

# CADNANT

PLANNING

**LAND AT GREENGATES FARM,  
ABERGELE ROAD, ST ASAPH  
DESIGN, ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT  
DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
MARCH 2024  
2023.136**

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## Design, Access and Planning Statement



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# Contents

1. Introduction.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2. The site and context .....	2
3. The proposed development .....	4
4. Policy context.....	6
5. Main considerations.....	8
6. Other design considerations .....	12
7. Accessibility .....	15
8. Conclusion.....	17

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Design, Access and Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application by Denbighshire County Council for the creation of a nature reserve, including works to access, erection of a wildlife barn and the construction of pathways at land at Greengates Farm, Abergele Road, St Asaph LL17 0LE.
- 1.2 Following the enactment of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the requirement for pre-application consultation on major development schemes was implemented. This includes development carried out on a site having an area of one hectare or more. Therefore, as the site area proposed is 13.3 hectares, this triggers the need to undertake a Pre-Application Consultation.
- 1.3 The requirement to carry out pre-application consultation falls under Section 17 of the Act and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (DMPWO) as amended by the 2016 Order. Guidance on carrying out the pre-application consultation requirements within the Act has been provided by the Welsh Government set out in Article 1 of the Town and Country Planning DMPWO (Amendment) 2016 'Guidance on Pre-application Consultation'.
- 1.4 This Design, Access and Planning Statement is issued as part of a suite of documents for Pre-Application Consultation prior to the submission of a formal planning application.
- 1.5 As required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order (Amendment) 2016 the statement aims to address the following matters;
- Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;
  - Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that context into account;
  - Explain the policy or approach adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in the development plan have been taken into account; and
  - Explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.
- 1.6 The adopted local plan is the Denbighshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021.

## 2. The site and context

- 2.1 The site comprises 13.3 hectares of agricultural fields located at the former county farm known as Greengates Farm in St Asaph. The site comprises of land adjacent to the existing farm buildings within the main farmyard, which are now derelict and redundant, and to the existing County Tree Nursery.
- 2.2 The site has been identified as Grade 3b agricultural land on the Welsh Government agricultural land classification predictive map. It is currently comprised of species poor grassland and was previously heavily grazed by horses.
- 2.3 The site is predominantly surrounded by agricultural land, with a cluster of residential dwellings to the north-east corner of the site, and the residential dwelling known as Bryn Coed, located along the eastern boundary of the site.
- 2.4 The site is bounded to the east by Cwttir Lane and to the north by the A55/North Wales Expressway. To the north-west corner of the site lies the derelict farm buildings and main farm yard of Greengates Farm. To the south-west of the site lies the St Asaph Electrical Substation and beyond this lies the existing commercial/industrial estate, St Asaph Business Park.
- 2.5 There are three existing entrances into the site. One is a gated access, located at the southern tip of the site from Cwttir Lane; however, this entrance way is now restricted and overgrown. The two remaining accesses are located along the northern boundary and western boundary; these form an existing access track within the north-west corner of the site, providing access through the site to the County Tree Nursery to the west of the site.
- 2.6 In terms of existing features within the site currently, some which are notable are hedgerow field boundaries with ditches, and a stream located along the western boundary of the site.
- 2.7 Figure 2.1 identifies the application site within the context of its surroundings.

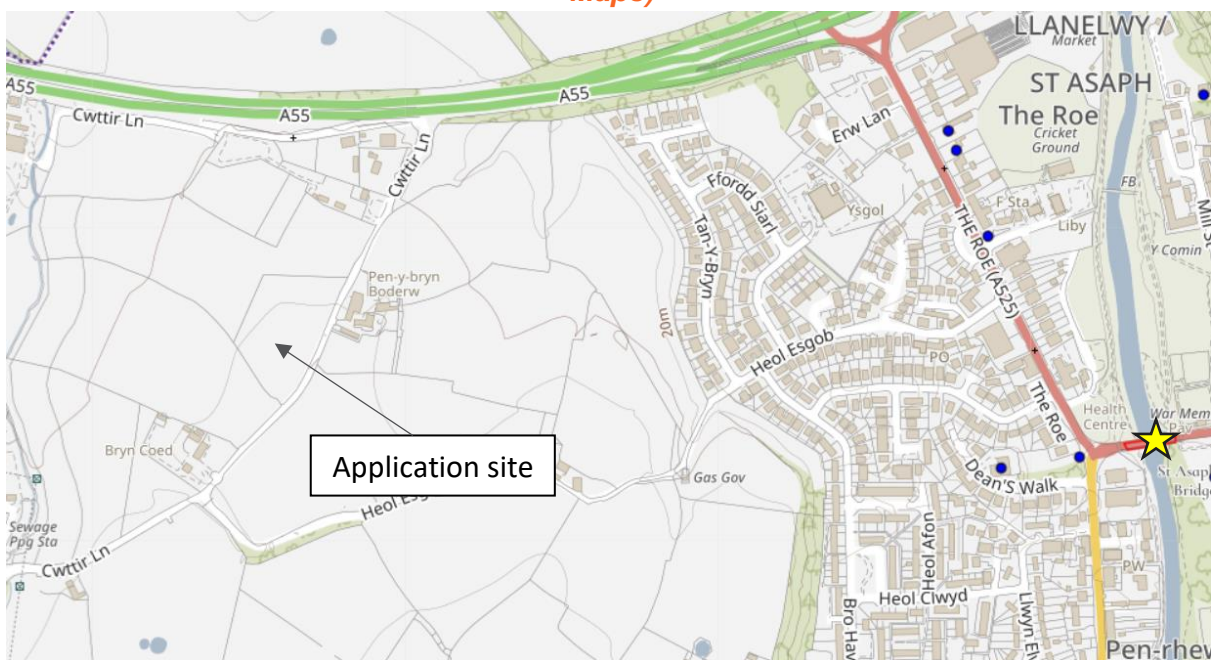
## Design, Access and Planning Statement

**Figure 2.1 Aerial view of the application site in the context of its surroundings (Google Maps)**



2.8 The site is also located within 1 km of the St Asaph Bridge, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The location of the monument in relation to the application site is provided in Figure 2.2 below.

**Figure 2.2 Location of St Asaph Bridge (star) in relation to the application site (Google Maps)**



## 3. The proposed development

### Use

- 3.1 The proposed development is for the change of use of agricultural land to create a new nature reserve at the site, with access into the site for public use.

### Appearance, amount and scale

- 3.2 The nature reserve would comprise native broadleaf woodland, scrub, wood pasture, wildflower meadow, ponds, and the erection of an associated wildlife barn. Previously infilled ponds would be restored, and new ponds created resulting in a total of 14 ponds across the site.
- 3.3 A new, two-storey wildlife barn would also be constructed, with features specially designed to support a wide variety of wildlife including nesting birds and roosting bats. The barn would be constructed from the following materials:
- Walls – Reclaimed brickwork, Limestone cavity work;
  - Roof - Reclaimed Slate on traditional roof construction, Cedar fascias and barge boards, unfinished WBP plywood soffits;
  - Doors – Stained boarded solid doors.
- 3.4 The site will have a minimum of 20% canopy cover, helping Denbighshire County Council achieve its targets in relation to their declared Climate and Ecological Emergency, and will move the Council further towards their goal of becoming an ecologically positive council.

### Layout and access

- 3.5 The proposed development would also result in the reconfiguration of the existing southern access into the site, located off Cwtirr Lane, and the construction of permissive pathways within the site. These pathways would link the southern tip of the site with the existing pathway to the north of the site, and would branch off into the central-northern area to provide a loop around for pedestrians to enjoy.
- 3.6 The new permissive route will provide direct access to nature for a large number of workers/volunteers at the County Tree Nursery who currently walk along roads and



## Design, Access and Planning Statement

pavements next to busy roads to access their place of work. The development would also provide those workers with access to nature during their recess/lunch breaks.

- 3.7 The permissive routes would also provide access to nature for local residents and for staff working at the neighbouring St Asaph Business Park. This is in line with the objectives of the Welsh Government 'Local Places for Nature' grant allocation, which is partly funding the works.
- 3.8 Notwithstanding the above, the pathways would be located towards the western part of the site, leaving much of the remainder of the site for biodiversity to thrive.

## Landscaping

- 3.9 Extensive soft landscaping is proposed within the site to conserve, enhance and support biodiversity within the nature reserve. Proposed planting plans and ecological enhancement are provided in more detail within the proposed plans and supporting documents submitted with this application.



## 4. Policy context

### National planning policy and guidance

#### Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

- 4.1 Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 is the recently produced national development framework which sets the direction for development in Wales to 2040 at a strategic level. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

#### Planning Policy Wales Edition 12, 2023

- 4.2 The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.
- 4.3 PPW defines “sustainable development” as “the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals. Acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle means that a body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.
- 4.4 Paragraph 4.5.1 of PPW states that “[r]ecreational spaces are vital for our health, well-being and amenity, and can contribute to an area’s green infrastructure. They provide a place for play, sport, healthy physical activity and a place to relax often in the presence of nature, and they contribute to our quality of life. Networks of high quality, accessible green spaces and recreation spaces will also promote nature conservation, biodiversity and provide enjoyable opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a wide range of physical activities. These activities are important for the well-being

## Design, Access and Planning Statement

of children and adults and for the social, environmental, cultural and economic life of Wales”.

### Technical Advice Notes (TAN's)

- 4.5 Planning Policy Wales is supplemented by guidance contained in Technical Advice Notes (TANs). The following are relevant to this application:
- TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning;
  - TAN 12: Design;
  - TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space; and
  - TAN 24: The Historic Environment.

### Building Better Places - The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures (2020)

- 4.6 This guidance emphasises the importance of where we live and the quality of the environment around us. It emphasises the importance of ‘Placemaking’ principles and identifies eight issues which need to be resolved across Wales, including:
- Active travel: exercise and rediscovered transport methods;
  - Green infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience;
  - Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being.

### Local planning policy and guidance

- 4.7 The application site lies within Denbighshire County Council and the local planning policy context is set out within the adopted development plan, the Denbighshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006 – 2021, which was adopted in 2013. The relevant policies are set out below:
- Policy RD1 – Sustainable development and good standard design;
  - Policy BCS11 – Recreation and Open Space;
  - Policy VOE5 – Conservation of natural resources;
- 4.8 Additionally, the following Local Planning Authority’s Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is relevant to this application:
- Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity; and
  - Recreational Public Open Space.

## 5. Main considerations

### Principle of development

- 5.1 The development is mainly for the change of use of land, with ancillary development proposed, to create a new nature reserve. Therefore, the main issues to consider are the loss of agricultural land and the use of the site for a new nature reserve.
- 5.2 The site has been identified as Grade 3b agricultural land on the Welsh Government agricultural land classification predictive map. It comprises of species poor grassland and was previously heavily grazed by horses. Grade 3b land is considered to be lower grade agricultural land, and would not be considered as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land worthy of retention for agriculture. Therefore, the loss of the agricultural use of the land is not considered to be of any significant concern, and would not result in the loss of any BMV agricultural land.
- 5.3 The agricultural farmstead at Greengates Farm is currently redundant; it is currently used as the site of Denbighshire County Council's County Tree Nursery. The Council's work to date has encouraged a large number of volunteers at the site, and recent project work with local schools has shown that there is a clear demand for nature based activities within the local community.
- 5.4 By creating the resources, and focusing on education and demonstrating best-practice approaches to restoring nature conservation, the provision of the nature reserve would provide residents and volunteers alike with the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the restoration of the environment.
- 5.5 The proposal would provide permissive paths within the site to allow access to nature for local residents, workers at the nearby St Asaph Business Park to the west, and volunteers at the tree nursery. Additionally, the nature reserve would link directly with the tree nursery as the biodiversity enhancements (wildflower creation, tree planting, etc) would feature stock produced at the nursery itself.
- 5.6 There are no specific policies within the LDP which relate to the creation of new nature reserves or public open space within the plan area. However, the general thrust of Policy BCS11 seeks to support the protection and enhancement of public open space, allotments and amenity greenspace provision. The justification text for the policy states that "[n]ational guidance recognises the linkages between opportunities for exercise

## Design, Access and Planning Statement

and people's general health and well-being", and it is considered that the proposal would encompass these principles through the provision of a nature reserve which would be accessible to the public. The proposal would provide access to nature for local residents/workers/volunteers during their lunch breaks or before/after work, which would improve well-being and health.

- 5.7 The proposed development also seeks to improve public safety through the creation of permissible pathways throughout the site. The new permissive route will provide direct access to nature for a large number of local residents, workers and volunteers who currently walk along the narrow road Cwtir Lane, and along the A55 to the north. The permissible pathways would provide a direct access through the site to connect to the tree nursery and provide an area for walkers to walk around without compromising their safety.
- 5.8 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable in principle.

## Heritage assets

- 5.9 The site is also located within 1 km of the St Asaph Bridge, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Given the nature of the proposed development and the separation distance of approximately 960 metres, it is not considered that the proposed development would have any impact upon this heritage asset.

## Impact on residential amenity

- 5.10 There are a number of residential dwellings within close proximity to the site, including the a residential dwelling along the eastern boundary and a cluster of dwellings to the north-eastern corner of the site.
- 5.11 The pathways proposed would be located towards the western and north-central part of the application site, which is a significant distance away from the boundaries of the site shared with these neighbouring properties. Therefore, any associated noise with produced through the use of the pathways would not have any impact upon these neighbouring properties. Indeed, the creation of a nature reserve is likely to improve the relationship of these neighbouring properties with the application site, as it would provide highly accessible amenity space, and would improve outlook, and would result

in an attractive, biodiversity-rich and harmonious neighbouring use with these residential properties.

### Biodiversity

- 5.12 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared and submitted as part of this planning application, setting out the ecological constraints of the site and identifying any protected, priority, designated or otherwise important species. Due to the nature of the application, a wide range of ecological enhancements and mitigation measures are proposed to ensure optimum conservation and biodiversity enhancement is achieved.
- 5.13 The interventions would be monitored using a variety of standard wildlife and habitat survey methodologies to record changes over time and to help guide future management.
- 5.14 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 12), 2024 advises that the quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. It advises that with careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.
- 5.15 PPW advises that a Green Infrastructure Statement should be submitted with all planning applications and should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. A Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared and submitted with this application accordingly.

### Contaminated land

- 5.16 Part of the application site was previously proposed to be used as a residential gypsy and traveller site (planning reference number: 46/2019/0792); however, this application was refused on 11 March 2020. As a result of this application, the Council were made aware of the potential for the contamination of land at the site as it had been raised that the previous ponds on the site had been infilled with asbestos material.

## **Design, Access and Planning Statement**

- 5.17 Denbighshire County Council carried out a formal re-excavation of the relevant ponds through a specialist contractor in December 2023, and no evidence of any asbestos material was found.



## 6. Other design considerations

### Design and layout

- 6.1 The proposed layout of the nature reserve is shown in Figure 6.1 below. The proposals would include the provision of native broadleaf woodland, scrub, wood pasture and wildflower meadow, the restoration of previously-infilled ponds, creation of new ponds (resulting in a total of 14 ponds across the site) and the construction of a new wildlife barn to be located in the central area of the site.
- 6.2 The plan is supported by expert designs to ensure that the nature reserve would provide the greatest benefit to biodiversity and build on the important neighbouring habitats in line with the DECCA principles of ecosystem resilience.

Figure 6.1 Proposed Site Layout





## Design, Access and Planning Statement

6.3 The pathways proposed would be a combination of board walk and compacted bitumen macadam, which would ensure that the pathways would not be submerged by any standing water during wet periods. These would incorporate wider sections for passing and resting places, equipped with benches for pedestrians to rest and enjoy the scenery. The pathway would connect to the existing path along the western boundary of the site, which provides access to the tree nursery, and would run south to the existing access at the southern tip of the site (which is currently overgrown and inaccessible). This entrance is proposed to be altered and improved as part of this application.

### Wildlife barn

6.4 The proposed wildlife barn would be sited in the central part of the site, screened from any external views by hedgerow and woodland. The building would be two storeys, with features specially designed to support a wide variety of wildlife, including nesting birds and roosting bats.

6.5 The building would be modest in size, incorporating pitched roofs and local, natural materials such as cedar panelling, limestone, reclaimed brick and reclaimed slate.

6.6 It is considered that the barn would be functional in nature, and designed so as to read harmonious in its setting, and would not have any visual impact upon the nature reserve or wider landscape.

### Environmental sustainability

6.7 In terms of environmental sustainability, consideration has been given to the effect of the proposed development on the environment. By its very nature, the proposal would result in a significantly positive impact upon the environment through the creation of a new nature reserve with a minimum of 20% canopy cover, helping Denbighshire County Council achieve its targets in relation to their declared Climate and Ecological Emergency. As stated previously, the scheme has been designed so as to ensure that the nature reserve would provide the greatest benefit to biodiversity and build on the important neighbouring habitats in line with the DECCA principles of ecosystem resilience.

## **Community safety**

- 6.8 The proposed development has been designed with the safety and well-being of future users being a key consideration as well as the need to protect and enhance the safety of the surrounding community. It is not considered that the proposed development will have any detrimental effect on community safety or on the amenity of the residents of nearby residential properties. Indeed, the creation of the pathways through the site would provide safe pedestrian access routes within the site for local residents and workers/volunteers alike to utilise, removing the risks associated with walking along the narrow road, Cwttir Lane.

## 7. Accessibility

### Planning policy

- 7.1 The relevant national policies and guidance relating to accessibility are set out within:
- Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12, (2024); and
  - Technical Advice Note 18 'Transport' (2007).
- 7.2 The relevant planning policies within the adopted LDP are as follows:
- Policy ASA3 – Parking standards.
- 7.3 The Council's SPG "Parking Requirements in New Developments" is also relevant to the application.

### Movement to, from and within the development

- 7.4 As stated previously, there are three existing entrances into the site. One is a gated access, located at the southern tip of the site from Cwttir Lane; however, this entrance way is now restricted and overgrown. The two remaining accesses are located along the northern boundary and western boundary; these form an existing access track within the north-west corner of the site, providing access through the site to the County Tree Nursery to the west of the site.
- 7.5 Access into site would be improved, as the proposal includes the reconfiguration of the access from Cwttir Lane and the provision of pathways to connect the southern entrance of the site with the northern and western entrances, and would provide access into and around the site for pedestrians to utilise.
- 7.6 The access off Cwttir Lane would be widened and resurfaced, and a new mobility kissing gate would be erected at the entrance, allowing access for pushchairs, wheelchairs and medium sized mobility vehicles. There would be no access for motorbikes or motor vehicles. An area of hedgerow would be removed to allow for clear visibility at the entrance, and allow for an open aspect.

## Sustainability

- 7.7 PPW supports sustainable means of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport, over travelling by private car. TAN 18 encourages development to take place in areas which would reduce car dependency and increase social inclusion.
- 7.8 The proposal would discourage the use of private vehicle by local residents, workers at St Asaph Business Park and volunteers at the tree nursery, through the introduction of pedestrian pathways away from the busy and narrow roads which would provide safe pedestrian access to these destinations. The very nature of the proposal is to promote health and well-being amongst local people.

## Parking

- 7.9 It is the intention of the proposal to discourage reliance on private vehicles and promote walking, and therefore, no parking is proposed as part of this development. The nature reserve would be targeted at local residents/workers/volunteers to use and therefore parking would not be required. Indeed, it is the view of the applicant that providing car parking would encourage the use of cars, which would be contrary to the purpose of a carbon storage and nature scheme.
- 7.10 Bollards are proposed along the southern boundary of the site to prevent any cars parking along Cwttir Lane, so as to not obstruct traffic or create any highway safety issues.
- 7.11 Glascoed Nature Reserve is located to the south-west of the site, approximately 840 metres away, and is accessible via Llys Edmund Prys. No parking is provided to serve this nature reserve either; pedestrians are able to access the site on-foot.
- 7.12 It is considered that the proposed new nature reserve at Greengates Farm would be a similar set up to Glascoed. There is already a high level of foot traffic generated by the tree nursery and business park, as well as local residents going for walks, etc and therefore, it is reasonable to expect that people will access the site on foot.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposal which forms the subject of this application relates to the creation of a nature reserve, including works to access, erection of a wildlife barn and the construction of pathways at land at Greengates Farm, Abergele Road, St Asaph LL17 0LE.
- 8.2 The proposal would result in the creation of a new nature reserve, enriched with a wide range of biodiversity enhancement, helping Denbighshire County Council achieve its targets in relation to their declared Climate and Ecological Emergency. The scheme has been designed so as to ensure that the nature reserve would provide the greatest benefit to biodiversity and build on the important neighbouring habitats in line with the DECCA principles of ecosystem resilience.
- 8.3 The provision of permissive paths within the site would allow access to nature for local residents, workers at the nearby St Asaph Business Park and volunteers at the County Tree Nursery, improving health and well-being, in line with national and local planning guidance.
- 8.4 Consideration has also been given to potential effects on the amenity of residential dwellings, heritage assets, visual impact, and highway safety, and the development is not expected to give rise to additional harmful impacts in this respect.
- 8.5 As demonstrated throughout this report, we consider the proposal to be in accordance with the adopted policies in in the LDP, as well as the overarching principles of the PPW. Therefore, we consider the proposed development acceptable in its submitted form.

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