
Planning Statement

**Lunt's Old Dairy
Top House Farm
Big Arowry
Hanmer
Whitchurch
SY13 3EQ**

**Conversion of traditional
agricultural building into a
residential dwelling house**

Mr T Hanmer

October 2024

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council (“The Local Planning Authority”) for the conversion of an existing traditional agricultural building into a single residential dwelling house at Lunt’s Old Dairy, Top House Farm, Big Arowry, Hanmer, Whitchurch, SY13 3EQ.

1.2 This application is a resubmission of application reference: P/2022/0453, which was refused by the Local Planning Authority on 24/10/2023 for the following reason:

1. *The proposed development would lead to increased phosphate inputs entering the fresh water catchment of the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation. A likely significant effect upon the integrity of the SAC cannot be ruled out, contrary to the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11), Technical Advice Note 5, Policies PS11, GDP1 and EC6 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan, as well as the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).*

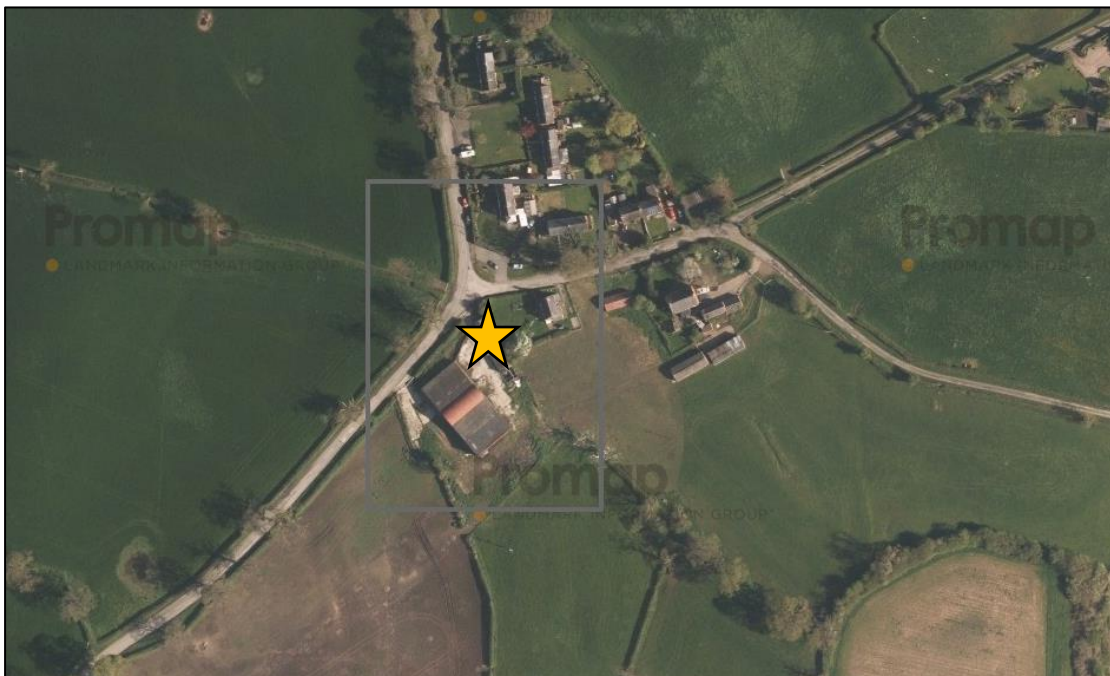
1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in-conjunction with other plans and documents which have been submitted in support of the application, principally comprising:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Structural Survey
- Site Location Plan
- Existing Block Plan
- Proposed Block Plan
- Existing Floor Plan
- Proposed Floor Plan
- Existing Elevation Drawings
- Proposed Elevation Drawings
- Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
- Proposed Access/Highways Plan

1.4 The information contained within this statement is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendation.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The application site relates to a traditional farm building which is no longer fit for purpose as part of modern agriculture, located at Top House Farm, Big Arowry.
- 2.2 The building comprises a single-storey red brick building which was formerly the dairy at Top House Farm, although has now not been in regular agricultural use for some time.
- 2.3 The application site benefits from an existing vehicular access directly onto New Road (a Class C public highway).
- 2.4 The Grade II Listed Arowry House lies approximately 25m to the east of the application site. However, given the subject building does not appear to have been in place on 1st July 1948, the Old Dairy does not form a curtilage listed building.
- 2.5 The application site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary as per the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan, and therefore in planning terms, is located within the open countryside.
- 2.6 An aerial view of the application site is provided below, with the site identified by the yellow star:



3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the existing building into a single open-market residential dwelling house.
- 3.2 The proposed development would involve the sympathetic conversion of the existing building, utilising existing window and door openings wherever possible so as to retain the building's existing rural character as much as possible. The overall and intrinsic scale and design/character of the existing building would remain as existing as a result of the proposed development; whilst the building would be given a viable long-term use to secure its future.
- 3.3 The development would involve the use of existing and reclaimed red brickwork, a slate roof and metal rainwater goods. The proposed roof lights would be 'conservation style' and would be flush fitting with the surrounding roof planes. It is anticipated that final details concerning the proposed external materials and finishes could be secured and controlled through suitably worded conditions.
- 3.4 The application also proposes the creation of a new small-scale residential garden space, which would be closely related in spatial terms to the host building. Landscaping would involve the planting of a new native species hedgerow as detailed within the submitted Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.
- 3.5 It is proposed to close-off the existing vehicular access serving the site and create a new access a few metres to the south-west, which would improve access visibility. These works are fully detailed within the submitted Highway Plan. Three new car parking spaces, together with an appropriate parking/turning area are proposed on the site to serve the proposed development.
- 3.6 In terms of foul drainage, as is detailed within the submitted Existing and Proposed Block Plans, it is proposed to install a new package treatment plant and drainage field to serve the proposed barn conversion. This would replace an existing septic tank which currently serves the adjacent dwelling house also within the Applicant's ownership at Arowry House. Given an existing septic tank of considerable age would be removed from use, it is considered there would be improvements with regards to the level of nutrients (phosphates) produced compared to the existing situation.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 At a national level, the principal policy guidance on the re-use and conversion of existing rural buildings is contained within Technical Advice Note (TAN) 23 (Economic Development). This states:

“3.2.2 Residential conversion of rural buildings which have ceased to be used for industrial or commercial purposes, including agriculture, need to be assessed on their impact including their impact on the fabric and character of historic buildings...”

3.2.3 If the existing building is unsuitable for conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension, or if the creation of a residential curtilage would have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside, the same considerations relating to new house building in the open countryside will apply.”

4.2 In terms of local planning policy, the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (adopted in December 2023) is of primary relevance. Policy H9 states:

“The change of use or conversion of buildings to residential use outside settlement limits will only be permitted where:

- i. The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension; and**
- ii. The building is worthy of retention due to its appearance, historic, architectural or landscape value; and**
- iii. The creation of a residential curtilage does not have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside.”**

4.3 It is therefore noted that the LDP policy does not favour economic re-use of existing rural buildings over residential re-use and there is no requirement for marketing evidence to be submitted in support of planning applications to demonstrate that an economic re-use of the building has been considered.

4.4 Further local policy guidance in relation to the conversion of rural buildings is outlined within Wrexham County Borough Councils Local Planning Guidance Note 03: Converting Rural Buildings.

5.0 Principle of Development

5.1 In-line with the above, the principal consideration with regards the principle of development in this instance relates to compliance with LDP Policy H9 (Conversion of Buildings Outside of Settlement Limits to Residential Use).

5.2 In terms of the subject building being structurally sound and capable of conversion, a Structural Survey of the building accompanies this application.

5.3 The submitted report confirms that the main roof and wall structures of the building are largely in-tact and capable of conversion without any significant alteration works; subject to some localised re-pointing to external walls. It is also noted that the planning officer as part of application ref: P/2022/0453 did

not disagree with the findings of the submitted survey. Therefore, the requirements of Criterion (i) are met.

5.4 In terms of Criterion (ii), the building is of local traditional agricultural character and design, and as such is worthy of retention.

5.5 With regards Criterion (iii), the proposed residential garden area would be of a limited scale and would be closely related in spatial terms to the host building. It would not, therefore, have the potential to cause any harmful impact upon the character of the open countryside.

5.6 In light of the above, the development as submitted is acceptable in-principle in accordance with the requirements of LDP Policy H9.

6.0 Design & Visual Impact

5.1 As is evident from the submitted drawings, the overall and intrinsic character, scale, form and appearance of the existing building would be retained as part of the conversion scheme.

5.2 Wherever possible, the building's existing window and door openings would be retained and used within the development, ensuring the original form and design of the building would be retained. As noted, a slate roof would be used along with reclaimed red brickwork where any elements of rebuilding are required. Roof lights would be 'conservation style' and flush fitting with the surrounding roof plane.

5.3 Importantly, no extensions to the existing building are proposed and as such the overall scale and form of the existing building would be retained.

5.4 In light of the siting of the building amongst existing buildings and the fact the overall scale and design of the building would not significantly change as a result of the development scheme, there would be no adverse impacts caused upon the character of the wider rural landscape.

5.5 It is anticipated that should any further details of external materials and finishes, or landscaping, be required that these could be subject to suitably worded conditions.

5.6 The development represents a sympathetic conversion of an existing rural agricultural building, which would retain the existing character, design, scale and form of the building. As such, there would be no adverse impacts upon the visual amenities of the application site nor the surroundings.

7.0 Neighbouring Amenity

7.1 No new built development is proposed and as such there would be no adverse impacts upon neighbouring residents in terms of overbearing and overshadowing effects.

7.2 In terms of the potential for overlooking, no windows are proposed within the building's north-eastern elevation facing towards the neighbouring dwelling at Arowry House. As such, there would be no adverse effects in terms of loss of privacy.

8.0 Movement & Access

8.1 It is proposed to close-off the existing vehicular access into the application site and form a new access to the south-west with improved visibility splays.

8.2 It is noted that subject to conditions, the Local Highway Authority raised no objections to these access/highways arrangements as part of the previously-refused planning application ref: P/2022/0453.

8.3 On-site parking and turning space for three cars is proposed as part of the application in accordance with the requirements of Wrexham Local Planning Guidance Note 16 (Parking Standards). Again, no objections were raised by the Local Highway Authority as part of the previous application in this regard.

8.4 Given the previous application, which forms a large material planning consideration, it is considered the access and highway safety elements of the proposed development are acceptable and compliant with the requirements of LDP Policy DM1 (Criterion vi).

9.0 Ecology

9.1 Given the nature of the proposed development, the application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, undertaken by Arbor Vitae Ecological Consultants. Please refer to the separate report submitted for full details.

9.2 The submitted report confirms the existing building provides negligible potential as a bat roost, and that the proposed works would not have any impact upon bat species.

9.3 There is also no evidence of breeding birds using the building.

9.4 In terms of potential impacts upon Great Crested Newt (GCN), as the development relates wholly to an area of existing hardstanding forming part of

an agricultural complex of buildings and yards, the report confirms there would be no disturbance to any terrestrial habitat which may be in use by GCN. Furthermore, the report confirms that the ponds present within 500m of the application site provide ‘poor’ and ‘below average’ suitability as a breeding site for GCN and no GCN eggs have been found within the ponds during surveys undertaken. In light of this, and given that there are also no records of GCN being present within a 1km radius of the application site, the report concludes that there would be no impact upon GCN as a result of the development and no further survey work is required.

9.5 Section 6 of the submitted PEA report provides suitable mitigation and avoidance measures, which will be adhered to and fully implemented as part of the conversion scheme.

9.6 A Green Infrastructure Statement and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan also accompany the application. The development complies with the step-wise approach as prescribed by Chapter 6 of PPW and it would provide a net biodiversity benefit which is commensurate to the scale of the development proposed.

10.0 Heritage

10.1 As noted, the neighbouring dwelling at Arowry House is a Grade II listed building. Notwithstanding this, as the subject rural building does not appear to have been in existence on 1st July 1948 as per historic mapping, the building would not appear to be curtilage listed.

10.2 As discussed within Section 6 of this statement, the proposal comprises a sensitive conversion of the existing building which would utilise existing materials as well as existing openings so as to retain the existing rural and agricultural character as much as possible.

10.3 As has been confirmed, a slate roof would be used as well as metal rainwater goods. Roof lights would be ‘conservation style’ and flush fitting to the surrounding roof plane. Any repairs to external walls would be made using lime mortar.

10.4 In light of the proposed works as outline and as detailed within the submitted plans/drawings, the development would not have the potential to cause any harmful impacts upon the setting of the nearby listed building at Arowry House.

11.0 Foul Drainage

- 10.1 It is noted the only reason for refusal as part of the previous application on-site (ref: P/2022/0453) related to foul drainage arrangements and associated potential impacts upon the River Dee & Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- 10.2 As is detailed within the submitted Existing and Proposed Block Plans, and as explained within Paragraph 3.6 of this statement, the current proposal is for the existing (historic) septic tank serving Arowry House to be disconnected and removed, and for a new package treatment plant and drainage field to be installed to serve both Arowry House and the proposed barn conversion at the Old Dairy.
- 10.3 As this solution would involve the removal of an old septic tank from use, and would see the installation of a modern foul drainage system in its place, it is considered there would be a significant betterment with regards the water environment and potential impacts upon the SAC in terms of phosphate inputs.
- 10.4 The proposed foul drainage system would be built to BS 6297:2007+A1:2008 and the drainage field would be located more than 40m from any surface water feature such as a river, stream, ditch or drain and located more than 50m from a SAC boundary and at least 50m from any other known discharge to ground (once the existing septic tank serving Arowry House is removed).
- 10.5 Thus, the development is considered to offer an acceptable foul drainage solution which would see the removal of an old septic tank from use and would therefore improve the quality of foul drainage discharges from the site at present.

12.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the conversion and renovation of an existing rural building which is no longer suitable for modern agricultural purposes. The proposed development would provide the building with a viable and suitable long-term use, to secure its preservation for the future.
- 6.2 This statement and the supporting reports, plans and drawings submitted alongside it as part of the planning application outline that the development is fundamentally compliant with the requirements of TAN 23 and LDP Policy H9 in terms of the principle of development, whilst also providing an assessment of the main material planning considerations of relevance to the development proposals.
- 6.3 It is clear that the development is fully acceptable in planning terms – providing a sympathetic conversion in visual terms which would not cause any

harmful impacts upon ecology, highway safety, neighbouring residential amenity and the historic environment.

6.4 In light of the above, the proposal is compliant with the relevant local and national planning policy, and it is therefore respectfully requested that full planning permission be granted for the development.