

Planning Statement

Timber Shed
Top House Farm
Big Arowry
Hanmer
Whitchurch
SY13 3EQ

Conversion of traditional agricultural building into a residential dwelling house and associated works

Mr T Hanmer

February 2025

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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 The Timber Shed, Top House Farm, Big Arowry, Hanmer, Whitchurch, SY13 3EQ.

1.2 This application is a resubmission of application reference: P/2023/0642, which was withdrawn by the Applicant in December 2024.

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 (including update from Structural Surveyor)
- Site Location Plan
- Existing Block Plan
- Proposed Floor Plans & Elevations
- Existing Floor Plans & Elevations
- Proposed Site / NBB 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 timber-framed building clad with timber and corrugated panels which was formerly part of the traditional farmstead 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 field access directly onto the public highway (Brookhouse Lane).

2.4 The application site lies equidistant between the Grade II Listed Arowry House and the Grade II Listed Top House Farmhouse. However, given the subject building does not appear to have been in place in its current form on 1st July 1948, the Timber Shed does not constitute 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 red star:



Figure 1: Location and context of Application Site

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 corrugated sheeting on the external elevations, and a new natural slate roof is proposed atop the existing timber roof structure. The proposed roof light would be 'conservation style' and would be flush fitting with the surrounding south-eastern roof plane. New windows and doors are proposed to match the style of the existing units which are in a poor state of repair. Existing openings are to be used where possible as shown on the submitted existing and proposed elevation drawings. 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, and the planting of new native species trees as detailed on the submitted Net Biodiversity Benefit (NBB) Plan.

3.5 It is proposed to improve and widen the existing field access into the site in order to provide a suitable vehicular access into the site from the public highway. Access visibility would be improved as a consequence of these works. These works are fully detailed within the submitted Highway Plan. Two new car parking spaces, together with an appropriate parking/turning area are proposed on the site to serve the proposed development.

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 Council's Local Planning Guidance Note 03: Converting Rural Buildings.

5.0 Review of Main Material Planning Considerations

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, along with an update (dated December 2024) from the Structural Surveyor confirming the conclusions of the original 2021 survey remain relevant and responding specifically to issues raised by the Local Planning Authority as part of application ref: P/2023/0642.

5.3 The Surveyor's updated comments state:

"In regard to the comments from the PO, the existing roof frame continues to provide its structural function satisfactorily and can be retained as part of conversion. Damage is localised to sections of framing directly below the window openings. Weather boarding has broken down in these parts leaving some exposure to the elements. Affected timbers can be cut out and replaced which should prove to be relatively straightforward. The affected area constitutes no more than 20% of the overall wall framing. The necessary alteration works are within the accepted guidance in LPGN 3, being less than 20% of the walls, whilst the roof frame remains functional and requires no replacement. On this basis, I see no reason why the application cannot proceed".

5.4 In light of the above, based upon the judgements and conclusions of the experienced surveyor's visits to the site, it is clear the existing building is capable of conversion without requiring any substantial alterations or extensions and as such the requirements of Criterion (i) are met.

5.5 In terms of Criterion (ii), the building is of local traditional agricultural character and design, and as such is worthy of retention. Both the Planning Officer and the Authority's Conservation Officer confirmed the building is worthy of retention as part of the previous withdrawn planning application, stating that the shed helps to understand the agricultural usage, character and appearance of the farm and also that of the wider agricultural character of the area. Therefore, the requirements of Criterion (ii) are met.

5.6 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.

5.7 In light of the above, the development as submitted is acceptable in-principle in accordance with the requirements of LDP Policy H9, LPGN 03, TAN 6 and TAN 23.

Design & Visual Impact

5.8 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.

5.9 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 natural slate roof would be used along with reclaimed and matching corrugated sheeting used for the external elevations. The proposed roof light would be 'conservation style' and flush fitting with the surrounding roof plane.

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

5.11 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.

5.12 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.

5.13 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.

Neighbouring Amenity

5.14 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.

5.15 In terms of the potential for overlooking, given the placement of windows within the proposed elevations and their distance to neighbouring residential dwellings, there is no potential for any adverse loss of privacy to arise as a consequence of the proposed development. As such, the residential amenity of neighbours would be retained and maintained.

Highways & Parking

5.16 It is proposed to improve the existing field access to provide adequate means of vehicular access into the access site off Brookhouse Lane.

5.17 It is noted that subject to conditions, the Local Highway Authority raised no objections to these access/highways arrangements as part of the previously-withdrawn planning application ref: P/2023/0642.

5.18 On-site parking and turning space for two 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.

5.19 As such, 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).

Ecology & Green Infrastructure

5.20 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.

5.21 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.

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

5.23 In terms of potential impacts upon Great Crested Newt (GCN), whilst a small area of grassland would be affected by the development, it is noted the vast majority of land to be affected comprises existing areas of concrete hardstanding. As a result, the submitted report concludes that impacts upon GCN are unlikely. In any case, the report sets-out suitable GCN Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) which will be fully adhered to throughout the course of the proposed works.

5.24 A Green Infrastructure Statement and NBB 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.

Heritage

5.25 As noted, the application site lies between two Grade II listed buildings at Top House Farmhouse and Arowry House. Notwithstanding this, as the subject rural building does not appear to have been in existence in its current form on 1st July 1948 as per historic mapping, the building would not appear to be curtilage listed. This was also confirmed by the Local Planning Authority as part of application reference P/2023/0642.

5.26 As discussed within the *Design & Visual Impact* section 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.

5.27 As has been confirmed, a natural slate roof would be used as well as metal rainwater goods. The proposed roof light would be 'conservation style' and flush fitting to the surrounding roof plane. Reclaimed and matching corrugated sheeting would be used for the external elevations so as to retain the building's intrinsic rural character in its current form.

5.28 In light of the proposed works as outlined 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 buildings and as such the requirements of TAN 24 (The Historic Environment) are met.

6.0 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 6, 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 without delay.