

23rd July 2024

Chief Officer Economy and Planning
Wrexham CBC
Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1AY

Fao: Matthew Phillips

Dear Matthew

Re: Application P/2023/0593 – Land at Lower Berse Farm, Wrexham.

In a recent discussion with Welsh Government Highways, it was indicated that the safeguarded route within the development site for the A483 Junction 4 improvements had never been withdrawn and, therefore, the TR111 protected route still applied. We find this position to be very surprising in the light of the previous decision of WG to accept the recommendations of the Roads Review Panel to drop the scheme in February 2023. However, insofar as it remains a safeguarded route for road infrastructure improvements, then that should have been made clear to us at the time of pre-application consultation, or in the nine months since the application was submitted (and, at the time of writing, we still have nothing formally from WG confirming the position).

Nevertheless, in order to make progress with the application, we feel that we have no option other than to respond to this update and amend our application to safeguard the protected route on our Masterplan. Unfortunately this change has a number of consequences for other aspects of the proposals that also require amendment and, therefore, this letter sets out a series of changes to our application submission responding to the above, but also providing updates in relation to a number of other evolving matters.

Replacement Masterplan

As indicated in our letter dated 12th March, following extensive engagement with Welsh Water, we no longer consider that there is a need for a wastewater treatment works within the development given that, subject to some off-site works, the site can now be drained to the Five Fords Treatment Works. The land on which it was proposed that the works be constructed, as indicated on the Option One Masterplan, is no longer required for this purpose and, therefore, the land in question can now appropriately be used for housing, as previously indicated in Option Two.

As described above, we have amended the Masterplan to safeguard WG's preferred route for the J4 improvements (TR111), this involves removing a swathe of land from residential development to the south of Lower Berse Farm and a realignment of the proposed spine road to the east of the Farm to the point where it joins the A525.

We, therefore, submit a single Masterplan Framework Plan (PS9730.001 Rev I) that takes on board the above changes and we confirm that the two previous masterplan options are now withdrawn.

Amendment to the Description of the Development

The changes to the Masterplan have consequences in terms of the delivery of housing within the development. On the basis of the revised masterplan we have reassessed the potential capacity of the proposed development which we calculate to be 1450 dwellings, consequently, the description of the development should now be amended to take account of this (together with clarification of the position in respect of wastewater), we, therefore, propose an amendment to the description of the development to read as follows:

Residential development of up to 1450 dwellings, plus associated roads, open space, community facilities and a site for a primary school.

For clarification we make two points in relation to the above description:

First of all, we have not included reference to the road scheme within the description. The reason for this is that we are not in any way proposing it as part of our development, that would be a matter for WG when, and if, they found a way to progress the scheme and decided to submit a planning application. Our proposal simply safeguards the land that they have indicated they would require, until such time as WG either progress the road scheme, or drop it entirely. The safeguarded land would be landscaped and provided as recreational space

within our development, but it remains excluded from our calculations of open space provision in association with the development given the possibility of the road being constructed at some time in the future.

Secondly, we are aware that Policy SP3 refers to the development of land at Lower Berse Farm as being for “**a minimum of 1500 dwellings**” whereas our proposal is now for up to 1450 dwellings. There is, however, no conflict between our proposal and the Policy because our proposal has always excluded an area of land adjoining Homestead Lane that is allocated for development as part of SP3, but is not within the Applicant’s control. Our assessment is that this area of land has capacity for up to 70 dwellings and, therefore, it is clear that the Policy requirement in terms of the number of dwellings to be provided on the allocated site can still be fulfilled insofar as this may be considered to be important.

Please let us know if you have any concerns in relation to our proposed revision to the description of the development.

Revision to the Environmental Statement

The Environmental Statement submitted with the application, of course, referred to the original description of the development and the, now withdrawn, masterplans. These changes are considered to be sufficiently significant such that it is now considered necessary to revise the ES so that it specifically addresses the current proposals.

We, therefore, attach a revised ES to replace the originally submitted version. The ‘altered’ impacts of the development as now proposed are very minor and the overall conclusion as to the environmental effects of the development remain the same in that they do not give rise to reasons why planning permission should not be granted.

Regulations 24(3) and 24(7) of the 2017 Welsh Regulations both refer to a 30 day period for consultation following the submission of additional environmental information before which an application cannot be determined. Whilst the changes to the ES might be viewed as relatively minor in this case, for the avoidance of doubt, we would ask that you undertake the consultation process as soon as possible and it would be very helpful if you could let us know the date on which the 30 day period will come to an end.

The Potential Noise and Air Quality Impacts of the WG Road Scheme

Whilst we in no way seek to promote the WG road scheme as part of our planning application, we have, nevertheless, considered on an entirely 'without prejudice' basis whether there is any aspect of our proposals that might conflict with the construction of the road at a later date, notwithstanding the fact that these would ultimately be matters for WG to justify.

As described, the safeguarding of the identified land is the most fundamental requirement and the revised Masterplan has taken this on board, however, we have also considered whether the introduction of potentially significant levels of traffic movement into a corridor through the development might give rise to either noise or air quality concerns that would make the juxtaposition of the two developments incompatible. We, have, therefore, submitted two addendum documents addressing these two issues, both conclude on the basis of the assessment that has already been undertaken that there is no cause for concern.

Transportation Issues

The original submission made reference to highway improvements being provided in association with the development through a S.106 Agreement. The Applicant's proposal to provide for highway improvements at the A483/A525 junction commensurate with the scale of the additional traffic generated by the proposal remains as part of the proposal.

However, discussions have been ongoing with Wrexham Highways and with Welsh Government Highways in relation to public transport and Active Travel improvements that would also form part of the package of highway improvements, these proposals are now formally submitted as part of the application within an additional Sustainable Transport Improvements and Potential Modal Shift document.

The Applicants propose a range of measures, both within the development area itself, but also within the wider area, that are designed to encourage residents of the development to use alternative modes of transport to the private car, some of these measures will also be of direct benefit to residents, businesses and community facilities within the wider area. The measures include a new bus service and enhanced cycle and footway provision proposals which are set out in detail within the document, the delivery of which would be committed through the S.106 Agreement. In overall terms the proposal seeks to maximise travel through the use of sustainable transport opportunities whilst at the same time providing for the additional traffic that will be generated.

The sustainable transport proposals have an impact in terms of reducing traffic generation rates from the development and, of course, the amendments to the Masterplan, including the relocation of the western access onto the A525, for which a revised plan is now submitted (SCP/210187/AC02 Rev D), have an impact on the overall approach to highway matters. Consequently, a revised Transport Assessment is also submitted which directly addresses the updated circumstances. The conclusions remain the same in that it is clear that the full development can be accommodated on the highway network with the proposed improvements to Junction 4 of the A483 now submitted as part of the application.

Addendum to the Planning Statement

Since the application was first submitted, the Local Development Plan (LDP) has been formally adopted and the previous UDP has, therefore, been replaced. Whilst the original Planning Statement referred to both documents, it is considered appropriate to submit a further document that concentrates on the policy considerations relevant to the application proposals within the LDP whilst also having regard to its relationship to National policy within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In particular, the Addendum highlights sustainability considerations, demonstrating that the application proposal is a highly sustainable proposal that has been identified through a process of assessment derived from NPPF policy and the LDP, both of which emphasise the importance of sustainability considerations in the identification and determination of proposals for development.

Aside from the fact that the application site is allocated for development (which is a consideration of very significant weight in itself) it is clear that the sustainability of the proposal weighs heavily in favour of the grant of planning permission.

Revision to the Design and Access Statement

We also attach a revised Design and Access Statement (IN9730.001F) and a revised Parameter Plan – Access and Movement (D9730.011D) to replace that previously submitted. The DAS has been revised to relate specifically to the latest Masterplan and to refer in more detail to the Active Travel proposals now that they have been developed further and formally submitted as part of the proposals.

Conclusion

As indicated, we would ask you to accept each of the above documents as part of the planning application and to mark the relevant predecessor documents as superseded.

We hope that this approach will make the package of proposals easier to understand, avoiding the contradictions that sometimes arise when applications are amended. We look forward to discussing the changes with you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

M GILBERT