

Statement by Bryan Owen Rees Jones and Bethan Ogwen Rees Jones, both from Fferm Penamser, Porthmadog LL49 9SL on the development of Affordable Houses on a plot of land which forms part of Moelwyn Dairy, Porthmadog.

I have already expressed my objection to the intention to locate any affordable housing developments in Cricieth and Penrhyndeudraeth. I believe that insufficient attention has been given to the need for affordable houses within Porthmadog itself. In my opinion, omitting the town from any developments shows that the authors of the plan are lacking in knowledge of the area's history and the background to the developments which were decided upon under the previous plan. Porthmadog was the growth area for Eifionydd and North Meirionnydd. It was the location for economic developments, with the town acting as the area's centre. A special committee was established to develop this idea.

The existing County Council has substantially changed these policies, by almost completely neglecting the south of Gwynedd in any developments. This is partially demonstrated in its response to all ideas for developing housing in the Porthmadog area. Each suggestion of suitable land has received a response with the same wording, which clearly shows that scant attention has been given to such an important issue for the area.

The Town Council has already stated its objection to Gwynedd Council's ideas. It has suggested suitable plots of land within the boundary of the Town Council; lands which are not affected by the Flood Plain. My interest lies with one particular plot of land, and I believe that developing a small estate of affordable houses would partially meet the town's needs.

The land in question is part of the former Moelwyn Dairy farm, Penamser Road, Porthmadog. The land is located immediately to the west of Tuhwntirbwlech deciduous woodland. The specific field (Parcel Number) is surrounded by dry stone walls and there would be no need to construct any new boundary. To the north the boundary runs parallel with the highway from Porthmadog to Cricieth, there is access located opposite the entrance of Porthmadog Industrial Estate located on the other side of the road to the north, which runs parallel to the Moelwyn Dairy land for some distance to the west.

The land was used until the late sixties to graze dairy cattle. Three main buildings were located on this suitable site, a substantial cowshed which is by now almost derelict and two substantial zinc buildings which by 2000+ were in a serious and dangerous condition. Planning permission was granted to demolish the former dairy buildings and to construct a modern building for Aberglaslyn Mountain Centre. This group fully utilise the building and the land. They occupy the land on a 15 year lease on an annual fixed rent of £50.00. There is already a public water supply and electricity on the site. A public sewer is already located on Penamser Road. It is considered that this property, with its former use as a dairy is partially a "brownfield site". The old milking parlour which is dangerous needs to be cleared, along with the remains of the former use, and the associated outbuildings.

The land rises directly from the highway with the farm track rising 30 feet in a southerly direction. This is completely free from any flood risk. Dense deciduous woodland runs along the land's boundary from west to east, which visibly shades the site from the south for the majority of the year. This aspect of the land faces part of the National Park which is located approximately one mile to the south at the peak of "Creigiau'r Dref". Due to the location of the trees, and the particular prominence of Penamser Industrial Estate, this land is not prominent from any significant parts of the National Park.

To the rear of the land there is a dry stone wall and some deciduous trees. This land rises steeply towards the peak of Moel y Gest with a public footpath crossing it; running from the land of Tuhwtirbwlch in the North-East, rising towards the North-West. This land is also part of Moelwyn Dairy. Although the estate would be prominent from this footpath, it would be less visually detrimental than the extremely prominent Penamser Industrial Estate which has been permitted to run for some distance along Penamser Road. The roof of the former Gelert building is visible from all directions and has a detrimental effect on the visual environment. Attention should also be given to the fact that the Council has recently extended the boundary of the industrial estate to the west, thereby allowing a development that would be visible from the public footpath, Moel y Gest and the National Park. It should also be noted that Gwynedd Council has recently permitted a caravan storage facility on the southern side of Penamser Road which in itself undermines any argument that it is reluctant to extend any developments on the northern side of Penamser Road.

For some years, the land behind the suitable site (approximately 8 acres) which is crossed by the public footpath has been kept free from grazing animals. This provides an opportunity for the land to redevelop naturally, and the deciduous trees are now becoming prominent on the site. The intention would be to retain this land for the development of natural trees.

Moelwyn Dairy spans a total of 33 acres. It is used as rough grazing land and for some years it has been farmed in conjunction with Fferm Penamser (approximately 50 acres). Both units do not provide a self-sufficient farm, and the land has been leased out for grazing sheep and cattle.

The main advantage of this land is its unique position on the outskirts of Porthmadog. A footpath leads to the High Street (approximately 200 feet) and part of the coastal cycle path runs past the entrance to the land. The main shops in the area are located within 400 feet of the property and the Primary School (Eifion Wyn) is within 300 feet. The Leisure Centre and the Library are also within walking distance. The Industrial Estate is on the land's periphery. This is the location of the largest workforce in the whole area, including Cricieth and Penrhyndeudraeth.

The government's environmental policies clearly place importance on protecting the environment by reducing unnecessary journeys. The Council's attitude in this respect is wholly contrary to this particular policy. Housing developments in Cricieth and Penrhyndeudraeth would lead to the necessity to travel by car to shops; leisure centres, schools, libraries and the main shopping towns which is contrary to the government's aspirations. Porthmadog was the main centre under this Council's previous policies, and it has been developed in line with this vision. It is unreasonable for the Council now to change its policies in such an senseless manner.

I am of the opinion that the Council's policy is totally unreasonable in this respect. The town could be developed in a way that would not harm the environment. Without any growth in housing that is within reach of the area's young people, over time the town will die. There will be no children in the schools; the shops (supermarkets and others) will lose their popularity which will in turn be detrimental to the other centres which are currently available. House prices in Borth y Gest, Morfa Bychan, Cricieth and the vicinity are so high that local people with reasonable jobs cannot afford them. Developing a small estate of affordable housing on the outskirts of the town would hugely benefit the town and secure its future, in a reasonable and sustainable way.

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