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8th November 2017

our ref: 06/1047 Trago Mills, Merthyr Tydfil
your ref:

Design & Access Statement

1. Proposal

- 1.1. This proposal is for revisions to the site layout, shop and canopy of the petrol filling station (PFS) (approved under P/03/0130), located above the entrance roundabout of the Trago mills site – see plate 1.



Plate 1 – view of PFS site from southeast

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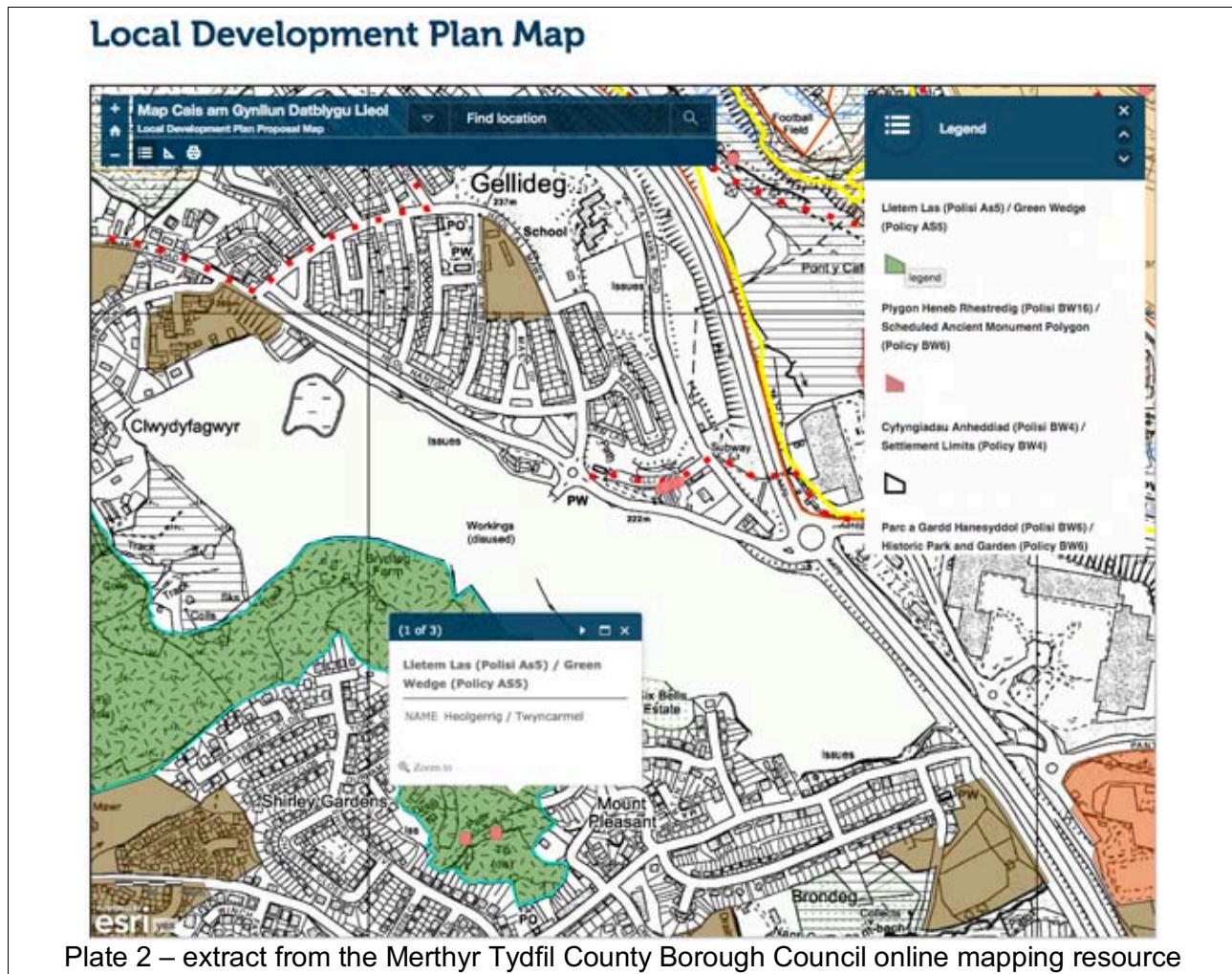
2. Planning History

2.1. The below is a list of the primary planning approvals for the Trago Mills site. The reserved matters application P/03/0130 included the design of the main retail store and a PFS. This approval has been implemented so the current use of the land in question is as a PFS.

Application Reference	Application Type	Decision
52/9/98/0061	Depositions	Approved
P/00/0268	Outline	Approved
52/P/01/0025	Groundworks	Approved
P/03/0130	Reserved matters	Approved
P/04/0102	Roundabout	Approved
P/08/0105	Groundworks	Approved
P/10/0014	Extension	Approved

3. Planning Policy

3.1. The application site is not set within any specific land designations, as identified in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council online mapping resource – see plate 2 below.



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4. Access

- 4.1. The objective is to ensure ease of access for all.
- 4.2. Part of the original development included the construction of a new roundabout, bus stop and shelter on the Swansea Road under a S278 Agreement to link the development with the public network. That work has been completed and adopted by the Highways Authority.
- 4.3. The Trago Mills site is well connected to the wider strategic network via the A470T and has good access to the Town Centre and rail network by means of the 2 bus routes on the northern site boundary – a 15 minute frequency service from Clwydfagwyr and Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. The existing footpath network allows access to the Town Centre. The gradient of public domain footpaths on Swansea Road enters the site at the main entrance on Swansea Road and continues along the normal 1.8m wide pavements alongside the main internal road to either the main store entrance to the east, or rising to the west into the leisure areas of the sider Trago Mills site, as well as the PFS site.
- 4.4. Part of the implementation of the initial works included the realignment of the permissive public footpath from Gellideg to Heolgerrig. That footpath link will allow access for local users during the period of the store being open.
- 4.5. The Swansea Road site entrance and access road remains as approved and is presently controlled and monitored by security staff. That control will continue in the completed development with Trago's own security organisation monitoring the site entrance and public domain near the entrance. This aspect of community safety should encourage access by pedestrians.
- 4.6. Pedestrians using the local network or those using the Town Centre-Clwydfagwyr bus service would access the site from Swansea Road. The 1.8m wide footpath runs alongside the main access road down to the principal entrance or up to the leisure and PFS plateaus. For residents of Gellideg and Clwydfagwry there is permissive footpath access from the site boundaries. Within the site all vehicles are subject to a 20 mph speed limit to align with the generally accepted figure for residential areas. Users of motorised wheelchairs can gain access to the public footpath network.
- 4.7. Trago security staff will have a stock of wheelchairs for use by ambulant disabled customers within the premises. The general access to the premises from the disabled parking areas is fully accessible.
- 4.8. And rather than relying upon the Swansea Road bus stop alone, the scheme incorporates a bus stop adjacent to the Tourist Information Point. It is intended that buses would make a short stop, not use the coach park facility, and continue the service on to their normal schedule. Customers choosing to use a bus service and purchasing bulky goods can use the goods delivery service that Trago operate.
- 4.9. The National Cycle Network Route 8 runs through Merthyr on the Taff Trail, which is only about 0.8km from the site. In order to attract cyclists, secure storage for cycles is essential. Cyclist will have secure cycle stands located to near the main store entrance, the detail of which is subject to a separate planning application. Again, for delivery of goods cyclists can opt for the delivery service available within Trago.

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- 4.10. The original approved scheme contained provision for 1280 standard car parking spaces 2.4x4.8m. Changes in the pattern of vehicle ownership informed the changes in the parking provisions of the extension application referenced P/10/0014. In that approval the standard car parking spaces were widened from 2.4m to 2.5m reflecting dimensional changes in vehicles and an intention to create a more relaxed environment. In addition, a specific family parking area was introduced, close to the main entrance, in order to minimise the risk to children from manoeuvring vehicles totalling.
- 4.11. The approved PFS site layout does not currently allocate any customer parking adjacent the shop. The enclosed, proposed, site layout includes 5 customer parking spaces.
- 4.12. Trago's existing branches are a destination coach stop for a number of operators. Trips run from the Midlands and it is likely that these operators will move their destination to Merthyr. These operators have access to a designated coach park located to the south of the main store entrance.
- 4.13. Again, customers may choose to use a delivery service for bulky items. For coach users with disabilities the access route to the store entrance is defined by surface changes in both colour and texture.
- 4.14. The scheme has sought to eliminate customer loading from the vicinity of parking for vulnerable groups. There is provision for spaces for those with disabilities, all of which are sited close to the main entrance. The route from the parking area to the main entrance is defined both in terms of form and clearly defined surface changes to provide both colour and textural cues for those with partial sight. Customers with disabilities having purchased goods may have assistance in loading vehicles at the loading bays. There will be accessible facilities for lavatories, customer services and tills.
- 4.15. At their other stores Trago have noted an increase in customers using motorcycles. As with cycles, a key element in the attraction or otherwise of motorcycle use is that of secure storage. There is provision for motorcycles in a secure area with facility to chain locks a vehicle, located under part of the offices, south east of the main store entrance.

5. Character

- 5.1. The objectives are:
- Sustaining or enhancing local character
 - Promoting legible development
 - Promoting a successful relationship between public and private space
 - Promoting quality, choice and variety
 - Promoting innovative design
- 5.2. The original site was the former Heolgerrig brickworks and the remainder a deposition site for arisings from historic mining activity. The site is linked with the wider Merthyr Tydfil Landscape of Historic Importance although the site itself has no cultural heritage significance.

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- 5.3. To the North, the site is bounded by the A470 and Swansea Road. To the northeast of the A470 a ribbon of commercial and business development has been completed. In the location of the Trago site the dominant development is Cyfartha Retail Park, opened in 2005. Cyfartha is a development of around 18,800 sq m of large unit retailers with three drive-through fast food outlets. The built elements are grey coloured, high single-storey shells. The individual retailers have adopted high-profile corporate images to create identity. From Cyfartha ground level corporate identities are the dominant visual element. However, Cyfartha is set down from the A470, the application site and land to the southwest. From those locations the dominant feature of Cyfartha is the roofscape. The Trago proposal adopts built forms as a corporate image rather than signage.
- 5.4. To the South, Heolgerrig Road bounds the land with some C19th dwellings, later housing and the newer residential development of Shirley Gardens. To the southwest there is an area of land defined as Green Wedge, which to the east is poor farmland and to the west the deposition area.
- 5.5. The initial site appraisal that lead to the approved scheme sought to re-use the plateau of the original brickworks and to grade the mining waste to create the plateaus and other topographical features in the deposition area. That application process also included measures for the recording of biodiversity and the implementation of mitigation measures to re-establish habitat. That work has been completed and is now under on-going management.
- 5.6. The Applicant Organisation has a house style of cladding their building envelope in towers, pitched roofs and other features. The scheme, which was approved under reserved matters, adopted this theme. This theme has been followed in the idiom adopted for the revised PFS design. Moreover, the materials of the external envelope of the PFS shop building have been updated to reflect those of the main retail store, which is nearing completion.

6. Community Safety

- 6.1. The objectives are:
- Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces
 - Security through natural surveillance
- 6.2. Community safety is paramount. The inclusive nature of the customer demographic suggests there will be vulnerable groups. Trago have 24/7 security and do not tolerate anti-social behaviour or vandalism. This development is of a single owner/operator for the entire site, which enables full control to be exercised over on-site behaviour.
- 6.3. The design takes account of the threat to peaceful enjoyment of the development by eliminating as far as possible hidden areas that might invite inappropriate behaviour to develop. The development will have a security building, which is manned continually and there are continual security patrols. The leisure areas are intended to offer safe enjoyment for families and those areas are under security control.
- 6.4. Of particular concern is the threat to adjoining residents by unauthorised use of areas of the site. These issues will be addressed by security patrols.

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- 6.5. Wherever possible, conflicts of use and user circulation modes have been eliminated, reducing potential conflict between pedestrians and motor vehicles. This has served to increase safety for both user groups. From this approach, the chief change is the separation of commercial filling pump and domestic filling pumps, alongside the provision of customer parking spaces adjacent the shop which are afforded space to reverse from without having to encroach on the fuel pump forecourt. Moreover, the car wash facilities have been moved away from the shop itself. All these changes are an improvement over the current approved PFS site layout.

7. Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1. The objectives are:
- Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources
 - Enhancing biodiversity
 - Designing for change
- 7.2. The Applicant Organisation has taken advantage of the delay in full implementation of the approval of reserved matters to allow the extended scheme to incorporate new technologies to create a sustainable development. Such a sustainable approach allows the economic benefits arising from the adoption of these technologies to retain the viability of conventional retailing, local employment and vitality against the threat from online retailing.
- 7.3. To begin with, the general principles that have been adopted to reduce environmental impact are:
- to re-design vehicular arrangements to better cater for alternative transport, namely the provision of bus stop, coach parking, cycle racks and motorcycle parking
 - to introduce rooflights to certain areas to allow photoelectric control of lighting to reduce electrical load and thus carbon emissions
 - to reduce external lighting levels to the minimum necessary controlled by photoelectric cells and timers
 - to use recycled materials already set aside on site for re-use
 - to adopt full recycling of waste and packaging in the construction process
- 7.4. The approved scheme's infrastructure already implemented incorporates SUDS principles using a series of ponds to mitigate peaks of flow to watercourses.
- 7.5. In operational terms, Trago already recycles packaging, other materials and products. Part of the 2010 extension application allocated part of the applicant's service zone to accommodate up to date compacting equipment. That process is managed through regular collection of recycled material.
- 7.6. Biodiversity measures are already in place with a new management programme improving habitat in the deposition area which is outside the scope of this application. Further landscaping, once implemented will create links with surrounding habitat areas allowing migration of species.

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8. Movement

- 8.1. The objective is promoting sustainable means of travel.
- 8.2. From the access there is a clear footpath route to the main store entrance and up the 'spine' road between the leisure and PFS plateaus to facilitate pedestrian movement. The route to the main retail store is linked to the bus and coach setting down point, which is in an area to which private vehicle access is physically prevented.
- 8.3. As customer vehicles enter the site, they will be presented with an internal mini-roundabout to allow them to continue to the main retail store, or to turn right to the PFS and leisure plateaus. The right turn to the west side of the overall development will have a dedicated lane with queuing for vehicles to prevent backing up to the entrance roundabout on Swansea Road.
- 8.4. Emergency vehicles:
 - 8.4.1. Fire - Evacuation procedures and defined assembly points will be agreed with the fire service in order to avoid conflict with emergency vehicle access.
 - 8.4.2. Ambulance - With an annual high number of visitors it is expected there will be an occasional medical emergency. There is provision near the entrance and sick room facility at the main retail store for an ambulance.
 - 8.4.3. Police - Regrettably, the Police will need to visit and, as at their other branches, Trago provide a police room for detention and interview by Police of those suspected of theft. This facility is accessible only to the Police and is adjacent to the main retail store's entrance. Police vehicles would use the same access as an ambulance.
- 8.5. The general hierarchy of movement is reflected in the artificial lighting scheme where prominence is given to the principal circulation route and specific entrances. Moreover, prominent in the main retail store is the primary 'spine' route along the centre of the building's plan which will aid orientation of the user. In terms of the PFS itself, the changing from 3x3 pumps to 4x2 pumps will improve visibility by removing the additional visual clutter of a third row of pumps.

9. Revisions of Approved Scheme

- 9.1. The Reserved Matters application was submitted in 2003. Over the subsequent 14 years the requirements of PFSs has changed. The primary design change of this current (submitted) scheme over the approved is the removal of the middle run of pumps on the forecourt. With only two rows of pumps, the total number has reduced from 18 to 16, but the improvement is that the vision of all the pumps from the kiosk, and therefore staff, is greatly improved. Moreover, the middle pumps are often the least used of such layouts meaning the layout is less efficient. A 3x3 double pump layout means that the middle pumps are seldom used so only 12 of the 18 pumps are frequently used. With a 4x2 double pump layout all pumps are readily visible to drivers/customers meaning that all 16 are frequently used, minimising waiting times and reducing wasting capital expenditure.

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- 9.2. Alongside the reduced but more efficient pump numbers, the kiosk has been increased in size from 161m² to 345m², providing a 275m² retail area (including staff counter/till points). With the minimal profit margins on fuel sales, the kiosk and sales area within is necessary to subsidise the fuel sales. In 2006/7 Trago increased the size of the kiosk at their Newton Abbot PFS which has been instrumental in maintaining the viability of the PFS offer. As such, the increased kiosk size is only to bring the PFS design/offer up to current requirements.
- 9.3. The 4x2 pump layout allows the pumps to be readily visible by the staff behind the counter to activate the pumps and to observe customers refuel safely. The enlarged kiosk has been lengthened to accommodate the more rectangular pump arrangement. With the addition of customer parking spaces, the PFS site layout has been updated to accommodate these revisions.
- 9.4. Furthermore, the materials of the main retail store have been altered to modern cladding with standing seam mansard roofs. The approved PFS scheme was designed to reflect the proposed materials of the Reserved Matters submission. With updated and more modern materials of the retail store, the PFS similarly needs to be updated to maintain the Applicant Organisation's house style.
- 9.5. This application is for a revised PFS on an approved PFS site that was approved as part of a larger submission that has been implemented. The question is whether the changes to the approved scheme are acceptable to the Local Authority. It is suggested that the updates to current requirements, accrued over the 14 years since original approval, may be supported.