

MEMORANDUM

From: Chief Officer, Environment & Technical

To: Chief Officer Planning & Regulatory

FAO: Sharon Holman

Our Ref: ET/DC/MZ/P/2023/0593

Your Ref: P/2023/0593

Date: 17th July 2024

Land At Lower Berse Farm, Bersham, LL14 4HP.

Outline application seeking planning permission for the erection of 1520 dwellings plus associated roads, open space, community facilities, a site for a primary school and a wastewater treatment plant (if necessary) (all matters reserved except access).

This note has been prepared in response to a submitted modal shift technical note submitted to Wrexham Council for application ref: P/2023/0593 Land at Lower Berse Farm.

The LHA has undertaken an extensive review of the submitted technical report on potential modal shift analysis from SCP on the KSS1 site and feel it's a little thin on the ground. The proposals offer limited and basic infrastructure and detail infrastructure that has been reviewed and reviewed by others but that there doesn't seem to be any plans or funding to deliver.

The LHA would have expected this technical note or the TA to review good practice examples delivered elsewhere to create successful modal shift and to have reviewed the success of a variety of schemes that have been delivered elsewhere but this report does not touch on that.

The approach basically sets out that the applicant will focus on travel to and from work. The adopted approach considers specific sustainable transport interventions proposed in conjunction with the lower berse farm development and then considers how these might tie in with wider sustainable measures proposed for Wrexham as a whole. There are concerns with this approach as there is no data for Wales and the England trips to work only account for 14.9% of all trips pre-covid, the LHA feels that other journeys should be considered including education trips, bearing in mind that pupils will not receive statutory school transport unless they are going to their nearest school and it more than 2 miles (Primary school) or 3 miles (Secondary school distance. It's very important to consider young people who are more likely to travel in a multi-modal manner than older people who are more reliant on the car.

Three scenarios have been set out – baseline (existing) , plausible (a small step towards change) and possible (a large step towards change).

Further discussion relates to area wide measures which are more likely to be successful in inducing modal shift than stand alone measures and that research indicates that the best point to target behavioural interventions to achieve modal shift is during trigger points in lives like moving home.

Walking

The report states that it's a 30 minute walk time to the centre of Wrexham which is not expected to attract much diversion from private car to walking for such trips.

The report seems to indicate that there will be a focus on designing facilities within the site to reply on trip internalisation.

A more thorough discussion of the infrastructure for pedestrians in the vicinity of the site, what is missing and what could be improved would be beneficial. Trips and links to the local Morrisons, the local shop on Bryn Offa, the Hospital and local GP/Dentists/Opticians etc would be useful too as we don't know at this stage, what the local centre will offer.

Many of the existing facilities for walking may well not be upto current active travel standards, and therefore these should be audited and provide traffic flow and speed data to justify the existing facilities being adequate.

It should not be taken for granted that the uncontrolled crossing facilities will be fit for purpose, PV squared surveys or methodology may need to be employed to ensure the crossing types proposed are appropriate for the proposed footfall.

Further details and discussion is required about PROW13 should be undertaken with the PROW officer Mr Hanratty and The Councils Active Travel officer Gwen Thomas. Clarification is required on this as it doesn't appear to be located in this area, is it the Bridleway you are referring to?

In the first instance for routes that experience over 2000 AADT segregated cycling and walking routes should be the priority.

Bus travel

The report states sets out the assessment of the modes, starting off with public transport looking at likely patronage resulting from bus service enhancements proposed in conjunction with the Lower Berse Farm development. The assessment makes use of ONS 2021 census data which was still during the pandemic, so I am concerned that the baseline data might be uncharacteristically low as only essential workers were travelling to work at this time. The census survey data indicated that 2.9% were travelling to work by bus at that time compared to 5% in 2011 and 4% in 2001 in the Lower Berse farm area.

The centre of the site is over 400m from the nearest bus services.

The report states that the enhancement options for buses are:

- To extend the service or divert the town link 2 service
- A new service A operating north from the site via Maelor Hospital, Central Station and Wrexham Bus Station
- A new service B operating east from the site via Ruthin Road (A525), Cambria College, Bradley Road A5152, Central Station and Wrexham Bus Station
- Or a demand responsive or taxibus solution

Some discussion and detail was also held over service extension of the existing TL2 (Town Link 2) service to create a longer loop (option 1) through the development or a shorter loop (option 2) Indicative proposals are indicated in a map to the rear of the report but the detail is limited and the extents seem limited too.

Ultimately it is recommend a staged implementation would be the best use of resources. It's clear that there needs to be a service in operation from first occupation or that the areas of development should be phased and delivered closest to the locations with existing bus services.

It recommends that a new service 'A' should be developed to maximise mode shift and secure the largest reduction of peak hour car trips. It is proposed that the existing bus mode share for this area could increase from 3% to somewhere between 5% and 8% following implementation of proposed bus service enhancements and wider bus network improvements. Whilst a new bus service could be pump primed there is concern that without adequate patronage the service may fail and be withdrawn, therefore, the LHA would recommend if a service could be designed that goes through the site but also passes other new residential developments on Bersham Road and Rhostyllen.

Consultation and discussion should be undertaken with the Councils Active Travel Team and Andrew Mytton in regards to public transport services.

Cycling

In terms of active travel the analysis of cycling trips has utilised the DfT's cycling propensity tool to estimate what might be feasible under different scenarios. This is a nationwide web based tool for estimating cycling potential which covers travel behaviour data for commuting and travel to school based on the 2011 census data. It presents baseline data and how cycling would change under different scenarios such as trip distance and hilliness. Increases in either discourage cycling.

The discussion details relevant scenarios including Government targets. Assuming a doubling of cycle mode share nationally to 3.7% or to go 'dutch' a 22 fold increase in cycling nationally to 41% cycle mode share. There is no discussion about the features required for a go dutch approach or locations where this has been implemented successfully and has resulted in uplift and the levels of uplift witnessed.

The propensity tool has be used which indicates that a 2-6% increase in cycling under a government target scenario could be delivered or a 24% increase under a go dutch methodology. But no details of measures or success stories have been provided, but it is key that there needs to be a seamless cycle network coupled with social attitudes that fully embrace cycling in addition to secure cycle parking facilities.

Wrexham Gateway Transport Hub

There was discussion around the development of the Wrexham Gateway transport hub in the vicinity of Wrexham General Railway station. It is not clear if this is aspiration or if any works have been undertaken towards making this a reality.

The report states that it will improve the interchange facilities between modes, improve walking and cycling connectivity to and from the railway station and nearby destinations, it will improve the user experience at the railway station, enhanced setting of the station and welcome to the city of Wrexham, and finally, a WeTAG Stage 2 study.

Some small scale changes are likely to be put into place within the railway station curtilage this financial year but there is no funding committed to the delivery of the remainder of the work.

Site Proposals

The submission states that the internal layout will be developed and give a high priority to safe and convenient cycle access. That the development should incorporate a primary school and local commercial centre, with potentially a nursery, shops, café, public house and community facilities to reduce trips outside the site. This does not consider the trips into the site for people accessing these from external locations. A pragmatic approach should be taken as a small size of food store / corner shop is unlikely to serve residents full food shopping requirements but may provide effective top up shops.

Transport proposals around the site

The proposals around the edge of the site seem quite minimal with proposals to:

- Provide shared footways, cycleways along the A525 Ruthin Road and Bersham Road. The LHA would advise that this needs to extend upto the Victoria CP School.
- Signalised pedestrian crossing facilities to be added at the proposed north eastern access at the Ruthin Road junction with Croesnewydd Rd.
- Footway provision and uncontrolled crossing facilities along the eastern side of Homestead Lane which links to PROW 13. (Is this correct, doesn't appear to be the case) Which is intended to be retained / upgraded. No details have been provided in regards to this.
- Potential to close Homestead Lane and Berse Lane to motorised traffic which would provide significant benefits for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It is unclear what impact this will have on the wider highway network or residents in these areas.
- Additional uncontrolled crossing points where appropriate (more detail on locations required, plan in the rear of the report hard to review.

Wider Measures For Wrexham

There was an extensive discussion about wider measures from Wrexham detailed for the A525, the A534 Holt Road, the A5152 Chester Road, the A541 Mold Rd & Regent Street. A collaboration between Transport For Wales and Wrexham Council focussing on Active Travel. There have been a couple of options floated, the medium intervention package with a new single direction cycle track 2m wide on either side of Mold Road with separated footways of 2-3m width vs option 2 – A high intervention package with new two way cycle tracks 4m wide along the northern side of the Mold Rd corridor with separated footway of 2-3m width. There is currently funding in place to construct Phase 1a as well as making minor improvements between the railway station and Wrexham Maelor Hospital, but it is hoped that the developer could improve walking and cycling from their site in this direction as well as on the Ruthin Road corridor.

The wider strategy of how this site links to the city centre and major employment, education, leisure and transport infrastructure is not evaluated.

The Way Forward

The submitted report states that the TA is proposed to be updated to reflect the downward adjustment of TEMPRO growth factor on the modelling data and the derivation of a new set of person and vehicle trip rates and re-testing of the road capacity analysis with these trip

rates. Furthermore the review of the sustainable and highway capacity interventions required to support the development.

Conclusion

The submitted technical note seems a light touch, further research and more detailed proposals to encourage modal shift would be welcomed. On the basis of the proposals submitted, it would not appear to warrant any reduction in requirements for highway mitigation measures or trip generation figures.

The following conclusions have been made:

- The data utilised should be widened from just commuting trips
- More research into successful measures to achieve modal shift are required to be demonstrated to inform the scheme proposals.
- More extensive details of the existing infrastructure in the area are required, and the access issues pedestrians might face and proposed infrastructure improvements to overcome these.
- The proposals at Ruthin Road / Croesnewydd Rd pedestrian crossing upgrade should also provide cycle crossing points.
- The LHA feels the use of the 2011 public transport census data would be a fairer baseline, as the 2021 figures were taken during COVID.
- Conversations with Active Travel and Andrew Mytton are recommended.
- If a new bus service is the chosen path forward, then the route should consider linking to other new residential developments in the area to ensure that the service remains sustainable for future.
- The proposals will require SMART targets
- The proposals will need to consider access for cyclists and secure cycle parking within the development.
- More detail is required about the actions and methodology of the 'go dutch' approach
- Further clarification is required in regards to the Wrexham Gateway Transport Hub and if the development is proposing any actions or support on this project.
- The trip generation will need to consider incoming trips to the site for the infrastructure proposed
- The transport proposals for the site seem quite basic, not even showing a footway connecting to Victoria CP School. For an exemplar scheme to encourage modal shift, it is felt further actions would be required.
- Sites in the local vicinity that residents are likely to access should be considered and access routes / infrastructure to these sites.
- It is unclear if the Mold Road scheme is applicable, how does it relate to the proposals.
- A TEMPRO review is acceptable.
- The trip rates and junction capacity assessments will require updated.



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