

Application Number: DM/2020/00390

Proposal: Change of use of existing agricultural building to B1 use

Address: Gaerllwyd Farm, Gaerllwyd Farm To Gethley Road Newchurch, Devauden
Chepstow

Applicant: Mr Williams

Plans: Landscaping Plan Revised Landscaping - , Location Plan - , Other 1041(10)19 - Rev A, All Proposed Plans 1041(11)19 - Rev D, Bat Survey - , Other Planning Statement - , Other Access Plan - , Other Welfare Cabin - ,

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Case Officer: Ms Kate Young
Date Valid: 11.03.2020

This application is presented to Planning Committee as the applicant is related to Councillor Sara Jones and also at the request of Councillor Louise Brown

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

1.1 Site Description

Gaerllwyd Farm has recently been subdivided into smaller units and this has resulted in some of the large agricultural outbuildings becoming redundant. The building which has a steel frame measures approximately 26 metres by 18.5 metres. It is finished in concrete blockwork, Yorkshire boarding and galvanised steel. The pitched roof is of fibre cement sheeting with translucent roof lights and is 6.5 metres high to the ridge. The building was previously used as a cattle shed and for storage.

The site is located in open countryside, approximately 100metres north of Gaerllwyd crossroads. Immediately to the west of the building is a timber building which has recently been granted planning permission for conversion to a residential unit.

1.2 Value Added

This is the resubmission of a withdrawn application. The previous application related to general industry. Officers considered that a B1 use only would be more appropriate.

1.3 Proposal Description

This current application seeks the conversion of the modern agricultural building into B1 (Offices, research and development, studios, high tech and light industry) units to be used for rural enterprise. This is a speculative proposal with no end-user in mind at this stage. The proposal involves enclosing the open south elevation with blockwork and steel sheeting to match the existing. Three roller shutter doors would be inserted on the front elevation and three personnel doors would be inserted into the rear elevation. To the rear of the building it is proposed to provide 19 car parking spaces for customers and employees. A new hedge would be planted around the car parking area. A welfare cabin would be provided within the car park. This would provide toilet and kitchen facilities for all the units. The welfare building would measure 2.3 metres by 3.5 metres.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (if any)

Reference Number	Description	Decision	Decision Date
DM/2018/00641	Demolish existing glazed porch and erect a single storey extension to improve accommodation.	Approved	12.06.2018
DM/2018/01123	Non-material amendment to planning consent DM/2018/00641:- Revision of roof layout design.	Approved	12.07.2018
DM/2019/00154	Discharge of conditions 6 and 10 of planning permission DC/2014/00205	Approved	10.04.2019
DM/2019/01158	Change of use of existing agricultural building to B1, B2 and B8 use.		04.02.2020
DM/2020/01485	Discharge of conditions 9 and 10 of planning consent DC/2015/00847 (Construction Method Statement and Lighting Plan)	Approved	16.12.2020
DC/2012/01010	Change of use for a redundant agricultural building, into a dwelling.	Refused	25.01.2013
DC/2014/00843	Change of use of the land to the north east from agricultural to the keeping of a horse. Within the Garden curtilage the erection of 2 stables, haybarn, Tack/Store room and garage together with hard standing to the front and south of the stables. Fence off a section of the existing 1m high stone wall to the front of the property securing the garden area whilst hedging is given time to establish.	Approved	19.08.2014
DC/2016/00051	Within the garden curtilage erect a wooden garage and barn together with a hard standing to the front and south of the garage/barn. This replaces the approved current planning application (DC/2014/00843) in place on the site.	Approved	17.02.2016
DC/2012/00835	Change of use to equestrian and erection of stable block access track from lane to stable block (existing gateway entrance).	Approved	15.04.2013
DC/2015/00847	Conversion of barn to form one dwelling.	Approved	08.01.2016

3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Strategic Policies

S10 LDP Rural Enterprise
S12 LDP Efficient Resource Use and Flood Risk
S13 LDP Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment
S16 LDP Transport
S17 LDP Place Making and Design

Development Management Policies

RE2 LDP The Conversion or Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Employment Use
RE3 LDP Agricultural Diversification
SD4 LDP Sustainable Drainage
LC1 LDP New Built Development in the Open Countryside
LC5 LDP Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character
NE1 LDP Nature Conservation and Development
EP1 LDP Amenity and Environmental Protection
MV1 LDP Proposed Developments and Highway Considerations
DES1 LDP General Design Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Conversion of Agricultural Buildings Design Guide SPG April 2015:

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/H4-LDP-Barn-Conversion-SPG-April-2015.pdf>

LDP Policy H4 (g) Conversion/Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside to Residential Use Assessment of Re-use for Business Purposes SPG April 2015:

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/LDP-Policy-H4-g-SPG-April-2015.pdf>

Monmouthshire Parking Standards (January 2013)

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/Mon-CC-Parking-Standards-SPG-Jan-2013.pdf>

4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Future Wales - the national plan 2040

Future Wales is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. 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. Future Wales - the national plan 2040 is the national development framework and it is the highest tier plan, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a framework which will be built on by Strategic Development Plans at a regional level and Local Development Plans. Planning decisions at every level of the planning system in Wales must be taken in accordance with the development plan as a whole.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11

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. PPW promotes action at all levels of the planning process which is conducive to maximising its contribution to the well-being of Wales and its communities.

Technical Advice Notes

TAN 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 Consultation Replies

Shirenewton Community Council - recommend refusal referencing the following points:

Barn is visually prominent

Contrary to LDP Policy RE3 as no existing enterprise in this location, no evidence that it will provide sustained employment, remote location away from any settlements.

Lack of public transport

No independent structural survey has been provided to demonstrate that the building is suitable for conversion

There is no fibre cabling and consequently broadband speeds are minimal and unsuited to business use

Highway safety is compromised by the site access being from a single track country road

Granting of planning permission sets a precedent

No toilets or washing facilities are proposed

The bat report was undertaken in winter when bats are in hibernation. A further survey in spring/summer time should be provided as bats have been observed in the immediate vicinity

The application lacks detail in the necessary repairs including any upgrading or roof lights.

The application lacks detail of external lighting and roof lights, and the steps to be taken to ensure there is no light disturbance to residents, wildlife and the dark skies

No time, noise, machinery operation or vehicle movement restrictions are proposed and these are needed to protect the rural and residential surroundings

MCC Highways - No objection to the principle of the change of use.

The adjacent barn has planning consent for conversion to a dwelling (DC/2014/00205), the proposed conversion will be accessed via the same access as for the change of use, the result is that the existing means of access will provide access to a residential dwelling, B1 premises and agricultural buildings creating a diverse mix of use and vehicles requiring access and egress with particular servicing requirements.

The level of detail submitted in support of the application is not considered adequate to provide constructive highway comments. Neither the Planning Statement nor the supporting drawings indicate the level of detail the highway authority would require to consider the suitability of the proposed building and associated infrastructure, parking provision, turning provision etc. Access is not directly off the B4235 as detailed in the Planning Statement, access is off an unclassified rural road, route C58.5 that has a junction with the B4235 approximately 80 metres from the site.

The highway authority has no objection to the principle of the change of use, the footprint of the proposed development is such that the likely traffic movements generated by the change of use would not be considered to be detrimental to the existing network or lead to a real deterioration in highway safety or capacity. However, the proposal is located in what can be considered an unsustainable location in Monmouthshire, the area is inadequately served by sustainable transport provision and there are no realistic opportunities to provide sustainable travel enhancements that

would reduce the reliance on the private motor car. The highway authority would recommend that any future development should incorporate ULEV charging points.

The highway authority therefore would support the principle for the change of use but the proposed change of use should take account of the proposal's location and promote development that is compatible with the location. If the planning authority are minded to grant planning consent, then the highway authority would require suitably worded conditions to ensure that the development is built out so as not to be detrimental to the safe operation of the immediate highway network.

MCC Environmental Heath - I would find it hard to object to this application as by the pure definition of Class B1 use it states that 'in all cases, it is a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.'

Obviously that being said there is concern with a building already having been given planning permission to be converted into residential so close to this proposed site. Having a residential property so close could be very restrictive to the type of business allowed at the proposed site given the restrictions of the above definition.

If planning permission is granted I would certainly recommend that a condition regarding operating hours be put in place such as no late evenings or particularly early mornings, to avoid disturbance to nearby or potential future residential properties. The chance of disturbance will be exacerbated by the low background noise levels in such a rural location.

MCC Ecology - No objection

A preliminary roost assessment was undertaken on the 5th January 2020, this identified that the building offered negligible potential for bat roosting. The limited roosting locations that were present have been ruled out due to the poor state of the building. Whilst we agree that the building holds limited potential, we disagree with the section of the report which states: that no mitigation is necessary due to the access remaining in the future, Mitigation for bats and nesting birds is required. Lighting should be controlled.

The indicative landscape plan submitted is welcomed and will contribute towards ensuring net benefit for biodiversity. Further details of planting specification will need to be provided, this could be sought at this stage to avoid conditions. We request that the hedgerow boundary is extended to provide connectivity to the existing network and that it be interspersed with standard trees.

Cadw - No objection

The proposed development is for the change of use of an existing agricultural building to allow various classes of business use to take place in it. The proposal will require some minor external changes to the building but views of the building from the scheduled monument are blocked by an existing barn. Vehicle traffic along the B4235 has already added modern noise and traffic movements in the surroundings of the monument and whilst it is possible that some of the possible uses of the agricultural building will slightly increase these elements they are unlikely to change the way that the monument is experienced, understood and appreciated. Consequently it is our opinion that the proposed development will not have any impact on the setting of the scheduled monument

5.2 Neighbour Notification

Letters of objection received from four addresses

Close to adjoining properties, inappropriate for a rural area, out of keeping with character of area. More appropriate to have this on an industrial estate.

Conflict with local plan, site also put forward as a candidate site for residential

Increase of pollution

Information missing from plans

Loss of privacy

Noise nuisance

Not enough information given on application

General dislike of proposal, unsuitable location

Inadequate access, dangerous junction, increase in traffic leaving the lane and turning onto the B4235 will occur, conflict with residential access

This is effectively a repeat of the earlier application (DM/2019/01158) that was withdrawn (I presume due to the amount of local resident objection to the proposal). Please take on board comments made on that application.

There will be more local residents once the two approved barn conversions have been approved.

No notification of the application

Site should be maintained as agricultural

Many people can work from home now so this use is not needed

There will be many empty business premises due to the economic downturn and see no reason to create another set of empty buildings that will only detract from the local area

The site is a very quiet rural location and is in a prominent position overlooking the valley

The area is currently quiet, unspoilt, and close to an ancient monument

No mention is made of provisions for on-site workers (parking, waste disposal, local amenities), nor the obvious security that would be required in future.

There is minimal broadband, insufficient public transport, no local desire for the minimal employment opportunities this might offer

No credible business plan.

5.3 Local Member Representations

Councillor Brown Requests that this application be considered by the planning committee in view of highways, planning policy and other considerations. There is insufficient information.

The highways report dated the 8th of June indicates that there is insufficient highways information in this application, with no details provided of how a shared access/egress will operate with residential/ B1/ agricultural buildings if change of use/ turning circle etc.

I am concerned about the piecemeal nature of this application. The design and access statement for the conversion of one of the 3 agricultural buildings to residential use (DC/2014/00205) made it clear that a business use was not an alternative for this same site.

The parking for this large barn and for other uses of the 2 other buildings on site, needs to be considered within the parking policy for Monmouthshire as well as consideration for any residential and other large barn use. It is not a suitable site for off-site parking and the 430m2 area could double if another floor area were added to this high barn and then double the parking requirement.

The derelict large barn opposite may also result in a future planning application which may have its own parking requirements. Hence a concern about how the 3 buildings on the site may in the future, operate as an integrated whole.

Please note all representations can be read in full on the Council's website:

<https://planningonline.monmouthshire.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

6.0 EVALUATION

6.1 Principle of Development

PPW11 supports economic growth but also recognises the need to protect the character of local areas. It also promotes the use of previously developed land. This development would conform to those objectives by providing employment opportunities in a rural area on a brownfield site. PPW 11 supports activities that generate sustainable long-term prosperity, jobs and income. The proposal complies with the objectives of paragraph 5.6.1 of PPW which states.

"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." PPW makes it clear that "Many commercial and light manufacturing activities can be located in rural areas without causing unacceptable disturbance or other adverse effects. Small-scale enterprises have a vital role to play in the rural economy, and contribute to

both local and national competitiveness and prosperity. While some employment can be created in rural locations by the re-use of existing buildings, new development will be required in many areas."

The site is located outside of any development boundary, within open countryside. PPW Ed.11 and Technical Advice Note 6 'Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities' (TAN 6) support the diversification of the rural economy, to meet the needs of both traditional and new industries, whilst minimising the impacts on local communities and the environment. Paragraphs 5.74 and 5.76 of the LDP recognise the need to balance rural enterprise with the principles of sustainable development and priority is given to the re-use or adaptation of existing buildings, with conversion to employment uses being promoted.

The building in question is of modern construction but was used for its intended purpose as an agricultural building in association with Gaerllwyd Farm for a number of years until it became redundant. The site is located in open countryside outside of any defined development boundary. Given its location and extant use the application falls to be considered in relation to LDP policies S9 and S10 which seek to support the development of small units / workshops and rural enterprise, subject to detailed consideration under policies E2, RE2 and RE3 of the LDP.

Policy E2 of the LDP refers Non-Allocated Employment sites and states that:

Proposals for industrial and business development (classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987) by new, non-speculative single-site users that cannot be accommodated on existing or proposed industrial or business sites within the County will be permitted provided that all the following conditions are met:

- a) the proposed site is within or adjoining development boundaries of towns and other main settlements or existing and proposed industrial / business sites;
- b) the proposal is compatible with adjacent land uses;
- c) there is a demonstrable need for the type and scale of development in that location; and
- d) the proposal would cause no unacceptable harm to the surrounding landscape, historic / cultural heritage, biodiversity or local amenity value.

This is a speculative development with no specific end user in mind. The applicant states in their planning statement that, "*The applicant has not yet identified an occupier for the units, however given the rural location of the site it is envisaged that the buildings would be occupied by businesses with a small number of employees*". Policy E2 does not apply in this case as the proposed use is speculative and the site is not adjacent to a settlement boundary. In addition the proposal is not for a new building but rather the conversion of an existing building. The applicants have not indicated that the buildings would be used in association with any working farm holding as a way of diversifying that agricultural enterprise, and therefore Policy RE3 of the LDP which supports agricultural diversification is also not relevant in this case.

The conversion of this building for speculative B1 uses would therefore need to be evaluated against Policy RE2 of the LDP, the conversion or rehabilitation of buildings in the open countryside for employment uses. The Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) defines B1 use as businesses and offices, but not financial and professional services where the service is provided principally to visiting members of the public.

LDP Policy RE2 of the Local Development Plan states:

"Proposals for the conversion or rehabilitation of existing buildings in the open countryside, to employment use will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

- a) the form, bulk and general design of the proposal, including any extensions, respect the rural character and design of the building;
- b) in respect of farm diversification proposals, any necessary re-building work should respect or be in sympathy with the location and traditional characteristics of the building; in all other cases the buildings should be capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;

- c) the more isolated and prominent the building the more stringent will be the design requirements with regard to new door and window openings, extensions and means of access, service provision and curtilage, especially if located within the Wye Valley AONB;
- d) the conversion of modern farm and forestry buildings will only be permitted if the building has been used for its intended purpose for a significant period of time. Particularly close scrutiny will be given to proposals relating to buildings that are less than 5 years old, or which are known to have been used for their intended purpose for less than 5 years, and where there has been no change in farming or forestry activities on the unit since the building was erected permission may be refused;
- e) the proposal including curtilage and access, is in scale and sympathy with the surrounding landscape and does not require the provision of unsightly infrastructure and ancillary buildings; and,
- f) the building is capable of accommodating the proposed use without substantial extension.

The above criteria will also be applied to proposals to extend buildings that have already been converted.”

Considering these criteria in turn:

- a) In this case the form, bulk and general design of the building would be respected with no major external alterations or extensions to the buildings. The building would be subdivided into 3 separate units internally. The Yorkshire boarding would be replaced by metal cladding and the roof covering would remain as existing.
- b) The proposed building work and recladding is considered to be in sympathy with the context of the building's location and that the buildings are capable of conversion.
- c) As b. above.
- d) The building has been used for its intended purpose as an agricultural building for a significant period of time.
- e) The siting of the building has sufficient room to accommodate parking for employees, utilises the existing access and would not require unsightly infrastructure or ancillary buildings, only a welfare cabin.
- f) The proposals do not include any extensions to the building, accommodating the three units within the existing footprint.

The above reasons show that the provisions of part a), b), c), d), e) and f) of Policy RE2 are complied with and the proposal would be an acceptable form of employment development in the countryside. It would comply with policies S10 and RE2 of the LDP, which seek to support the County's rural economy by enabling the provision of rural enterprise and permit the conversion of buildings in the countryside to employment use, where appropriate.

6.2 Sustainability

Good Design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. In this case the setting of the building in the open countryside will provide a very pleasant environment for people to work. It will provide extensive views and fresh air to enjoy during lunch time and breaks. The appearance of the building will not alter significantly but once converted it will provide a pleasant environment for its occupiers. The site, in the open countryside does not occupy a very sustainable location, employees working in the offices would tend to drive to the site. The location of the building is more rural, however it is close to the main secondary road from Usk to Chepstow which does accommodate a local bus service (no.63 Cwmbran to Chepstow).

6.2.1 Good Design and Place-making

The application seeks the change of use of an existing building and there would be very few external alterations to the appearance of the building. The new cladding would match the existing cladding in colour and profile. The fair-faced concrete blockwork would be retained. The south elevation of the building would be the most significantly altered with the introduction of new door openings, these would be in keeping with the appearance of the existing building with dark grey roller shutter doors. The south elevation faces towards the existing farm yard and is not visually

prominent in the wider landscape. This north elevation faces towards a field and the open countryside beyond, the changes will be visible but only when viewed from close proximity. There is a public footpath to the north-east of the site but this is over 370m away and the changes to the building will not be discernible from that distance. The roof covering and roof lights will remain as existing. The car parking area will be to the north of the building in an area already hard surfaced. The carpark will impact on the landscape but the proposal to surround the car parking area with a new hedge of native species will help to reduce its impact. The car park at the back of the building will not be highly visible when viewed from the road. The proposed change of use does respect the form scale and materials of existing farm buildings on the site and its intensity is compatible with existing uses. The conversion will not affect natural views and panoramas within the wider landscape in general and the views from the neighbouring scheduled ancient monument of Gaer-Llwyd Burial Chamber in particular. This will be evaluated in more detail later in the report. The re-use of the building for employment purposes is a compatible land use. Therefore the proposal does conform to criteria a), b), c), e) and i) of Policy DES1 of the LDP

6.2.2 Green Infrastructure

The building and the hard standing at the front of the building are existing so there is little scope or need for additional green infrastructure. A hedge of native species will be planted around the car parking area. This will provide biodiversity enhancements as well softening the visual impact of the proposal.

6.2.3 Energy

The proposal seeks to convert a redundant farm building into business units to build new units. This is considered to contribute the objectives of PPW11 for the sustainable management of natural resources which includes land. An existing brownfield site is being used rather than developing on a green field site. The existing site is considered to be appropriate for this type of development given that it is on that has previously been developed but is no longer needed for that purpose. The proposal will help to sustain the rural economy. The proposal does accord with the objectives of PPW11 for the sustainable management of natural resources. The use of an existing building to form the basis for new business results is an efficient use of an existing resource which requires less materials than would be required if a totally new building was to be constructed.

6.3 Landscape

PPW 11 underlines the importance of protecting and enhancing a rich and varied landscape but at the same time understanding the social and economic benefits they can provide. This site is not in a designated landscape area but it is important to protect the rural landscape from inappropriate development. In this case the building already exists and is within a complex of buildings including other modern agricultural buildings. The proposed change of use from an agricultural building into business accommodation will have little visual impact on the wider landscape. The provision of new doors and windows will be on the north elevation facing onto the open countryside but even these changes will not have a significant impact when viewed from any public vantage point. These alterations will not be highly visible when viewed from outside the site. The conversion is in keeping with the rural character of the area and reflects the rural landscape. Policy LC5 of the LDP does allow for development provided that it does not have an adverse effect on the special character or quality of Monmouthshire's landscape in terms of its visual, historic, geological, ecological or cultural aspect. The proposal does not cause significant visual intrusion and it does not change the landscape character of the area. The use is compatible with its location and harmonises with the landscape. The proposal therefore accords with the objectives of Policy LC5 of the LDP.

6.4 Historic Environment

The application area is 68m to the east of the Gaer-Llwyd Burial Chamber which is a scheduled monument comprising of a large capstone resting on three upright stones. Neolithic chambered tombs are relatively rare. Cadw have carefully considered the information provided within the planning application and have no objection to the impact of the proposed development on the

scheduled monument. In the medieval and post medieval periods the tomb is likely to have been a significant landmark and remains a significant feature in the modern landscape. The landscape surrounding the monument has been altered significantly since it was erected but it remains a significant feature in the area. Views of the building from the monument are blocked by an existing barn. Cadw therefore considers that it is unlikely that the change of use will alter the way the monument is experienced and will not impact on the setting of the SAM. Cadw has no objection to the proposal.

6.5 Biodiversity

The land to the west, on the opposite side of the road is a designated site of interest for nature conservation (SINC) noted for its natural grassland. A bat survey was submitted as part of the application. The objective of the survey was to determine the presence or absence of bats and to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on bats. MCC Ecologists evaluated the submitted ecology report and agree that the building holds limited potential for bats but that mitigation will be required. Mitigation will also need to be provided for birds as it is likely that this structure with its open nature would be used by swallows and other birds for nesting. A plan has been submitted showing Biodiversity Enhancements in the form of bat and bird nesting boxes on the east elevation of the building.

This area is very important for bats, with numerous bat roost records in close proximity including a lesser horseshoe bat maternity roost. Lighting is therefore a key consideration. The indicative landscape plan submitted is welcomed and will contribute towards ensuring net benefit for biodiversity. Further details of a planting specification will need to be provided.

6.6 Impact on Amenity

PPW11 in paragraph 3.21 says that the planning system must consider the impacts of new development on existing communities and maximise health protection and well-being and safeguard amenity. Health impacts should be minimised in all instances. In such circumstances where health or amenity impacts cannot be overcome, development should be refused. Policy EP1 of the LDP says that development should have regard to the privacy, amenity and health of occupiers of neighbouring properties and developments that would cause or result in unacceptable harm will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that measures can be taken to overcome any significant risk.

There are two existing properties that are close to the application site. Glenmore is approximately 86m to the north-west of the site, on the opposite side of the road. Gaerllwyd Farm is approximately 88m to the south. In between Gaerllwyd Farm and the application site is an existing agricultural building which is being retained on the site. The site was previously a working farm yard that would have generated a significant amount of noise, odour, dust and traffic. The proposed site is not suitable for general industry or for storage distribution as this may result in high levels of traffic generation and potential noise and dust depending on the type of activity undertaken inside the premises. A B1 use would be more suitable in this location. The use of these three units for office use would not generate noise or dust and moreover, operating hours could be controlled. The premises could be occupied by a small number of staff but the B1 use would preclude businesses where the service is provided principally to visiting members of the public. Restricting the use to B1 would protect the amenity of adjoining occupiers and would be compatible with the objectives of Policy EP1 of the LDP which seeks to protect the amenity and health of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

In May 2014 (DC/2014/00205) planning permission was granted to convert the small timber dairy unit abutting the application site, into a residential dwelling and in January 2016 planning permission was granted for the stone building opposite the entrance into this site to be converted into a residential dwelling (DC/2015/00847). No work has commenced on these conversions to date however we must consider the residential amenity of these properties as well. The timber dairy unit is less than three metres from the proposed units. For this reason it is important that the use of the units is restricted to offices and business only as other uses would not be compatible with the adjacent residential use.

MCC Environmental Health officers do not object to the proposal given that the definition of a Class B1 use that 'in all cases...is a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.' However they do recommend a restriction on operating hours given the close proximity to (potential) residential properties.

6.7 Highways

6.7.1 Sustainable Transport Hierarchy

PPW11 refers to the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy where walking and cycling are the highest priority and public transport second with use of private motor vehicles being the least desirable. The location of the proposed business units is not in a very sustainable location. Thus, most (if not all) users of the building would have to travel to the site by car.

The existing barn is in open countryside where TAN18: Transport recognises that, "The distinctive characteristics of rural areas including low population densities, the dispersion of job opportunities and the concentration of services in larger settlements restrict travel options. The car is important for accessibility in rural areas and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Development in rural locations should embody sustainability principles, balancing the need to support the rural economy, whilst maintaining and enhancing the environmental, social and cultural quality of rural areas."

Gaer-llwyd cannot be described as a sustainable location as advised in PPW11, although weight needs to be given to the fact that the proposal would generate employment opportunities for the rural economy.

6.7.2 Access / Highway Safety

The proposal would utilise the existing access into the farmyard; it would share this access with the adjacent barn conversion, if that development was to go ahead. The existing access is wide with good visibility in both directions. The access is located some 75m north of the B4235 at the Gaer-llwyd crossroads. The highway authority has no objection to the principle of the change of use, the footprint of the proposed development is such that the likely traffic movements generated by the change of use would not be considered to be detrimental to the existing network or lead to a real deterioration in highway safety or capacity. However, the proposal is located in what can be considered an unsustainable location in the County; the area is inadequately served by sustainable transport provision and there are no realistic opportunities to provide sustainable travel enhancements that would reduce the reliance on the private motor car. The highway authority would recommend that any future development should incorporate ULEV charging points. The highway authority also wants clarity on the internal vehicle movements within the site to ensure that there is no conflict.

6.7.3 Parking

Nineteen car parking spaces would be provided at the rear of the site. As this is a speculative proposal there are no details of the operating requirements of the occupiers of the building with regards to deliveries, servicing or staff. The adopted Monmouthshire Parking Standards 2013 part B) considers the parking requirements for offices. This site has an internal floor area of 468 square metres and is in zone 2 to 4 (non-town centre) and would therefore require one parking space per 25 metres square. A development of this size would therefore require nineteen off street parking spaces. The proposed parking provision complies with the advice given in the adopted standards and therefore the proposal complies with LDP Policy MV1.

6.8 Drainage

6.8.1 Foul Drainage

There will be no foul drainage from the building itself. Foul water from the toilet and sinks will be in the welfare cabin, it will drain to a sealed unit within the cabin and will be emptied by truck when required.

6.8.2 Surface Water Drainage

The applicant has indicated that any surface water will discharge into the existing drainage system. The water runs via a series of underground drains into a reception pit, and this is then pumped into the large slurry tower on site. The existing building does not have a down water drainage system at present and so the scheme will require approval by the SuDS Approving Body (SAB) prior to any construction work commencing. The applicant has been informed of this.

6.9 Contaminated Land

The site was previously used for agriculture but there are not known to be any abnormal contamination issues.

6.10 Noise

As the proposed use is for B1 use there should be no significant increase in noise levels as a result of the development. The site was previously used for agricultural purposes which had the potential to generate a certain amount of noise.

6.11 Phosphates

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 it is necessary to consider whether the development should be subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment. This is in particular reference to the impact of increased concentrations of Phosphates on designated SAC's. NRW has set new phosphate standards for the riverine SAC's of the Wye and Usk and their catchment areas. Development that may increase the concentration of phosphates levels will be subject to appropriate assessment and HRA. This application is outside of the SAC catchment and so will not have a detrimental impact on any protected SAC, and as a result no further assessment is required.

6.12 Response to the Representations of Third Parties and Community Council

6.12.1 Most of the issues raised by the objectors such as residential amenity, traffic generation and compliance with the LDP have been addressed in the main body of the report.

It is considered that there is sufficient information submitted with the application to determine it. A site notice was posted at the site on the 27th May and adjoining land owners notified by post as per the statutory requirement.

The building was previously used for agricultural purposes and is now being considered for B1 use - there will be few visual alterations to the building. There is likely to be an increase in cars being parked at the site. The parking area will be partly screened by a new hedge.

The change of use will not have a large impact on the character of the area given the low level of intensity, low scale visual alterations to the building and use of existing access arrangements.

These offices could be provided on a business park but the applicants have applied for them in this location and that is the proposal before the local planning authority; this has to be considered on its merits. Whether there will be demand for such offices in the future is not a material consideration. It is an objective of the Council to upgrade broadband provision throughout the County and especially in rural areas like this.

The fact that this area may be put forward as a candidate site for the next LDP is not something that should be considered at this stage and has no bearing on this current application.

6.13 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

6.6.1 The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales has been considered, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act). In reaching this recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been taken into account and it is considered that this recommendation is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

6.14 Conclusion

6.14.1 This is a speculative proposal but the conversion of this building into a B1 use may have the potential to generate skilled jobs in this rural location where job opportunities are limited. The proposal accords with the objectives of PPW11 and the LDP by promoting economic development. Although this is speculative, the provision of these small business units provides a new opportunity for potential small enterprises to establish in the area without entrepreneurs having to move out of the County to find suitable premises. The Council is generally supportive of facilities that would aid economic growth and Policy S8 of the LDP says that "Development proposals that seek to deliver the Council's vision for sustainable economic growth will be permitted subject to detailed planning considerations".

As discussed above, Policy RE2 of the LDP does allow for the conversion of buildings in the open countryside for employment use. The use of this building for business purposes therefore does accord with the Council's vision for economic growth. It is hoped that by approving these three units it will result in some new enterprises either starting up in this area or relocating from areas outside of the County.

PPW11 states that a strong rural economy is essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. The establishment of new enterprises and the expansion of existing businesses are crucial to the growth and stability of rural areas. The advice in PPW11 therefore is that the establishment of new enterprises in rural areas is to be encouraged as it would increase local prosperity.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Conditions:

- 1 This development shall be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the list of approved plans set out in the table below.

REASON: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved drawings, for the avoidance of doubt.

- 3 The building shall be occupied by businesses operating within the B1 Use of the Use Classes Order (1987) only and for no other purposes without the express permission of the LPA.

REASON: Alternative uses may be detrimental to residential amenity and therefore contrary to the objectives of policy EP1 of the LDP

- 4 The premises shall not be used for the approved purposes outside the following times 08:00 to 18:00 on any day.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to ensure compliance with LDP Policy EP1.

- 5 Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Scheme

Prior to commencement of any construction works a detailed plan of proposed biodiversity enhancement illustrating "net benefit features" to include bird nesting and bat roosting provision identifying location, positioning and specification, The scheme shall provide for the future management and an implementation timetable and shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only proceed in accordance with the approved plans and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To compensate for loss of potential and to provide biodiversity net benefit ensuring compliance with PPW 10, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and LDP policy NE1

6 Lighting Plan

Notwithstanding the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no lighting or lighting fixtures shall be installed on the building or in the curtilage until an appropriate lighting plan which includes lighting type, positioning and specification, protecting roosting and foraging/commuting habitat for bats has been agreed in writing with the LPA.

Reason: To safeguard foraging/commuting habitat of Species of Conservation Concern in accordance with Section 6 of the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 and LDP policies EP3 and NE1

7 Landscape Plan

No development shall take place until full details of soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details should include the following; -Soft landscape details of the hedgerow planting around the perimeter of the site connecting to existing hedgerows to the south. Hedgerow plants to be interspersed with native trees. The plan shall include planting plans, specifications including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment, schedules of plants, noting species, sizes, numbers and densities.

Reason: To safeguard all Green Infrastructure Assets at the site in accordance with LDP policies, DES1, S13, GI1, NE1, EP1 and SD4.

8 Landscape Works Implementation

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and to a reasonable standard in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable with others of species, size and number as originally approved, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs and ensure the provision afforded by appropriate Landscape Design and Green Infrastructure LC5, DES 1, S13, and GI 1 and NE1.

9 Before development commences details of the parking layout and on site turning provision to enable all vehicles associated with the various uses on the site to enter and leave the site in a forward gear shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with those approved details before the occupation of the building for the approved use.

Reason: To ensure the access is used in the interests of highway safety and to ensure compliance with LDP Policy MV1.