

Owners 'don't plan to house youngsters' in new dwelling

Villagers' fears over extension

By Daniel Bissett

A CONTROVERSIAL home for young people who have recently left care is still looking to expand its premises despite opposition from local residents.

Bron Menai in Felinheli provides aftercare support for 16-21-year-olds who have spent most of their lives in local authority care, to allow them to live semi-independently in the community.

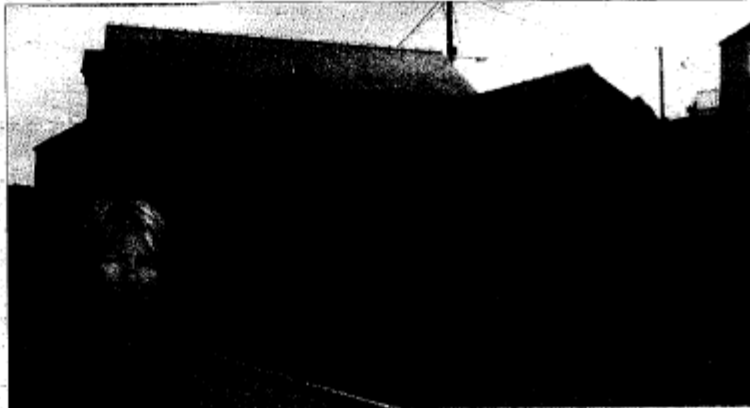
The home cares for three young adults at any one time from the Gwynedd area and its owners Hefin and Iona Williams want to convert a garage on the site for an additional dwelling.

The original application was unanimously turned down by Felinheli Community Council in July but an updated, scaled-down application has now been submitted to Gwynedd Council.

The owners say the extension will be not be used to house more young people who have recently left care but local residents fear that is exactly what will happen.

More than 50 residents of Felinheli's Sea View and Hekin Terrace have expressed their "complete objection" to expansion plans and a petition has been circulated opposing the scheme.

Cllr Stan Gwennilan met with Gwynedd Social Services last week to discuss the problems of Bron Menai.



OBJECTION: Bron Menai in Felinheli, which houses young people who have recently left care, is looking to expand its premises to the dismay of many residents. Cllr Stan Gwennilan met with social service officers last week.

"I sympathise with the youngsters who are trying to set up life on their own, but I feel they may, at times, need more supervision and guidance," she said.

Iona Williams, co-owner of Bron Menai, said: "As far as we're concerned, this is a separate application from the original one, rather than an amended one."

Glyn Hughes, head of children and families service at Gwynedd Council, said: "At any one time there are about 100

children and young people in the care of the council. When these youngsters come out of care and become independent young adults, the council continues to have a legal duty to provide assistance to them, commonly called 'aftercare'.

"This assistance often entails practical help such as financial assistance, finding somewhere to live, entering further education, finding work, setting up a home or flat together with support and advice

provided by a support worker.

"We have a number of young adults receiving such support and we do commission such a service for three persons through Bron Menai in Y Felinheli.

"I can confirm that we do not envisage commissioning more than three individual placements at any one time in any particular service as we wish to avoid setting up a 'quasi residential' service."

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