

Change of Use from Agriculture to Tourism and Educational Land Based Facility at Colliers Holdings, Nelson, CF46 6PR



The current agricultural site lies to the east of Nelson and is accessed via the A472 Caerphilly Rd via a metalled access road. The farm holding comprises approximately 20 acres of ground (8ha) including land to the north of the Matthews Butchers Shop, Farmhouse and Rowan Tree Pub. Agricultural land lies both north and south of the National Cycle Route (47) that is crossed by a stone bridge. Along with open fields, the holding contains a large number of agricultural buildings adjacent to the National Cycle Route. The holding also contains an outdoor horse exercising area on made up ground to the south of the Cycle Route.

To the east of the Rowan Tree Pub lies a large gas storage infrastructure facility. This site affects the visual quality of the area that is further impacted by pylons.

To the north east of the site and on the northern side of the National Cycle Route (47) lies the Council owned and managed Penallta Parc which is designated tourism and countryside designated area.

The aim of the project is to diversify from agriculture and to develop a further educational and tourism facility in the Nelson area building on the success of Penallta Parc and given the high level of sustainable access offered by the National Cycle Route that runs through the site plus the recent development of a

segregated footway between Nelson and Ystrad Mynach. The site also lies less than a ten-minute walk away from a bus stop to the west in Nelson.

In strategy planning terms the site lies in the countryside and in the northern connections corridor area. The concept of an additional tourism, educational, leisure offer to build on the area's existing locations at Llancaiach Fawr, Penallta Parc and Wern Woodland Park. Indeed, the Local Development Plan sees specific potential in the Nelson area for tourism development as indicated by Para 3.88 below

3.88 The national cycle route (47) runs through Nelson adjacent to the Wern Woodland Park and links the area to Penallta Community Park. Together these facilities provide a very attractive rural backdrop to Nelson. Wern Woodland Park also provides a valuable link for visitors to the area to a range of small shops and services within the historic village centre. Given the range of heritage and visitor attractions in the vicinity including Llancaiach Fawr living history museum, Nelson could have significant tourism potential.

In line with the thrust of countryside policies in the LDP, the development focuses primarily on the reuse of existing and longstanding agricultural buildings to cater for the proposed new uses. One main new building is required on the site of the existing horse exercise area. This is necessary as a large modern building is required for play area and catering. Due to health and safety considerations (see more detailed explanation below) none of the existing agricultural buildings are suitable for this form of use.

The accompanying drawing from HD Williams indicates a concept layout for the new proposal upon which the proposed planning applicant requires pre application advice. The proposed uses of the areas shown on the plan are indicated below.

Area 1 – Proposes a new single storey building in the form and style of modern agricultural outbuildings. The building proposed would measure 30m x 15m with a pitched roof and would be on the site of the existing horse exercise area that is formed on tipped land.

The building would comprise:

- Soft play zone for children;
- Sensory room for toddlers and autistic children, hope to hold separate group sessions for autistic children during the week;
- Interactive wall panels to assist learning;
- Cafe selling locally sourced produce, home-made food. The cafe will have two separate sections, one for walkers off Penallta Parc and the other for farm park customers. Indoor and outdoor sitting area for walkers

A new modern building is required to be located a little distance away from the farm and animal area in order to improve hygiene for food preparation, reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases. None of the existing buildings are suitable for alteration and they are going to be used to house animals (their original use). This building would provide modern toilets and washing facilities, ensure a secure building for child safety (no child will be able to leave without the correct supervising adult that brought them). Having suitable indoor capacity will allow tourism and visitors all yr round regardless of the weather.

Area 2 - Parking area for farm park customers, which it is presumed would be a permeable surface and laid out with a one-way system and marked car parking spaces. A dedicated cycle storage area would be provided that would take advantage of the opportunity to encourage sustainable access by cycles along the National Cycle Route (47).

Area 3 – Building measuring 25m x 14 sq m= 350 sq m

(Currently housing animals, made up pens and stables)

- Will house animals in separate pens - goats, sheep, calves, pigs, donkeys and alpacas;
- Sheep – Will synchronise 10 ewes to lamb every week from February through to April, will have cameras with a live-feed to facebook for any followers. Children will be able to feed pet lambs;
- Calves – Purchase from the neighbouring dairy farm at 10 days old, will keep until weaned. Will allow children to feed

calves at certain times of the day and learn where milk comes from!;

- Goats and Alpaca's – Children will be able to feed goats and alpacas. Will learn husbandry skills;
- Pigs – Hopefully have a breeding sow with piglets, will supply our family butchers with pork;
- Donkeys – Children will be able to feed and groom the donkeys;
- Hand washing facilities on entry and exit route (one-way system around the shed).

Area 4 - Building measuring 30m x 16m = 480 sq m

(Currently cattle shed)

- Walk bridge from the new shed will enter this building and form a ramp with an offset balcony (steps as a separate entry route to the balcony);
- Balcony – Will be a classroom for school children – able to contribute to different key stage levels in the curriculum (life cycle, habitats etc). Will also be able to host animal themed children parties;
- The ramp will be the form of entry into the farm park area from the playzone to stop walkers off the footpath from entering. Will be accessible to wheelchairs and prams;
- One area of the shed will be set up as a nature craft area – paint stones, pictures out of foliage, small basket weaving, charcoal leaf rubbing, leaf painting;
- Another section will have either have a straw based maze or mini go kart area.

Area 5 – Building measuring 11m x 4m = 44 sq m

(currently an old stable block)

- Will be converted into a small pet handling/grooming area;
- Guinea pigs and rabbits available for children to hold, groom and learn about husbandry;
- An area designated to the life cycle of a chicken, will have an incubator to hatch chicks, live chicks and chickens to handle;

Area 6

(currently stock handling pens)

- Will hold an outdoor play area made of wood or recycled plastic;
- Will have learning aspects to the play area;
- Bark or rubber flooring;
- Recycled rubber picnic benches as a seating area

Area 7

(currently hard standing, can be extended further back, ground been built up through tipping)

- Overflow carpark.

Area 8

(currently hard standing that has been built up through tipping)

- Large chicken run with several breeds of chickens;
- Egg boxes around the edges of the hutches to allow children to collect the eggs, eggs to be handed back in to reception;
- Gain access through a doorway at the back of area 3, may want 2 doorways to aid the one-way system.

Area 9

(currently a grazing field)

- Farm walk trail – separated into paddocks with walk ways in between, several hand washing stations;
- Paddocks would contain donkeys, ponies, goats, sheep and alpacas;
- Wooded fenced area for a duck pond, able to feed the ducks;
- Provide small little push along tractors for toddlers;
- One paddock would contain several raised garden beds –

act as a community garden, hopefully involve local school children. Encourage children to grow their own food;

- This field also has the footpath that leads straight onto Penallta Parc – a large country park.

Area 10

(currently a compound for vehicles)

- This area can be used to widen the access of the main road, allowing two way traffic and ;
- Applicant owns the ground to enable highway junction improvements, for example if a right hand turning holding lane if required;
- Farm access has been present for years

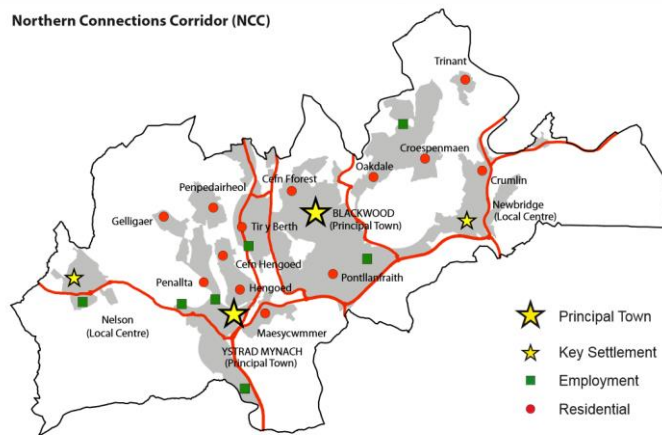
Area 11

(currently grazing field)

- Existing consent for tipping on this field;
- Possible longer term use for tractor rides and extra grazing paddocks for the animals.

Compliance with Local Plan Policies

Strategic Location of Proposed Development adjacent to Nelson



The proposed development, in terms of the reuse of existing farm buildings and the use of previously developed land for the new building and its accessible location by foot and cycle, would help deliver the Council's strategic planning objectives of sustainable development in the Northern Connections Corridor area of the LDP.

As indicated in Para 3.88 of the LDP, the promotion of appropriate new tourism facilities in the Nelson area is encouraged.

LDP CW1

Development proposals that are likely to generate a significant number of trips will only be permitted provided:

A Walking and cycling are modes of travel which have been actively encouraged for short trips to and within the development and to nearby services and facilities, including public transport nodes, through the provision of appropriate infrastructure

B Provision has been made for ease of cycling, including secure bike storage and cyclist facilities

C It has been demonstrated that where a significant number of freight trips will be generated, the least environmentally damaging route will be utilised

D The use of Green Travel Plans has been encouraged, where appropriate

The development is located immediately adjacent to the National Cycle Route 47 and can be accessed via a segregated footpath that runs between Nelson and Ystrad Mynach. The site lies adjacent to Penallta Parc offering the potential of combined trips. The site lies under a ten minute walk from the nearest bus stop in Nelson. The development therefore complies with CW1

LDP Policy CW2

Development proposals must have regard for all relevant material planning considerations in order to satisfy the following requirements:

A There is no unacceptable impact on the amenity of adjacent properties or land

B The proposal would not result in overdevelopment of the site and / or its surroundings

C The proposed use is compatible with surrounding land-uses and would not constrain the development of neighbouring sites for their identified land-use

D Where applicable, the viability of existing neighbouring land uses would not be compromised by virtue of their potential impact upon the amenity of proposed new residential development

The change of use would not have any unacceptable impacts on the nearest properties that are located over 100-150 m to the south and on higher land adjacent to the main road. The development largely utilises existing farm buildings. Use of the land and buildings for tourism and education would be suitable and would not adversely impact on surrounding land uses. In this way the development meets the criteria in LDP Policy CW2.

LDP Policy CW3

Development proposals must satisfy the following highways requirements:

A The proposal has regard for the safe, effective, and efficient use of the transportation network

B The proposal ensures that new access roads within development proposals are designed to a standard that:

i Promotes the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport before that of the private car, and

ii Safely and effectively accommodates the scale and nature of traffic, which those roads are intended to serve

C Parking, appropriate servicing and operational space have been provided in accordance with the CSS Wales Parking Standards 2008

D Where access onto a highway is required the proposal takes account of the restrictions relevant to the class of road as designated in the road hierarchy ensuring movements and speeds are controlled through appropriate design, in order to ensure highway safety and amenity

The site provides opportunities for access on foot and by cycle and is in walking distance from a bus stop. It lies adjacent to National Cycle Route 47 (a long-distance segregated footpath/cycleway)

The site enjoys longstanding access from the main Caerphilly Rd A472. It is recognised that detailed highway design work would be required to ensure junction arrangements between the site and the A472 were safe and appropriate. The applicant owns sufficient land on the northern side of the A472 in the vicinity of the existing junction with the metalled access track to accommodate highway improvements.

The applicant has indicated a large indicative area for car parking. However given the move in strategic planning policy terms to discourage car movements and to look for maximum car parking requirements we would value the Council's view on how many parking spaces would be required given the change of use of existing buildings and the new building.

LDP Policy CW19

Locational Constraints - Rural Development and Diversification

Rural Development and Diversification schemes will be permitted where:

A They are consistent in scale and compatible with their rural location, including the retention and enhancement of existing natural heritage features

B That where buildings are required to deliver the scheme, existing buildings are reused where possible, or the new buildings relate to an existing group of buildings

C They will be complementary to, and not prejudice, the operation of the existing business

The rural development scheme, involving the use of the land and buildings for farm based educational and tourism, is of a scale appropriate to the local area. The scheme utilises the existing farm buildings and the one new building is of a scale and size

compatible with the existing grouping and is located close by. The development therefore complies with Policy CW19

LDP Policy CW20

Locational Constraints - Conversion, Extension and Replacement of Buildings in the Countryside

The conversion, extension or replacement of a building outside settlement boundaries will be permitted where:

A The proposed use, scale, form, siting, design and materials are suitable within its context

B A conversion is justified by demonstrating that:

- i The building is not makeshift in nature and is of permanent, substantial construction, and
- ii The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion or rehabilitation without major alteration or reconstruction
- iii The building is capable of accommodating the proposed use without materially changing its existing character
- iv The development does not result in the domestication or urbanisation of an otherwise rural setting or the unacceptable loss of undeveloped countryside

C Extension is justified by demonstrating that:

- i The scale, form and design of the extension respects the scale and character of the original building, which remains the dominant element;
- ii The extension does not result in the loss of undeveloped countryside
- iii The extension does not result in the domestication or urbanisation of an otherwise rural setting

D Replacement is justified by demonstrating that:

- i The existing building is structurally unsound and not capable of rehabilitation or conversion to an alternative use without major alteration or rebuilding
- ii The use of the existing building has not been abandoned
- iii The use cannot practicably continue to be accommodated in the existing building and
- iv All practical appropriate alternatives for reuse have been examined

The existing farm buildings are substantial and have been a feature of the landscape for decades. They are structurally sound and their conversion will not change their visual character or appearance in the landscape. The development therefore complies with Policy CW20.

LE3

Protection of Country Parks Country Parks that contribute to the Valleys Regional Park are protected at the following locations:

LE3.4 Parc Penallta, Ystrad Mynach

LE3.5 Penyfan Pond, Croespenmaen

The proposed development that will be located immediately adjacent to Penallta Parc will help increase the critical mass of countryside-based activities in the Nelson area and the protection of the rural landscape character and countryside use will assist in the long-term protection of Penallta Parc. In this way the development helps promote Policy LE3.

TM1

TOURISM Tourism Proposals Sites are allocated for tourism related activities at:

TM1.3 Llancaiach Fawr and environs, Nelson TM1.4 Maesycwmmmer Mill, Maesycwmmmer TM1.5 Rhymney Riverside Walk, Rhymney - Cefn Mably TM1.6 Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Crumlin Arm

3.142 Tourism is a significant contributor to the County Borough's economy, with attractions such as Llancaiach Fawr Manor House forming part of a network of historic buildings and landscapes. Continuing their success is a prime objective of any tourism strategy, and developing other attractions is an effective means of promoting regeneration and increasing economic activity in specific locations.

The proposed use of the buildings and land would add to the existing tourism infrastructure of the area in a manner that would be appropriate to the existing scale of buildings. Use as tourism and education would support the County Borough's economy and build on the Council's desire to see more tourism in the Nelson area. The development would therefore support Policy TM1

NH1

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) Special Landscape Areas are identified and will be protected at the following locations: NH1.2 Gelligaer Common NH1.3 Mynydd Eglwysilan

3.101 Two Special Landscape Areas have been identified in the NCC area. These areas will be protected from any development that would harm their distinctive features or characteristics. The policy is not designed to preclude development. However, an applicant will need to demonstrate that any development proposal will not have an unacceptable impact on the specific distinctive features or characteristics associated with the SLA.

The bulk of the proposed floorspace for the tourism and educational development would be housed in existing agricultural buildings and hard surfaces and pens. The new building and car park would be located on previously developed land and would lie in the valley bottom and well located to the existing range of farm buildings. The surface of the car park can be designed so as to fit in with the tones and appearance of the locality. The area already contains a large number of visual detractors in relation to the gas storage area and pylons. The development would not harm the visual landscape quality of the area and would comply with Policy NH1.

Specific Queries

Alongside generalised pre application advice the applicant would value the LPA and Highway Authority's guidance on the following matters:

1. Would this be a major application requiring a formal PAC?
2. Are Caerphilly CBC a Sustainable Drainage Body and would you suggest that pre application advice is sought soon after we receive your planning advice?
3. Would a Coal Mining Risk Assessment Report and Contamination report be required? Especially given that part of the land has been the subject of tipping. At what point in the planning process would these be required?

4. What advice would you give in terms of highway requirements to form part of the planning application given the need for junction improvements with the A472.
5. Can you advise on your parking requirements given moves to discourage car journeys and given the site's location next to the National Cycle Route?
6. The site lies in a Special Landscape Area although the surrounds are degraded by large visual detractors and the site contains previously tipped land. Would you require the application to be advised by a LVIA?