

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Wednesday, 9 April 2025 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Ellie Chard, Karen Edwards, James Elson, Chris Evans, Justine Evans, Jon Harland, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Alan James (Vice-Chair), Julie Matthews, Terry Mendies, Merfyn Parry, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, Cheryl Williams, Elfed Williams and Mark Young (Chair)

Local member – Councillor Huw Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Legal Advisor (RJ), Principal Planning Officer (PG), Development Manager (PM), Minerals and Waste Planning Manager (HP), Senior Engineer- Development Control (MP) Committee Administrator (RhTJ) and Committee Administrator: Zoom Host (NH)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from councillors Delyth Jones, Andrea Tomlin and Raj Metri.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alan James raised a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, as he was the lead member for the service presenting the application.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items of an urgent nature had been raised with the Chair prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on the 12 March 2025 were submitted. It was:

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 12 March 2025 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

At this juncture the Chair allowed agenda item 6 to be discussed prior to agenda item 5 as the local member who wanted to attend was having technical issues joining the zoom meeting.

5 APPLICATION NO. 21/2021/1194 BURLEY HILL QUARRY, ERYRYS

A section 73 application was submitted to continue the development at Burley Hill Quarry without complying with the time limits imposed by conditions 1, 26 and 30 of a Schedule 14 Environment Act 1995 Review of conditions (ref 21/2002/0009), and to revise the time limits to allow a continuation of extraction for a period of 15 years from the date of determination of the application.

As officers had revised their recommendation to one of deferral, the Chair invited officers to clarify their deferral recommendation before allowing any discussion on the application. Officers stated that the reports for meetings were bundled two weeks ahead of the meeting. Due to this, late information was often presented to officers after publication. There had been a large amount of late information given ahead of the meeting; officers felt that due to the volume of information, they required additional time to digest the information and respond appropriately to the points raised; this would allow the committee to be presented with all relevant information ahead of deciding on the application in a future meeting.

Proposal Councillor Merfyn Parry proposed the application be deferred to allow the committee to have all the details regarding the application. Councillor Alan James seconded the proposal.

Vote –

For – 16

Against – 1

Abstain – 0

RESOLVED: *that the application be DEFERRED in accordance with Officer recommendation.*

6 APPLICATION NO. 16/2024/1194 MOEL FAMAU CAR PARK

An application was submitted for the erection of a new visitor hub with information and restroom facilities, ranger space and associated works at Moel Famau Car Park, Llanferres, Mold.

Public Speaker –

David Shiel (For) - the public speaker thanked the Chair for the opportunity to provide some background on why the application was brought forward to the Committee.

The public speaker has been involved in the management of Moel Famau for numerous years. Over the last 10 years, there's been an increase in visitors from 200,000 to 300,000, which brings challenges with litter, livestock, and parking. The increase in numbers was also year-round, whereas previously, the increase was focused on the summer.

The public speaker stated that they've worked closely with the local member, Councillor Williams, to try to tackle the challenges, and he's been a great support. However, there needed to be a presence in the area to tackle the challenges. There

was currently a shepherd's hut being utilised in the area, and the challenges could be addressed quickly while they were present; however, the shepherd hut had limitations. It has to be towed up and down from loggerheads daily and could only be used in favourable weather.

Because of the facility's limitations, it can't operate up there at all required times, so this proposed facility would enable us to be there more often and permanently. The development would also allow the Countryside Service to advertise the rest of Denbighshire, hopefully increasing footfall in the surrounding area.

General Discussion –

Councillor Huw Williams (local member) – thanked the Chair for allowing him to speak to the Committee. Councillor Williams wanted to thank the AONB team for involving him throughout the process regarding the application; he raised issues with many people calling the proposal a café; the application was to develop a hub at Moel Famau. The concerns Councillor Williams had at the site was the potential of increased litter as the bin situation at Moel Famau was already poor, and there were traffic concerns, especially those following the route from Tafarn y Gelyn; lastly, enforcement with dogs in the area was raised and whether this could be looked at further in line with the Commons Act 2006 which aimed to protect common land including grazing rights.

Officers responded that the waste issue related to the application was covered in condition 8 of the application. They reassured the Committee that the area serving beverages and cakes was only a small portion of the building and would be an ancillary use only. Officers also informed Councillor Williams that his concerns with the road would be looked at, and enforcement would be used when necessary.

Councillor Merfyn Parry argued the need for a permanent structure at Moel Famau, as he believed there was no need to have one at the site. There was a climate emergency, and the Council aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030; no value was added by the application.

Proposal - Councillor Merfyn Parry proposed that the application be refused, as it failed to comply with Planning Policy Wales and the LDP and did not meet planning policy PSE 14. The proposal was not seconded.

Members felt that if the application was to be granted, there would be an increase in footfall to the area, which would inevitably increase the pre-existing issues with litter in the area; officers reiterated that the waste concerns were encompassed within the application's proposed conditions. However, some members felt that the potential of increased tourism into the area would be a boon, especially as the application was for a hub to make visitors aware of the surrounding area and hopefully increase footfall in local towns/villages.

Concerns were raised regarding the application. The building would be a permanent structure, and there were worries that it would become a blot on the landscape if the site were no longer viable.

Proposal—Councillor Gareth Sandilands proposed that the application be granted in accordance with officer recommendations, seconded by Councillor Terry Mendies.

Councillor Merfyn Parry suggested including further conditions on the proposal for granting; these were the approval of the building's floor space, a management plan for the hub to be created prior to the development, and that if the building were to ever become redundant, it be taken down and the land reverted to its previous state. The proposing members were content with the additional conditions.

Members queried the application's lack of a business case; officers clarified that the café was an ancillary use; the application's primary use and purpose would be a visitor centre/hub.

Officers responded to concerns to say that issues such as control of the use floorspace (limiting the area used for refreshments), possible decommissioning of the building if it ceases to be used and approval of a management plan for the site could be addressed by way of additional conditions. Members agreed that the proposal made and seconded be amended to include these additional conditions.

Vote –

For – 13

Against – 3

Abstain – 0

RESOLVED: *that the application be GRANTED in accordance with Officer recommendation subject to three additional conditions (control of floorspace, approval of a management plan and decommissioning of the building on cessation of use).*

Meeting concluded at 10:35am