned sustainable construction product company based in Brecon)
- As much insulation as existing space will allow using natural materials: Diathonite (cork lime) insulating plaster, wood fibre batts, wood fibre boards and woodwool boards; and timber
- low embodied carbon materials throughout, re-usable where possible;
- wood-burning stoves for space heating, as required in addition to solar powered electric base heating;
- electricity generated from on-site photovoltaic panels (subject of concurrent planning application);
- cold water supply from spring-fed on-site water tank
- No external lighting is proposed. This is in keeping with the off-grid spirit of the place and to retain sensitivity to wildlife.

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7. Ecology and Green Infrastructure

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken and accompanies the application. In summary. No significant concerns have been raised, but some survey work is advised. The decision to leave the existing roof intact rather than strip and renew has been informed by the Appraisal.

Ecological matters and biodiversity enhancements are addressed in detail in the PEA and the accompanying Green Infrastructure Statement and are not repeated here.

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8. Planning Policy Context

The proposal has been developed with regard to:

- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12);
- TAN 12: Design;
- TAN 24: The Historic Environment
- Cadw guidance on managing change to listed buildings;

- Wrexham Local Development Plan policies relating to design quality, heritage and development within the setting of listed buildings.
    - Policy GDP1 – General Development Principles
    - Policy EC6 – Biodiversity Conservation
    - Policy EC9 – Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest
    - LPG 30 – Design
    - LPG 32 – Development and Biodiversity

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9. Response to Pre-Application Advice

The PAA states that “In principle, the Authority has no objection to these works”

Additional information is requested, namely:

- a detailed schedule of materials, coverings and finishes for both internal and external works,
- schedule to be supported by details of the materials to be used such as the proposed Diathonite Plaster which has been noted,
- submission of proposed and existing elevation drawings,
- proposed and existing floorplans,
- construction details of new partitions to be formed, and scaled joinery details for any new or replacement doors or windows.
- A Heritage Impact Assessment / Statement

The above information accompanies this Desing & Access Statement

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10. Conclusion

The proposed repairs and alterations to the cottage at Llangau are carefully considered in order to successfully preserve the character of this Grade II Listed building while providing essential liveability in the dwelling. The latter is in itself essential to the future preservation of the dwelling and the contribution it makes to the heritage and landscape of the Ceiriog Valley. The proposal responds positively to site context, pre-application advice and relevant planning policy.