

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

**Shadow Minister for Local Government
Gweinidog yr Wrthblaid dros Lywodraeth Leol**

Assembly Member for Aberconwy
Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy

Cllr Dilwyn Roberts
Leader – Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Conwy
LL32 8DU

Ref: CB/JFS/HM
23rd July 2012

Office of Janet Finch-Saunders AM,
29 Madoc Street,
Llandudno,
LL30 2TL.
01492 871 198

National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
CF99 1NA.
02920 898 734

Dear Leader, Dilwyn,

Re: Plas yn Dre, Llanrwst

I am writing to express my increasing concern and disappointment at the way in which planning issues relating to the Plas yn Dre site in Llanrwst are being perceived by local residents and businesspeople as lacking the level of transparency and openness that I would wish to see. The concerns primarily gravitate around the question of a supermarket development in the town as well as the wider issues around the Council's disposal of the site.

As you will recall, I held a public meeting in February in the hope that public fears that planning decisions were gathering momentum behind closed doors would be assuaged if concerned residents and businesspeople had an opportunity to speak to representatives of the Authority publicly.

Unfortunately, a perception has been allowed to emerge that the Council is not behaving as well as it could in relation to the democratic process and that the grounds of 'commercial sensitivity' are being used to obscure the truth and stifle transparency. In particular it is a cause of concern that the initial Assets Sub-committee report as well as the subsequent Cabinet decision were taken under the 'exempt items' procedure.

During the course of the public meeting I believe that progress was made towards ascertaining the proper facts as well as securing assurances on number of points that were the cause of such contention in the first instance. Since then I have been disappointed by the lack of engagement with the community that has been forthcoming from the Authority.

Assurances given during the meeting included a commitment on the part of the Council to show an exemplary level of openness and transparency, which is something that I believe is of paramount importance. This was to include community engagement at the pre-planning stage; the absence of any perceived secrecy when it comes to the exchange of contracts and a reaffirmation that the Council will abide by its full statutory obligations under existing planning law in full.

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Mi wnaiff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddelfio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a'ch cynorthwyo chi. Efalai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

I would like, therefore to raise a number of questions that reflect the concerns expressed to me by constituents, residents and local businesspeople.

- Does the Council intend to engage with the community and residents of Llanrwst before any planning submission is made; and if so what form will such engagement take?
- During the statutory consultation phase, what criteria, if any, will be applied to the weighting of consultation responses?
- What guarantees can you give that mechanisms are in place to halt this development should the majority of consultation responses be against the proposal?

Finally, I am sure that you will agree that the current state of affairs leaves a great deal to be desired. Failure to act at this time will only fuel the anger and frustration expressed to me by my constituents and has the potential to bring the name of Conwy County Borough Council into disrepute. I urge therefore that all interested parties do everything in their power to work together in this instance in the hope of a successful resolution which is transparent, accountable, and above all, democratically legitimate.

It is my intention to make this letter publically available and would intend to do so with responses received from the Council.

Yours sincerely,



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Ref: CB/JFS/RM
23 Gorfennaf 2012

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Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru,
Bae Caerdydd
CF99 1NA.
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Annwyl Arweinydd, Dilwyn,

Re: Plas yn Dre, Llanrwst

Ysgrifennaf atoch i fynegi fy mhryder cynyddol a siom am y modd y mae materion cynllunio sy'n ymwneud â'r safle Plas yn Dre yn Llanrwst yn cael eu dehongli gan drigolion lleol a phobl fusnes fel un sydd heb y lefel o dryloywder y byddwn yn dymuno ei weld. Roedd y pryderon yn bennaf o amgylch y cwestiwn o ddatblygiad archfarchnad yn y dref yn ogystal â'r materion ehangach o gwmpas waredu'r safle gan y Cyngor.

Fel y cofiwr, fe wnes i gynnal cyfarfod cyhoeddus ym mis Chwefror yn y gobaith y byddai pryderon y cyhoedd bod penderfyniadau cynllunio yn casglu momentwm tu ôl i ddrysau caeedig yn cael ei leddfu petai drigolion pryderus a phobl fusnes lleol yn cael y cyfle i siarad â chynrychiolwyr yr Awdurdod yn gyhoeddus.

Yn anffodus, mae canfyddiad wedi codi eisoes bod y Cyngor heb ymddwyn yn ogystal ag y gallai mewn perthynas â'r broses ddemocrataidd, a bod sail 'sensitifrwydd masnachol' yn cael eu defnyddio i atal gwir dryloywder. Yn benodol, mae'n destun pryder bod Adroddiad cychwynnol yr Is-bwylgor Asedau yn ogystal â'r penderfyniad gan y Cabinet wedi hynny wedi cael eu cymryd o dan y weithdrefn 'eitemau eithriedig'.

Yn ystod y cyfarfod cyhoeddus yr oeddwn yn credu bod camau wedi eu cymryd tuag at ganfod y ffeithiau cywir yn ogystal â sicrhau sicrwydd ar nifer o bwyntiau a oedd achos pryderon yn y lle cyntaf. Ers hynny rwyf wedi bod yn siomedig gan y diffyg ymgysylltu â'r gymuned sydd wedi bod ar ddod oddi wrth yr Awdurdod.

Mae'r sicrwydd a roddwyd yn ystod y cyfarfod yn cynnwys ymrwymiad ar ran y Cyngor i ddangos lefel rhagorol o 'fod yn agored' a thryloyw, sy'n rhywbeth fy mod yn credu sy'n hollbwysig. Roedd hyn i gynnwys ymgysylltu â'r gymuned yn y cyfnod cyn-gynllunio; absenoldeb unrhyw gyfrinachedd canfyddedig o ran cyfnewid contractau ac ailddatgan y bydd y Cyngor yn cydymffurfio â'i rhwymedigaethau statudol llawn o dan gyfraith cynllunio sy'n bodoli eisoes yn llawn.

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Hoffwn, felly, i godi nifer o gwestiynau sy'n adlewyrchu pryderon a fynegwyd i mi gan etholwyr, trigolion a phobl fusnes lleol.

- A yw'r Cyngor yn bwriadu ymgysylltu â'r gymuned a thrigolion Llanrwst cyn unrhyw gyflwyniad cynllunio yn cael ei wneud; ac os felly, beth fydd ffurf ymgysylltu o'r fath yn cymryd?
- Yn ystod y cyfnod ymgynghori statudol, pa feini prawf a fydd, os o gwbl, yn cael eu cymhwysos at y pwysiad o ymatebion i'r ymgynghoriad?
- Pa sicrwydd y gallwch ei roi bod yna mechanweithiau yn eu lle i atal y datblygiad hwn, os fydd y mwyafrif o ymatebion i'r ymgynghoriad yn erbyn y cynnig?

Yn olaf, yr wyf yn siŵr y byddwch yn cytuno bod y sefyllfa sydd ohoni yn llai na foddaol. Bydd methu â gweithredu ar hyn o bryd dim ond yn danwydd i'r dicter a siom a fynegwyd i mi gan fy etholwyr ac mae ganddo'r potensial i ddod ag enw'r Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy anfri. Yr wyf yn annog, felly, bod pawb sydd â diddordeb yn gwneud popeth o fewn eu gallu i weithio gyda'i gilydd yn yr achos hwn yn y gobaith o benderfyniad llwyddiannus sy'n dryloyw, yn atebol, ac yn bennaf oll, yn ddemocratiaidd a diliys.

Mae'n fwriad gennyf i wneud y llythyr hwn ar gael i'r cyhoedd ac y byddai yn bwriadu gwneud hynny ag ymatebion a dderbynwyd gan y Cyngor.

Yr eiddoch yn gywir,

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