

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No: P/20/0091

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 (resubmission following refusal of P/19/0302)

Case Officer: David Cross

Site Visit: 15th May 2020

Application Expiry Date: 24th June 2020

Consultation reply date expired: 25th May 2020

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 now been removed from the site, following enforcement action (Ref PE/17/0126), but the hard-core surface has been retained.

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 and farm/stable buildings to the east within Caerphilly County Borough Council.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the retention of the hard-core 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 with translucent panels. 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

P/19/0302 - Proposed Indoor ménage building, horse walker / exerciser and the retention of the hardcore area.

REFUSED permission on 07.02.2020 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.

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 2309.2010

CONSULTATION

Planning Division's
Policy Officer

- Noted that the development is in a countryside location which needs to be fully justified. Regard should also be given the sustainable design and place making, highway implications, ecology, amenity, landscape impacts and mineral safeguarding.

Engineering and
Traffic Group Leader

- No objection.

Planning Division's
Landscape Architect

- Concerns have been raised in respect on the increase in the built form that is visually prominent, with little opportunity to mitigate the impacts.

Bedlinog and Trelewis
Community Council

- No response.

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
- EcW7 - Tourism, Leisure and Recreation Development

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.

An Equestrian Appraisal has been submitted in support of this application. It is highlighted in the document that livery enterprises are typically sited in countryside locations, where horses require pasture for grazing, natural exercise and social interaction with other horses. Currently the site is served by a single ménage and the proposal would offer additional facilities with the provision of a sheltered ménage that can be utilised during inclement weather. The Equestrian Appraisal also notes that the development would improve the resilience of the equestrian business.

It should be noted that hard core material that has been laid across the site has resulted in the loss of the grassland that forms part of the equestrian centre and has previously been used for horses. Although other land has been identified to the north of the site, which could be used as pasture for grazing etc, that land does not form part of the equestrian centre and may not always be available for use by customers.

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 built environment within a countryside location. 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 financial details have been submitted to demonstrate an economic viability concern, or that the proposal is crucial to the future success of the business. However, it is accepted that the provision of additional facilities may increase livery prices, which may in turn offer some improvement to the viability of the business. To review the need/demand for additional facilities, details of the recent bookings for the existing ménage (during the months of April to July 2020) have been provided.

It is accepted that the use of the existing ménage will vary from month to month, which may depend on a number of factors. The recent bookings over the past 4 month period indicate that the existing ménage is used on average 16 days of the month. The records show that during this 4 month period, there were a total of 65 bookings, of which there would typically be only 1 or 2 bookings per day (for 1 hour periods). This amounts to approximately 74% of the time. It is acknowledged that there are few occasional days where the ménage may receive 5 or more bookings.

Although the existing ménage may be used on a regular basis, the number of bookings per day appears to be low the majority of the time. This indicates that there is not a significant enough demand to sustain an additional ménage. It is understood that the majority of the time, an outdoor ménage is the preferred environment for training/exercising horses. It is only during periods of inclement weather that the use of a covered ménage may be more desirable. As such, the proposed covered ménage is likely to be used less frequently than the existing facilities.

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 may provide additional benefits to the equestrian centre, without the need to further encroach into the open 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.

In this instance, the evidence submitted with the application is not particularly convincing to demonstrate a viable need for an additional ménage for the existing users of the equestrian centre. There are also concerns that this may lead to other persons, who do not normally keep horses at the adjoining stables to use the ménage. This would result in 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 aims of the LDP to protect the countryside. Finally, if there was such a pressing need for an additional undercover ménage then why would the applicant introduce an unauthorised use (storage containers etc.) on the application site. If permitted this use would have clearly restricted any further expansion of the current business.

Based on the information submitted, the application fails to adequately justify the expansion of the built environment within the countryside, which would result in an unacceptable encroachment and irreversible deterioration of the character of the countryside. Therefore, the expansion of the existing business does not outweigh the harm it would have on the surrounding environment, contrary to Policies SW4 and EcW7 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, with limited

openings, save for two roller shutter entrances. It is acknowledged that following the refusal of the previous application (P/19/0302) the design of the ménage has been amended to now incorporate translucent panes on the elevations and roof, to provide a source of natural light into the building. Notwithstanding this, the general mass, scale and appearance of the building largely remains the same as that previously refused.

The proposed 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. In this respect the Planning Division's Landscape Architect has stated the *'Landmap Visual and Sensory layer describes this area as consisting of a declining pastoral agriculture with a strong walled field pattern that needs ongoing maintenance. The openness of the landscape is therefore considered important and should be preserved. In contrast, but to compliment the former, the Historic Landmap layer emphasises the importance of retaining the nucleated character of the settlement'*.

Furthermore, the Planning Division's Landscape Architect has noted that the development would increase the built form in an area that is visually prominent and can readily be viewed from the highway. Whilst the applicant has indicated that additional planting could be introduced to mitigate the visual impacts, the paucity of land available makes this difficult to achieve successfully. Taking into account the difference in the ground level between the highway and the site, it would take a considerable amount of time for tree planting scheme to fully establish and provide an effective screen. Notwithstanding this, the fact that a building within the countryside might be unobtrusive as a result of screen planting is not, by itself, a good argument in favour of permission. Such permissions could be granted too often, to the overall detriment of the character of an area.

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 have an unacceptable impact on the character of the countryside 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 understood that the proposed indoor ménage would provide an additional facility for the existing users of the stables. On this basis, 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. It is acknowledged as part of the previous application (P/19/0302), the Planning Division's Ecologist did not raise any significant concerns, but 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 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 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.

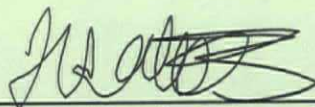
For the above reasons, the proposed development is unacceptable and runs contrary to policies SW4, SW11, EnW5 and EcW7 of the LDP. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

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, EnW5 and EcW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

2. The proposed indoor menage, 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:

4/9/20