

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No: P/19/0302

Site Address: Land At Cropthorne Stables
Shingrig Road
Trelewis
Treharris

Development: Proposed Indoor menage building, horse walker / exerciser and the retention of the hardcore area

Case Officer: David Cross

Site Visit: 4th December 2019

Application Expiry Date: 10th February 2020

Consultation reply date expired:

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to an irregular shaped area of land that lies on the outskirts of Trelewis, measuring approximately 0.2 of a hectare. Historically, the land comprised an area of undeveloped open grassland that was used in conjunction with the existing stables and ménage, which adjoins the site to the north-west. However more recently, hardcore material has been laid across the entire site without planning permission, which was used as part of a storage business involving shipping containers and skips. A 2.7m high timber fence has also been erected along the north-west boundary, which visually separates the site from the adjoining equestrian centre. It appears that the fencing was utilised at the time to screen the shipping containers and skips within the site. It is noted that the storage containers and skips have recently been removed from the site, following enforcement action (Ref PE/17/0126).

Although parts of Trelewis are urbanised, the character of the area surrounding the site is more rural in nature, with adjoining fields to the north, east and south. Additionally, there is a watercourse and woodland area to the south, along with a cycle/pedestrian route. In this respect, it is acknowledged that the site lies outside of the settlement boundary as defined by the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan.

Access to the site is via an unsurfaced track, which runs alongside (to the south of) the stables and ménage. To the north of the site is a private track, which provides access to several dwellings to the east within Caerphilly County Borough.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the retention of the hardcore surface that extends across the entire site, the erection of an indoor ménage building and the provision of a horse walker/exerciser facility.

The proposed building would be situated adjacent to the existing open ménage and would measure 20m wide by 30m deep and 7.5m high with a pitched roof. The building would incorporate two roller shutter door entrances (6m wide by 4.6m high) on the south-west and south-east elevations. The external material finishes would comprise green profiled cladding on the elevations and roof. The roller shutters would also have a green finish.

The proposed horse walker would be located in the eastern corner of the site and would comprise a circular area (11.2m diameter) enclosed by a 2m high mesh fence.

A detailed landscaping scheme has not been presented at part of the proposal. However the submitted plans, indicate the existing trees along the north-east boundary of the site would be retained as part of the development.

PLANNING HISTORY

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| P/11/0124 | - | Installation of herringbone drainage system and creation of hardcore track. |
| | | Prior approval GRANTED on 07.06.2011 |
| P/11/0033 | - | Installation of herringbone drainage system and creation of hardcore tracks. |
| | | Prior approval GRANTED on 13.04.2011 |
| P/10/0061 | - | Creation of equestrian centre including the erection of stable blocks with associated storage facilities, creation of ménage and parking area. |
| | | Permission GRANTED on 23.09.2010 |

CONSULTATION

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Engineering and Traffic Group Leader | - | No objection. |
| Planning Division's Landscape Architect | - | A number of measures are advised to essentially screen the development from the surrounding area. |
| Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council | - | No objection. |
| The Coal Authority | - | No objection, subject to a condition relating to intrusive site investigation works. |

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, two site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site.

No representations were received as result of the publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application:

National planning policy

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Edition 10, December 2018:

Para 3.5 – 3.15 set out the importance of high quality design to ensure inclusive design, to promote environmental sustainability and ensure high environmental quality. Regard should also be given to the special characteristics of an area, community safety and to encourage sustainable forms of transport.

Para 3.51 notes that previously developed land wherever possible should be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.

Para 4.1.43 – 4.1.55 set out the need to reduce the level and speed of traffic in new development, the provision of car parking and how this may be integrated into new development to minimise the reliance of cars. Transport assessments are also an important mechanism to determine anticipated impacts a development proposal may have.

Para 5.5.2 encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and the needs of visitors and those of local communities.

Para 5.6.1 notes that a strong rural economy is essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. The establishment of new enterprises and the expansion of existing business is crucial to the growth and stability of rural areas.

Para 6.3.3 acknowledges that all landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place and local authorities should protect and enhance their special characteristics, whilst paying due regard to the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits they provide, and their role in creating valued places.

Para 6.4.21 – 6.4.23 note that local authorities should seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks to ensure that any adverse environmental effects can first be avoided, mitigated or compensated. Regard should also be given to any potential impacts on protected species which may result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5, Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 6, Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities, July 2010

- TAN 18, Transport, March 2007
- TAN 12, Design, March 2016

Local planning policy

Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031:

- SW4 - Settlement Boundaries
- SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- SW12 - Improving the Transport Network
- EnW1 - Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- EnW4 - Environmental Protection
- EnW5 - Landscape Protection

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

- SPG 4- Sustainable Design, July 2013
- SPG 5- Nature and Development, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Land use

The application site is located outside of the settlement boundary and as such the proposal constitutes 'countryside development' as defined by Policy SW4 of the LDP. Development in such locations can be supported where it relates to the expansion of an existing business in the countryside and is for tourism, recreation or leisure facilities, where the need for a countryside location is fully justified.

A Planning Justification Statement has been submitted in support of this application. It is highlighted by the applicant that the benefits of an indoor ménage, is that horse riding and training can be undertaken throughout the year and that it can provide a quieter, more relaxed and private atmosphere for horses. Additionally, the statement noted that the only issue for the existing equestrian centre, is that during inclement weather there is no covered area to exercise horses.

It is recognised that the proposed development would provide an additional facility that forms part the existing equestrian centre and would involve the expansion of the existing business within a countryside location. It is also accepted that such facilities are typically located on farms or in rural environments. Notwithstanding this, Policy SW4 acknowledges that there is a general presumption for the protection of the countryside and that the provision of recreational/leisure facilities in such areas should be fully justified.

No details have been provided relating to the viability of the proposal, which is particularly important given the scale and permanent nature of the development. In this respect, no evidence has been submitted to indicate how often the existing ménage is used, which may otherwise demonstrate a reasonable demand to justify the need to provide another ménage. In this case, the main premise of the justification appears to relate to the simple need for a sheltered ménage to be used occasionally during inclement weather.

It is noted in the applicant's statement that consideration has been given to the enclosure of the existing ménage, but this was discounted on the grounds that the building would be too large and would result in the loss of the open facility during the summer periods. It is noted that the existing ménage is approximately twice the size of the current proposal. Whilst no details of alternative approaches have been submitted with the application, it would appear reasonable that a sheltered element could be incorporated over part of the existing ménage. If appropriately designed, this would likely have a far lesser impact on the countryside.

The planning permission for the equestrian centre (P/10/0061) was subject to a condition, which essentially removed permitted development rights, relating to temporary uses, to prevent any public or private horse shows or other events from taking place. At that time, there were concerns with the potential intensification in the use of the site, which may lead to traffic and parking issues in the area. There is a lack of evidence to demonstrate a viable need for the indoor ménage by the existing users of the stable. There are also concerns that other persons, who do not normally keep horses at the adjoining stables, could use the ménage. This could lead to the intensification of the use of the site with little planning control to avoid potential highway issues. Furthermore, in the event that the proposed ménage is not used as often as anticipated, there may be pressure in the future to seek an alternative use for the building i.e. industrial/storage use, which would further frustrate the aim of the LDP to protect the countryside.

Insufficient information has been provided to adequately justify the expansion of the existing business within the countryside, which would result in an unacceptable encroachment and deterioration of the open countryside. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Policy SW4 of the LDP.

Design approach

The existing stables and ménage are located on the southern fringe of Trelewis and set within a rural environment, which is characterised by the surrounding fields and woodland areas. Prior to the unauthorised creation of a hardstanding area across the entire site, the land comprised an area of grassland that could be used in association with the stables for horse grazing and exercise. This area of open land would have been seen as part of a wider group of fields to the north. Although an avenue of trees have been planted along the northern boundary of the site, which creates a visual break, this is generally consistent with the character, which includes tree lined field boundaries. During the period that the site was utilised for storage, with a number of steel containers and skips, it appears that a 2.7m high solid fence was erected alongside the existing ménage to assist in screening the site. This has resulted in the loss of openness between the existing equestrian centre and the site, which further deteriorates the qualities of the area. Indeed the extensive area of hardcore material across the site has significantly altered the character and appearance of the site.

The existing stable building is a low single storey 'L' shaped structure and of a typical design, with timber cladding on the elevations and a low steel profiled pitched roof. The scale and mass of the proposed indoor ménage is such that it would be seen as an obvious addition to the equestrian centre, which further encroaches and deteriorates the qualities of the countryside. The indoor ménage would appear as a bulky structure and industrial in nature, with profile metal cladding on the elevations and roof and limited openings, save for two roller shutter entrances. This building would appear out of context with the immediate surroundings, albeit partly screened by the existing trees and fencing.

Additionally, it would not be seen as part of a group of other large industrial/agricultural type buildings. As such, its design, in terms of its scale, mass and material finishes would be at odds with the existing equestrian centre. The proposal would represent a clear intensification of the existing use and development in the area to the detriment of the character and appearance of the countryside.

The proposed horse walker would be a small-scale structure that is used to help exercise/warmup horses. It would be of a typical circular design for such facilities, involving a mesh fence enclosure. Whilst its design is acceptable and would not have a significant impact on the area, its location in the far eastern corner of the site, appears to be somewhat detached from the rest of the equestrian centre.

For the above reasons, the proposed indoor ménage by virtue of its design, siting, scale, massing and material finishes, would be contrary to Policy SW11 of the LDP. The development would also have a harmful and permanent impact on the qualities of the landscape to the detriment of the character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to Policy EnW5.

Highway implications

Access to the site would be via a private unmade track, which currently serves the existing stables and ménage. It is set out in the Planning Justification Statement that the development would provide an additional facility for the existing users of the stables. Based on this ascertainment, there would not be a significant change in the existing traffic movements. Therefore, the access is deemed to be of an adequate standard to accommodate the traffic (i.e. vehicles with horse boxes) associated with the equestrian centre, with sufficient parking and turning facilities. Furthermore, the section of the track leading from the stables to the proposed indoor ménage and horse walker, would be capable of accommodating the traffic movements within the site (both vehicular traffic and horse riders) with additional room available in the vicinity of the proposed indoor ménage for parking and the storage of horse boxes. In this regard, the Engineering and Traffic Group Leader has not raised any highway safety concern. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policies SW11 and SW12 of the LDP.

Ecological impact

The land within the application site has been subject to significant ground disturbance with the provision of a hardcore surface across the entire site, which has resulted in the loss of the former grassland/field environment. As such, there are no features within the site of ecological value. It is acknowledged that along the boundaries of the site there are a number of mature trees, which may be of some value to roosting/foraging bats or nesting birds. However, given that the development would be situated entirely on the existing hardstanding area and that the existing trees would be retained, there would likely be a negligible impact on any protected species or habitats. In this respect the Planning Division's Ecologist has not raised any significant concerns, but has noted that the habitats along the Nant Caech Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC 56), which adjoins the southern boundary of the site, should remain a dark corridor for nocturnal species. In this regard, a strategy for the external lighting could be secured by condition to minimise any impacts. To compensate for the loss of the former grassland within the site, environmental enhancement measures could also be secured by condition to incorporate bat/bird boxes on the ménage building. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy EnW1 of the LDP.

Local amenity

The development would have the greatest potential to impact on the residential amenities of Stable View, which is situated approximately 65m to the north-west of the site. This property has recently been constructed and is positioned adjacent to the existing stables and the associated access/parking area. Given the nature of the proposal, which seeks to the expand the facilities to the south-east away from the neighbouring property and the existing separation distance, there would be a minimal impact on residential amenity. In this regard, it is acknowledged that no objections were raised as a result of the publicity exercise undertaken. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policy SW11 of the LDP.

CONCLUSIONS

The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the WBFG Act") has been taken into consideration when determining this application. In reaching the following recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been considered, as well as the Welsh Ministers well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

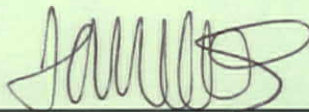
For the above reasons, the proposed development is unacceptable and runs contrary to policies SW4, SW11 and EnW5 of the LDP. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: BE REFUSED for the following **REASONS:**

1. The proposed development would result in an unjustified, unacceptable and intrusive encroachment into the open countryside that would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies SW4, SW11 and EnW5 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

2. The proposed indoor ménage, by virtue of its design, mass, scale and material finishes, would not be appropriate to its local context and thus would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Head of Town Planning

DATE:

7/2/20