



PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Siting of Two Detached Dwellinghouses

AT

LAND OFF NEATH ROAD,

FFORESTGOCH, NEATH

On behalf of
Mr J. Bevan

Our Ref: 1485.a

Date: January 2025

Prepared by: Richard Banks

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Evans Banks Planning has been instructed by Mr. J. Bevan to prepare and submit an application for outline planning permission for the “Siting of Two Detached Dwellinghouses” at off Neath Road, Fforestgoch, Neath.
- 1.2 This Statement has been prepared in been prepared to supplement and provide detail of the proposed development, and its contents should be read in conjunction with the following accompanying plans and supplementary reports:
- Site Location plan
 - Topographic Survey
 - Site layout plan, with indicative scale parameters
 - Green Infrastructure Statement
- 1.3 The Planning Application proposals have been prepared based on the nature and type of the above proposal, and the proposed scheme has been assessed against the following key areas, as well as the site’s context:
- Evaluation of site constraints, planning history and availability utility services
 - Evaluation of National & Local Planning Policy and procedures, and material considerations.
 - Precise physical characteristics of the application site in the context of the settlement of Fforestgoch.
 - Personal circumstances of the Applicant and the specific medical reasons for the requirement for the proposed residential development upon this site (refer to Appendix A of this Statement.)

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

2.1 THE SITE

- 2.1.1 The Application site comprises of the roadside frontage of a grazing field which is set off the eastern flank of the A474 Neath Road at Fforestgoch. The land presents a level enclosure with the highway and is marked by a continuous hedgerow and agricultural gate for access to the field. It is set between residential properties which also front the main highway at this point, with further detached and established housing set directly opposite off the western flank of Neath Road.
- 2.1.2 The single field parcel has a frontage width with the road of some 35 metres and extends eastwards and back from the road to a depth of some 85 metres to reach an existing tree-lined boundary with the River Clydach. Further grazing fields are to be found off the opposite bank of the river channel, which is marked by a dense copse of mature trees along both banks making it inaccessible and inconspicuous from ground level. The entire field is irregular in shape and extends to an area of 0.3 hectares (0.75 acres) and is relatively level to gently sloping eastwards. The northern perimeter is marked by a post and wire fence which acts to separate the ownership of the enclosure from further grazing land to the north, and range of agricultural outbuildings set to the rear of No.2 Neath Road, being the detached house to the north of the site.
- 2.1.3 The Application Site is found with a dense band of uninterrupted mature trees forming a linear southern boundary, which act to separate the site from a pair of semi-detached houses at No.'s 12 and 14 Neath Road. The properties mark a row of established dwellings which run south, uniformly fronting Neath Road at this point. The opposite, western flank of the road exhibits a range of dwelling forms but mainly detached and comprising two-storey and dormer bungalow types. Each are set in modest to generous plot scales with vehicular accesses in the form of side driveways.
- 2.1.4 The A474 Neath Road is quite wide at this point, being the main distributor road between Pontardawe and Neath. It is some 6.0 metres wide and benefits from pavements off both flanks, together with street lighting. Traffic calming and chevron markings have been introduced to define the extent of carriageway and pedestrian crossing islands introduced.
- 2.1.5 The site is identified by being edged in red on the plans below. Figure 1 illustrates its wider position with the settlement of Fforestgoch, whilst Figure 2 provides a detailed Ordnance Survey map extract with the site perimeters identified. Figure 3 provides a reproduction of the latest Google Earth aerial imagery, and in which the above physical features are highlighted.

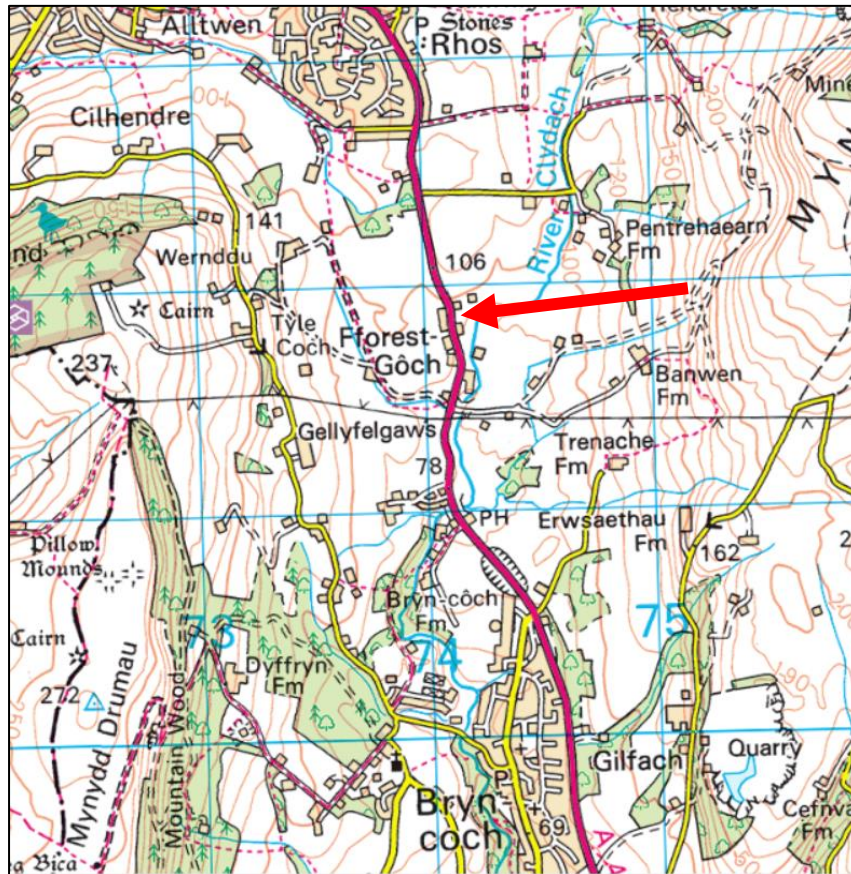


Figure 1 – OS Explorer Map of Fforestgoch with site highlighted

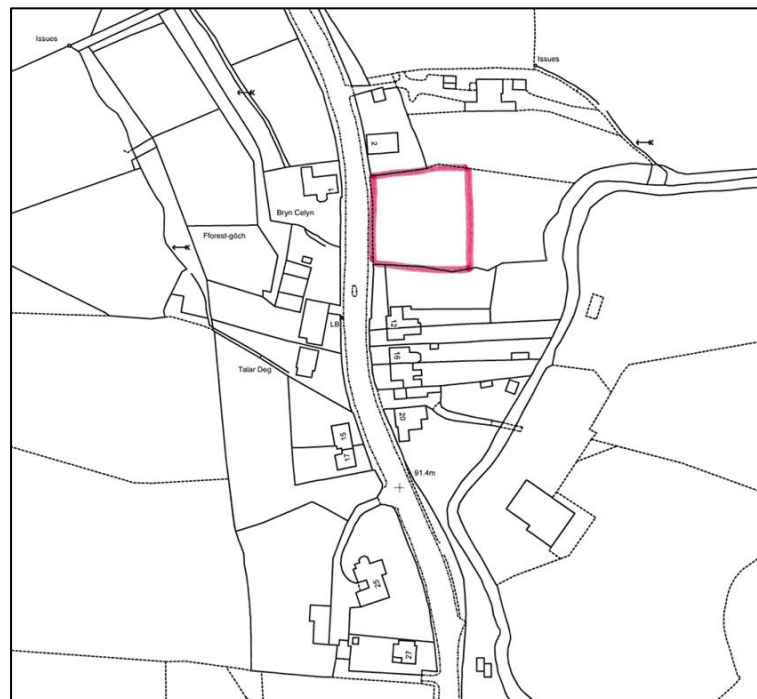


Figure 2 - OS Plan – precise boundaries of Site are shown edged in red



Figure 3 – Google Earth imagery – July 2024

- 2.1.6 The land contains semi-improved pasture which has been consistently grazed over generations. The perimeters are well defined, with the enclosure being irregular in shape with high, mature deciduous hedgerows and trees to two developed perimeters, with the northern boundary well defined with a continuous fence line.

2.2 Setting Within Fforestgoch

- 2.2.1 Fforestgoch is notable for taking a nucleated form as a small village set upon the A474 between Rhos to the north and Bryncoch and Neath to the south and historically being developed along both flanks of the A474 Neath Road. The village contains some 18 dwellinghouses set off both flanks of the principal road. It however lies only one kilometre on foot from Rhos and enables residents to walk uninterrupted along continuous pavements to the Rhos Primary School, Smiths Public House and village store and post office. To the south, a similar walking distance takes residents to The Dyffryn Arms public house and the northern outskirts of Neath at Bryncoch, and in particular Ysgol Maes-y-Coed and Hendrefelin School.

- 2.2.2 The Application Site's well-defined perimeters and immediate proximity to adjacent residential properties are shown within the photographs below. The photos depict the field form, and the extent of the adjacent highway. The alignment of Neath Road is acknowledged as fairly straight, which can enable users of a new development to benefit from good horizontal and vertical visibility in both directions when accessing and egressing the site.



Photo 1 – viewing Site off eastern perimeter Neath Road set between established properties



Photo 2 – extent of A road carriageway with site to east of road and dwellinghouses located opposite



Photo 3 – view of site frontage with dense band of trees to southern perimeter and agricultural gate access at mid frontage position



Photo 4 – view of site from access onto Neath Road looking right / north and noted double width of highway and good visibility

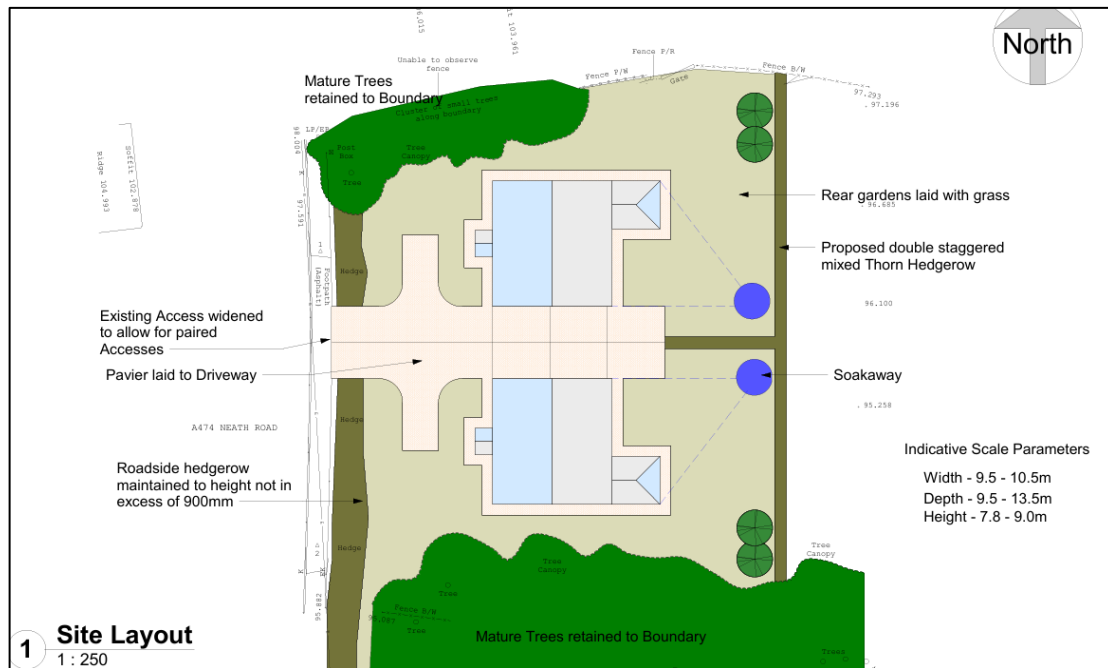


Figure 5 – proposed site layout plan

3.3 Both proposed dwellinghouses will be two-storey in form, set orientated to front the main highway. Both will be equipped with traditional rear garden areas extending to a minimum depth of 10 metres, with a new rear boundary provided comprising of a native hedgerow. This new hedgerow will provide a sense of new green infrastructure and encourage ecological connectivity between the existing vegetation present off both the northern and southern side perimeters of the site.

3.4 In accord with national development procedure protocols, “Indicative Scale Parameters” are provided, and will be as follows, and will provide for a scale of properties which will be four-bedroomed in form.

Indicative Scale Parameters

Width - 9.5 - 10.5m
Depth - 9.5 - 13.5m
Height - 7.8 - 9.0m

3.5 The proposals illustrate both dwelling footprints sited away from the existing perimeter vegetation which will allow those existing tree specimens to be fully retained in situ. Furthermore, the existing roadside hedgerow will be largely retained to a height not exceeding 900mm above the level of the adjacent carriageway crown, and thus allow for continued visibility splays in excess of 90 metres from the widened site access.

3.6 Soakaways would be the most sustainable means of disposing of surface water from both individual properties. The proposed development would be respectful of legislation aimed at steering new development to use sustainable methods of disposal

of surface water. SAB attenuation measures can be deployed on site to control surface water run-off during extreme storm events, which could also allow for additional capacity, making allowances for climate change.

3.7 **Development Need**

The development of two detached dwellinghouses is required to meet the personal needs of the Bevan family. The family have particular needs for needing to relocate to a semi-rural location such as Fforestgoch, but also continue to be located upon the main highway network in order to ensure that the family can access local medical and special needs education facilities in Neath and Pontardawe.

- 3.8 **Appendix A of this Statement** contains sensitive and confidential details of the unique medical condition of a young member of the Bevan family. Those details should be read in conjunction with this Statement to provide the officers of the Local Planning Authority an understanding as the personal circumstances in this case and reasons for the need for siting two detached dwellinghouses at this Fforestgoch location.

4.0 **PLANNING POLICY**

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 The Neath-Port Talbot Local Development Plan was formally adopted in 2016. The village of Fforestgoch does not benefit from defined settlement limits. Settlement limits encircle Rhos and Bryncoch respectively, but the village is not recognised as a settlement, despite the consolidated form of a large cluster of houses and its primary road position.
- 4.2 Rhos and Fforestgoch are seen as satellite settlements of the town of Pontardawe, with the latter also being linked to Bryncoch at Neath. The locality continues to be particularly popular to new homeowners due to its close proximity to the Swansea Valley Road links, both towns' facilities with multitude of retail, employment and leisure facilities, together being the focus of strategic highway routes via the A4067 to Swansea and A474 to Neath to the south.
- 4.3 In terms of Neath Road, the Site is located within walking distance of all community facilities and local services present and provided within the Rhos settlement, particularly the Primary School and Post Office and convenience shop, community centre and public house at Neath Road. It also lies close to Bryncoch facilities such as Ysgol Maes-y-Coed, Hendrefelin School and Dyffryn Arms public house.

- 4.4 Access to further facilities in the Retail Parks and Industrial Estates of Pontardawe and Neath can be gained by regular bus services, stops for which are located along Neath Road, a walking distance of only 20 metres from the Application Site. Main public bus services call at these bus stops, and in particular:
- Service 56 – Pontardawe to Neath
 - Service 256 - Pontardawe to Neath via Bryncoch, Rhos and Gellinudd
 - Service 903 – Abercrave to Neath College via Pontardawe and Skewen
- 4.5 The Application Site is within a short bus journey of 15 minutes to the London Paddington to Pembroke / Fishguard rail service at Neath station.
“Alloy Industrial Estate” at Pontardawe is a short 5 minutes’ bus drive from Fforestgoch. Neath-Port Talbot Hospital is also accessible by public bus from the village via Neath.
- 4.6 The Site at Neath Road lies within a 5-minute driving distance of Pontardawe Town Centre which contains a whole variety of convenience stores, food supermarkets, small shops, community centre and library, hot-food take-aways and public houses. Pontardawe Leisure Centre are accessible by road within 5-7 minutes from Fforestgoch. Local Medical Surgeries at Pontardawe only a 10 minutes’ drive from Fforestgoch. Rhos Primary School is a short walk of only 10 minutes from Fforestgoch and along Neath Road.
- 4.7 Figure 6 below provides an indication of the proximity of the site, as indicated by a red star, to Pontardawe town centre, Bryncoch and strategic road network.

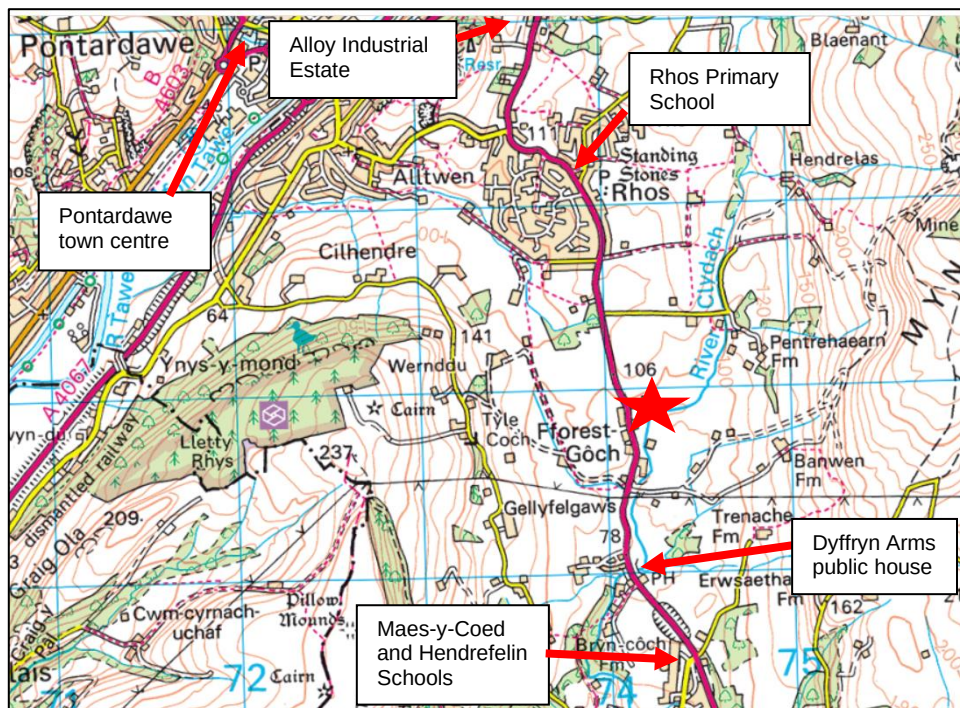


Figure 6 – proximity of Site to Pontardawe centre, Bryncoch & road network

- 4.8 LDP Policy TR2 covers all development proposals to pay regard to the need to safely access the highway network, and states that: *“Development proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:*
- 1. The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation;*
 - 2. Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;*
 - 3. The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes;*
 - 4. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation*
- 4.9 Policy BE1 “Design” is a generic development control policy, applying to all development proposals, and requires proposals to respect the character and setting of the immediate and wider locality.

4.10 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Planning Policy Wales (12th Edition) (February 2024) indicates at paragraph 3.60 that *“Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access, habitat and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable.”*

- 4.11 As stated above, the application site at Fforestgoch lies as an **infill opportunity set between established dwellinghouses** and off a primary distributor road (A474). The siting of two detached houses into this undeveloped gap will **not lead to an encroachment** into the surrounding countryside, instead it will follow guidance at Para. 3.60 which indicates that *“All new development should be of a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area.”* The character of established frontage houses at Fforestgoch will be retained and complemented by the infill proposals within this application.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL & LOCAL PLANNING POLICY AND MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Application Site consists of the roadside frontage of a field enclosure set as an infill opportunity between established frontage residential development at Neath Road in Fforestgoch. The current Local Development Plan does not contain defined settlement limits about Fforestgoch; however, this submission has evidenced the consolidated form of the village, and that the **establishment of new development could take place without compromising the setting of the countryside and any encroachment to its detriment.**
- 5.2 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that in determining a planning application the determination must be in accordance with the Development Plan **unless material considerations indicate otherwise.**
- 5.3 It is considered that the proposed dwellinghouses are such that they comply with Policy BE1 of the LDP in that it is appropriate in terms of scale and design and will not cause unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring uses. It is noted that whilst the site is not within a settlement limits, it is **nevertheless accessible on foot and cycle to the related settlements of Rhos and Bryncoch.** The site is immediately adjacent to 18 established dwellinghouses which comprise a nucleated form as the settlement of Fforestgoch, and this is considered to be a **material consideration.**
- 5.4 The precise location of the Application Site is such that the strong defensible boundaries of mature trees and high hedgerows, coupled with surrounding houses, provide a natural screen from views within the wider landscape. The **infill development** of the site would take place against the background of residential properties at Neath Road. Accordingly, the development of the site would remain more akin in character to the built-up form of Fforestgoch set off both flanks of the A474 Neath Road.
- 5.5 In addition to the above, the site lies within immediate proximity and walking distance of the Rhos Primary School and Ysgol Maes-y-Coed and Hendrefelin Schools at Bryncoch. Fforestgoch is accessible on foot to Rhos' small shop, community centre and public house at the village centre, together with the Dyffryn Arms near Bryncoch.
- 5.6 The Site will also benefit from nearby bus stops, which are part of excellent public transport links to all facilities within the nearby towns of Pontardawe and Neath.
- 5.7 The application site has no known access, ground condition, flood risk, hydrological, ecological, archaeological or land ownership related constraints.

- 5.8 In view of the above and information provided in this Statement, it is respectfully requested that the Council grant planning permission, subject to appropriate conditions, for the infilling of the field frontage at Neath Road.