Planning Statement

Conversion of Existing Barn into a 2-Bedroom Dwelling at Wallington Farm, Wallington Lane, Worthenbury, Wrexham, LL13 0AL

November 2024

Applicant:
Wallington Lane Farm
Wallington Lane
Worthenbury, Wrexham
LL13 0AL

Planning Authority:
Wrexham County Borough Council

Date of Pre-Application Advice:
17 September 2024

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1. Introduction

This planning statement supports a full planning application for the conversion of an existing agricultural barn located at Wallington Lane Farm, Wallington Lane, Worthenbury, Wrexham. The proposal involves converting the barn into a two-bedroom residential dwelling to provide accommodation for the owner's son, a farm worker currently residing in the main property.

The intention is to preserve the barn's traditional agricultural character while ensuring its sustainable use, aligning with local planning policies that encourage the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings in rural areas.

2. Site and Context

The subject barn is a single-storey, detached structure built with traditional solid brickwork walls and a pitched timber-framed roof covered in slate. The building is no longer required for agricultural use and has begun to deteriorate. To prevent further structural decay and secure a practical use, this proposal seeks to convert the barn to residential use while retaining its traditional architectural features.

Located within the existing farmstead, the barn is part of an established group of buildings, some of which have previously been converted for residential use. Planning permission was granted in 2015 (Ref: P/2015/0604) for the conversion of other barns on-site, which have since been successfully adapted to residential dwellings. This precedent supports the suitability of residential use within the farm setting.

3. Proposal

The proposed conversion will create a two-bedroom dwelling within the barn's existing footprint, ensuring minimal disruption to the rural character of the site and surrounding landscape. The conversion has been designed to retain the barn's agricultural appearance by using existing openings where possible, preserving traditional brickwork, and maintaining the pitched slate roof.

The proposed residential dwelling will accommodate the owner's son, who is a full-time farm worker. This will support the ongoing agricultural operations at Wallington Lane Farm by enabling family and workforce continuity on-site. The son's intended use of the converted barn as a family home will prevent the need for additional residential buildings on the farmstead, aligning with sustainable development goals and rural housing policies.

4. Planning Policy and Justification

The conversion of rural buildings for residential purposes is supported by local and national planning policies, provided that the proposals respect the character of the existing structure and meet sustainable development criteria.

According to Wrexham County Borough Council's planning policies, the sympathetic reuse of rural buildings can help conserve the area's architectural heritage, particularly where conversion secures the structural longevity of the building. This proposal aligns with these objectives by aiming to safeguard the barn's character, prevent its further deterioration, and contribute to housing needs in the area.

Furthermore, with the owner's son already residing in the main farmhouse, no significant increase in vehicle parking or additional infrastructure is anticipated, as the barn is situated close to existing amenities and facilities.

5. Design Considerations

The conversion has been carefully designed to retain the agricultural character of the barn. Key design elements include:

- **Brickwork:** Retention and repair of the original brickwork to maintain the barn's traditional appearance.
- **Roof:** Preservation of the pitched timber-framed slate roof to respect the historic character.
- **Openings:** Reuse of existing doorways and window openings wherever possible to minimise alterations.
- **Internal Layout:** The two-bedroom layout has been designed within the barn's current spatial constraints, retaining the building's open-plan agricultural feel.
- **Sustainability:** Energy efficiency improvements will be made to ensure a sustainable conversion while respecting the barn's heritage.

6. Response to Pre-Application Advice

Following the pre-application advice received from Wrexham County Borough Council on 17 September 2024, the proposed conversion has been revised to align with the council's feedback. The pre-application advice noted that an extension to the barn would likely not be supported, as current planning policy seeks to preserve the existing form of agricultural buildings, thereby retaining their historical and architectural character.

In response to this guidance, the initial plan, which included a small extension to the barn, was amended to remove the proposed extension. The current application now limits the scope of works strictly to the existing structure, with no alterations to the barn's footprint or roofline. This ensures that the barn's agricultural character is preserved, in line with the council's policies and pre-application advice.

The revised design uses the existing layout and openings, prioritising conservation and respectful adaptation to retain the barn's integrity and rural appearance. By following the council's guidance, this proposal aims to honour the historical significance of the building while making it fit for residential use.

7. Compliance with Local Planning Guidance Notes (LPGNs)

LPGN 16 – Parking Standards The proposed conversion meets the requirements of LPGN 16, as there will be no significant increase in parking demand. The applicant's son, who is intended to occupy the converted barn, already resides on-site within the main property. Consequently, no additional parking spaces are required, and the existing parking facilities are adequate to support the new dwelling. By minimising parking changes, the proposal preserves the surrounding rural setting and avoids unnecessary hardstanding areas that could impact the landscape.

LPGN 21 – Space Around Dwellings LPGN 21 seeks to ensure appropriate spacing around dwellings to promote privacy, reduce overshadowing, and maintain an attractive layout within the area. The proposed conversion adheres to these standards by keeping the barn in its current location and configuration without extensions or substantial modifications to its footprint. Sufficient space exists around the building to maintain privacy and amenity for both the new dwelling and the main property. The retained agricultural character of the barn supports the rural aesthetic, aligning with the intent of LPGN 21.

LPGN 30 – Design The design approach for the barn conversion carefully respects the requirements of LPGN 30, which emphasises high-quality design that is sympathetic to the character and setting of existing buildings. The proposal retains the traditional agricultural character of the barn by maintaining its brickwork, pitched slate roof, and simple, functional design. All external modifications are minimal and intended solely to meet residential requirements while preserving the barn's heritage. As a result, the design aligns with LPGN 30 by achieving a balance between functionality and aesthetic respect for the original agricultural structure.

LPGN 32 – Biodiversity and Development The project is designed with consideration for LPGN 32, which promotes biodiversity protection and enhancement in development. Recognising the barn's setting within a rural area, measures will be undertaken to mitigate any potential impacts on local wildlife. Where necessary, the conversion will include features to support biodiversity, such as bat boxes or other habitat-friendly elements, in accordance with local ecological assessments. Additionally, the proposed work is limited to the existing structure, minimising disruption to natural habitats surrounding the barn. This careful approach ensures compliance with LPGN 32 and reinforces a commitment to biodiversity.

By adhering to these local guidance notes, the proposal supports the council's planning goals while enabling a practical and sensitive conversion of a historically valuable structure into residential accommodation.

8. Ecology Assessment

A comprehensive ecological assessment has been carried out to ensure minimal impact on local bat populations. A Preliminary Roost Assessment was conducted on 30 April 2024, followed by Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys (BERS) with the report completed on 4 November 2024. Both reports are included with this planning application. The assessments identified evidence of bats and roosts within the loft void, and specific recommendations were provided to protect these species. We are committed to adhering fully to these recommendations throughout the project.

To legally permit the proposed work, an EPSL (European Protected Species Licence) application will be submitted to Natural Resources Wales. This licence will outline a series of measures, including restricting certain activities to bat-safe periods, installing three bat boxes on-site, and conducting a toolbox talk to inform contractors of bat protections and guidelines. Additionally, a pre-commencement inspection and post-development monitoring will be conducted to ensure compliance and minimise disruption to bat habitats. Upon completion of construction, an additional bat box will be installed on a mature tree on-site to further enhance bat habitat availability.

The existing barn structure already contains bat-friendly features that will be preserved, including bat access tiles, open gables, and habitat boxes that were previously installed on the exterior walls of converted barns. The loft void, which will remain as a designated bat loft, currently holds four roosting bat boxes, two Habibat brick boxes, twelve raised slates on the roof to facilitate bat entry, and a WQ Bat Roost box on the external wall. Should the roof lining require replacement, 1F bitumen felt will be used, avoiding modern roofing linings that could endanger roosting bats.

These measures collectively underscore our commitment to preserving and enhancing bat habitats on-site, ensuring the proposed works are conducted in an ecologically responsible manner in line with regulatory requirements.

9. Conclusion

This proposal seeks approval for the conversion of a redundant agricultural barn into a two-bedroom dwelling to provide family accommodation for a farm worker who plays an essential role in the farm's operations. The conversion will preserve the barn's traditional character and prevent further decay, ensuring that the building continues to contribute to the rural landscape.

The application follows a precedent established by previous barn conversions on the site, aligning with Wrexham County Borough Council's planning policies. Given these considerations, we respectfully request approval for the proposed conversion.

Yours sincerely,

Jake Simpson

Managing Director

CharterHouse Surveyors Ltd

Appendix – Pre-Application Advice 17.09.24

Wrexham County Borough Council / Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam
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wrexham
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
wrecsam

Your Ref/Eich Cyf	
Our Ref/Ein Cyf	ENQ/2024 /1020
Date/Dyddiad	17/09/2024
Ask for/Gofynner am	JENNI PERKINS
Direct Dial/Rhif	01978 298776
Union E-mail/E-bost	jenni.perkins@wrexham.gov.uk

Dear Sir,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Conversion of and extension to existing barn into 2-3 bed dwelling
Wallington Lane Farm, Walling Lane, Worthenbury

Further to the submission of the above enquiry, I would advise as follows:-

There are no permitted allowances in Wales for the conversion of outbuildings into separate dwellings and as such planning application is required for the conversion and extension of the barn.

National Policies and Guidance
Planning Policy Wales Ed. 12
Future Wales Plan (2040)
Future Generations of Wales Act 2015
Technical Advice Note 5 – Nature Conservation and planning
Technical Advice Note 6 - Planning for sustainable rural communities
Technical Advice Note 12 – Design
Technical Advice Note 18 – Transport

Wrexham Local Development Plan Policies (LDP)
Policy DM1: Development Management Considerations
Policy SP2: Location of Development
Policy SP11: Transport and Accessibility
Policy SP12: Design Principles & Masterplanning Framework

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
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Policy SP14: Natural Environment
Policy SP19: Green Infrastructure
Policy NE1: International and National Nature Conservation Designations Policy
Policy NE6: Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality
Policy H2: Affordable Housing, Non-Strategic Housing Allocations and Windfall Sites
Policy H7: Housing in the Countryside
Policy T1: Managing Transport Impacts Policy

Local Planning Guidance Notes (LPGN's)
LPGN 16 – Parking Standards
LPGN 21 – Space around Dwellings
LPGN 30 – Design
LPGN 32 – Biodiversity and Development

Planning History
P/2015/0604 – Conversion of barn to dwelling – approved.

Validation Requirements
A formal planning application must be accompanied by the following information in order to be validated and can be completed online here:
- ☐ Completed application form;
- ☐ Site location plan with the land subject to the application edged red. Any land within the applicant's ownership adjoining or nearby should be outlined on the same plan in blue.(1:1250 / 1:2500 scale);
- ☐ Detailed proposed floor plans and elevations scale 1:50 and 1:100 respectively
- ☐ Existing and proposed block plans 1:200/1:500 scale;
- ☐ Planning application fee – **Currently £460**.

In addition, to allow the application to be appropriate assessed the following will be required:-
- ☐ A preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- ☐ Green Infrastructure Statement
- ☐ Scheme of Biodiversity Enhancements
- ☐ Structural Assessment

Strategic Policy
Policy SP2: Location of Development
New development is directed to the defined settlement limits and employment areas as identified on the Proposals Map.

Policy SP11: Transport and Accessibility
Wrexham's transport network will be developed in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner through the following measures:
i. Restricting development that would have an unacceptable impact on the safe and efficient operation of the transport network;

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ii. Implement key transport projects identified in the Joint North Wales Local Transport Plan and supporting the development and delivery of key strategic road and rail transport improvement projects promoted by the North Wales region and Welsh Government (policy T4 and T6);
iii. Enhance the overall reliance of the network and take steps to adapt the transport network to the effects of climate change;
iv. Improve the coverage, service frequency, integration and priority of public transport services to provide a sustainable and viable alternative travel choice to the private car;
v. Improved integration of modes through the development of existing and new transport interchanges ensuring infrastructure provisions is accessible to all;
vi. Ensure adequate levels of car parking taking into consideration the location and accessibility of new developments to existing public transport facilities and walking and cycling network;
vii. Develop the coverage of the Active Travel Network across Wrexham to promote increased use of walking and cycling as safe, viable and sustainable alternatives to the car;
viii. Deliver capacity and safety enhancements to the local highway network where considered appropriate to facilitate existing and forecast traffic demands.

Policy SP12: Design Principles & Masterplanning Framework
All development will be required to be of a high quality, sustainable design which makes a positive contribution to the creation of locally distinctive places by complying with the masterplanning framework SPG and KSS schematics. Proposals must demonstrate how they have taken account of the local characteristics of surrounding areas and how innovative design solutions will enhance the quality of the built and natural environment.

Policy SP14: Natural Environment
Development will only be permitted where it seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment including:
- Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar Sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves;
- Protected Species and their habitat;
- The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Local Wildlife Sites;
- Local Nature Reserves;
- Special Landscape Areas;
- Natural landscape features and Green Infrastructure such as trees, hedges and woodland which contribute to the quality and diversity of the natural environment and play an important role in mitigating the impact of climate change;
- The quality of natural services including water, soundscape, air and soils; and
- Habitats and species of principal importance to Wales.

Policy SP18: Climate Change
To mitigate against the effects of climate change and adapt to its impacts, development proposals will need to demonstrate that they have taken into account the following:

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i. Reducing carbon emissions;
ii. Protecting and increasing carbon sinks;
iii. Adapting to the implications of climate change at both a strategic and detailed design level;
iv. Promoting energy efficiency and increasing the supply of renewable energy; and
v. Maintaining ecological resilience;
vi. Avoiding areas susceptible to flood risk in the first instance in accordance with the sequential approach set out in national guidance. Highly vulnerable development, as defined in TAN15: Development and Flood Risk, should not be located within zone C2;
vii. Preventing development that increases flood risk; and
viii. Assesses the potential effects of climate change when preparing a Flood Consequence Assessment for the site.

Policy SP19: Green Infrastructure
Wrexham's distinctive natural heritage provides a network of green and blue infrastructure. Protection, conservation and enhancement of natural heritage networks needs to be reconciled with the benefits of development.
Development will be required to maintain the extent, quality and connectivity of multifunctional green infrastructure on or near a site, and, where appropriate to enhance it by:
i. Creating new interconnected areas of green infrastructure between the proposed site and the existing network;
ii. Filling gaps in the existing network to improve connectivity;
iii. Protecting the features most valuable for both nature and people; and
iv. In instances where loss of green infrastructure is unavoidable, provide mitigation and compensation for the lost assets on a site-specific basis

Detailed Policy
The proposed site lies outside of the settlement limit where Policy SP2 of the LDP does not support the principle of development. As such, the proposals must accord with Policies H7 and H9 of the LDP:-

Policy H7: Housing in the Countryside
Proposals for housing development outside defined settlement limits will only be permitted where:
i. It is for the purposes of agriculture, forestry or other rural enterprise as defined in TAN6; or
ii. It involves the replacement of an existing dwelling (see policy H8); or
iii. It involves the subdivision of an existing dwelling, provided the dwelling is capable of subdivision without major extensions tantamount to the erection of an additional dwelling or dwellings; or
iv. It involves the conversion of an existing non-residential building (see policy H9); or
v. The proposal is for affordable housing rural exception sites on land adjoining the settlement limits (see policy H3); or
vi. One Planet development as defined in TAN6.

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Policy H9: Conversion of Buildings Outside of Settlement Limits to Residential Use

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 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.

Further advice is given Local Planning Guidance Note no. 3 – Converting Rural Buildings. Its states that the emphasis in any conversion scheme must be upon demonstrating that the building in its present form is suitable for the proposed new use. There is thus a presumption against large extensions to the building itself and against the erection of new ancillary structures within and adjoining the curtilage. In the case of residential conversions, garaging and domestic storage requirements must be met within the original building (or buildings). The attachment of porches and other extraneous features (including conservatories) is likely to adversely affect the original appearance of the building and should be avoided.

The structural capability of the barn to be converted is unclear, any subsequent application would need to be accompanied by a structural survey. It is considered that the building is worthy of retention in its current form, being of traditional brick and slate construction and making a positive contribution to the character of the site and rural landscape. It is unclear the extent of the proposed curtilage, however it would likely encroach further into the open countryside. An application would need to demonstrate that this encroachment would not significantly and detrimentally impact upon the rural landscape. The site is located with the Maelor Special Landscape Area and as such requires protection against inappropriate urban development. It is unlikely that an extension to the barn can be supported as policy seeks to preserve the current form of the building retaining its agricultural character.

Policy DM1: Development Management Considerations

Development proposals, where relevant, must:

i. Accord with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape in terms of their siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping;

ii. Not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties/land; and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers/users of the development itself;

iii. Safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land, noise, light or air, or land instability, arising from development;

iv. Take account of personal and community safety and security in their design and layout;

v. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use ahead of travel by car;

vi. Not give rise to highway safety, pedestrian safety or parking problems on site or in the locality;

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vii. Contribute to low carbon communities through energy efficiency, be designed to minimise the use of non-renewable energy, water and the production of waste both during construction and when in use;
viii. Not increase the risk of flooding but make adequate provision for sustainably dealing with foul and surface water drainage and not result in an unacceptable impact upon the water environ ment;
ix. On sites which have previously been developed, new development proposals should make use of existing suitable building materials wherever possible for appropriate uses in order to re-use recyclable materials and reduce the amount of imported materials; and
x. Ensure that any risks arising from past coal mining, as indicated on the constraints map, can be adequately managed

Any detailed scheme would need to comply with the general development principles set out in this policy. The design and layout should reflect the character of the area and not appear intrusive. Landscaping proposals should be included to ensure there is adequate visual amenity afforded to the site. Proposals should also accord with the guidance contained within LPGN 21 'Space around Dwellings' with regards to separation distances and land levels to avoid any significant detrimental impact upon the residential amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties, in terms of light or privacy etc. Adequate curtilage should be afforded to the dwelling in accordance with LPGN 21 providing space for clothes drying, bin storage and play. An appropriately scaled proposed site plan is required to demonstrate the above, together with floor plans which show the positions of windows.

Policy NE6: Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality
All new development will only be permitted where there is no adverse effect on the integrity of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC in particular through the treatment of waste water. To ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC, development creating waste water discharges will be required to demonstrate there is no increase in phosphorus levels in the SAC. The drainage hierarchy should be considered with the first presumption being connection to the public sewer system. If the development proposes an alternative method of drainage, you are advised to have regard to the guidance below. Natural Resources Wales / Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting phosphorus sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation
.
Upon receipt of a planning application, Natural Resources Wales will be consulted and their views invited on the proposed drainage method.

Policy T1: Managing Transport Impacts
Proposals for new development will be supported where they:
i. Facilitate increased journeys by more sustainable modes of travel first by walking and cycling, then by public transport and finally by private motor vehicle;
ii. Mitigate any significant adverse effects upon the transport network that arise from the proposed development including improvements to transport infrastructure where required;
iii. Do not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and do not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation;

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iv. Provide appropriate levels of parking and ensure access arrangements for the site to allow for safe manoeuvring;
v. Make provision for people with restricted mobility including those with characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
Developments that would generate significant amounts of movement should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

Further guidance in respect of parking is contained in LPGn 16 – Parking Standards.

The Highways Officer has been consulted on the proposal and to date has not provided a response. Their views in respect of the access and traffic impact are fundamental to the assessment of the proposal and I will forward any response they provide.

Ecology
In order to satisfy LDP policies NE1, NE2, SP14 and TAN 5, the application must demonstrate that the development would not cause harm to protected species or their habitats. A subsequent application must be accompanied by an ecological survey of the site, together with any mitigation measures required.

Green Infrastructure
Planning Policy Wales (PPW12) requires that a Green Infrastructure Statement is submitted on all developments. It should show that development has a net benefit to biodiversity and green infrastructure. This information is not appropriate to seek 'retrospectively' by way of a condition and must be provided as part of the planning application process. It should describe how the green infrastructure of a site (trees, hedges, and SuDS etc.) has been incorporated into the development proposal.

Net Biodiversity Benefit
PPW12 requires development to provide a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB) i.e. a better outcome than if the site was left undeveloped. Failing to provide such a benefit is a valid reason for refusal. Every application regardless of size must not only mitigate any negative impacts of the development, but also have a positive benefit for biodiversity which will be in place for the lifetime of the development. Enhancements should be onsite, proportional to the size of development, tailored towards features valuable in the area or providing linking habitats GI plan.

Other Matters

Broadband
To comply with aims of the Future Wales Plan, the new development will be required to have broadband access.

Timescales
An 8 week determination period would be targeted for determining a subsequent application however due to high application numbers and individual officer case loads, it will likely take longer. The case Officer would endeavour to keep you informed.

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Summary
Policy H7 of the LDP allows for the conversion of rural buildings however, the proposal must also comply with LDP Policy H9 and the other policies detailed above. It is unlikely that the an extension to the existing barn will be supported being contrary to the aims of Policy H9 and to LPGN 03.

The views and opinions contained herein are those of the individual officer concerned and are no way binding upon the Council nor its Members. The above advice is based upon the details submitted, if any details have been altered, left out or are inaccurate then it may affect the validity of this response. If planning permission is subsequently refused, you will have the right to lodge a formal Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against that decision.

Yours faithfully

Jenni Perkins

Senior Planner
Economi a Chynllunio
Economy and Planning

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