



17 January 2023

Wrexham County Borough Council
Planning Services
Lord Street
Wrexham
LL11 1LG

By E-MAIL ONLY

Dear Sir / Madam

Gorse Farm, Worthenbury Road, Worthenbury, Wrexham, LL13 0AL

Proposed demolition of existing office, storage and industrial manufacturing buildings and redevelopment of site for 61 no. residential dwellings (10% affordable), means of vehicular access, PROW re-alignment, associated landscaping, open space, biodiversity net gain, parking, bin storage and pumping station.

PLANNING PORTAL REF. P/2022/0441

I have the pleasure of providing some additional material and updated/new drawings with respect the above planning application submitted on 2 May 2022 on behalf of my client Broughton Hall Estates Ltd

The case officer was Sarah Hill, but we understand that she was providing agency cover and is no longer working for the Authority. It should be noted that pre-application guidance was provided by Sharon Holman in January 2022 (ref. ENQ/2021/0298); so it might be that this case is picked up by Sharon.

In June 2022 she asked for some additional changes/information and this submission seeks to cover and address the points raised by her.

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DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

To make greater sense of what is actually being proposed it is considered that the description of the proposed development needs to change from :

"Demolition of existing farmhouse and replace with a new dwelling. Change of use of existing outbuildings into residential accommodation. Demolition of some agricultural buildings."

To the following amended more accurate description :

"Proposed replacement dwelling and conversion of existing outbuildings to form a single dwellinghouse, with detached garage unit, revised means of vehicular access (involving closure of existing access), landscaping and biodiversity net gain and demolition of existing barns and outbuildings."

ECOLOGY

The ecology consultee response (NRW) sought additional information on GCN and bat mitigation measures. The applicant has commissioned a supplementary report covering and addressing these points and this is included in the package now provided.

The case officer also requested that an ecological enhancement plan could be brought forward and the applicant has agreed with this and the supplementary report and an associated landscaping masterplan scheme which identify a series of measures and opportunities that can deliver quality levels of biodiversity net gain.

HIGHWAY ACCESS

The Highway officer provided comments (dated 23 May 2022) where it was remarked that if the existing access was to be used and retained that it should be widened. The applicant considered this but feels that trying to improve an already deficient access onto the highway would be counter-productive especially since visibility is sub-standard and instead he is now proposing to seal up the current access through landscaping and make a better access further along the highway at a far superior point where visibility is much safer.

MARKETING / AGRICULTURAL

The applicant has sought some background to the site disposal from the selling agents (Fisher German) and a report has been provided that is now hereby issued for information.

The case officer asked for a supporting statement explaining why the agricultural buildings to be converted are no longer suitable, cannot be made suitable or are no longer required for agricultural purposes. The statement should also give reasons why a conversion to a use other than housing is not practicable or desirable.

The site was marketed from September 2020 and Lots 2 and 3 were purchased by a local farming enterprise, but there was no interest in the remaining Lot 1 (the house and 49 acres of land) from any agricultural entity. The sale took until July 2021 to finalise and with the holding extending to just 49 acres this is simply too small to viably run an agricultural enterprise from. The buildings on site are no longer required to service the land and the traditional ones that are being proposed for retention/conversion offer no feasible modern agricultural opportunity.

STRUCTURAL REPORT

The case officer requested a structural survey report for those buildings proposed for conversion .

The applicant has duly commissioned Platt White consulting engineers who have assessed the structural suitability of the two existing outbuildings and have found that they are capable of conversion without any major reconstruction. Thus, they are considered to meet the terms of policy and LPGN3 which provides guidance on such matters.

ADDITIONAL PLANS

A site topographical survey has been produced and from this more accurate site location and layout drawings have been produced.

Amongst the new plans include the following:

- Topographical site plan
- Site location plan : showing the accurate site area edged red and land owned edged blue
- Demolition plan : identifying the buildings/structures to be removed; the applicant notes that CPAT wish to see a recording of the existing buildings prior to demolition and they are happy with such a condition being applied
- A full suite of existing and proposed floorplans and elevations for all buildings
- Proposed Site layout plan : showing in more detail the proposed layout across the site with the existing buildings (to be demolished) underlaid
- Landscape masterplan : showing detailed hard and soft landscaping treatments; notably highlighting areas of biodiversity net gain and also how the existing access will be treated and how new access will be set out. This plan also shows that the residential curtilage will be reduced to an area that reflects that identified and accepted during the pre-application stage – this will mean that the land north of the proposed post and rail stock proof fencing/hedgerow will be excluded from the residential demise.

ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

The original proposal that was submitted back in May 2022 did not provide any detail on floorspace/volumes changes and so, with the benefit of accurate topographical and measured survey information the team has been able to put together a tabulated schedule of existing vs. proposed accommodation in respect of floorspace, volume and site area.

These are discussed in more detail below, but the table indicates significant **reductions in site area (curtilage demise) by 32%; in building volume by 38% and in floorspace by 25%.**

PLANNING POLICY : WREXHAM UDP

The applicant has also sought to consider extant planning policy as set out below.

POLICY H3 "Conversion of Buildings Outside Settlement Limits" : provides the ability to convert existing rural buildings where there is no longer an agricultural need (which there isn't as shown by the Fisher German report as there were no agricultural interest and at just 49 acres this would not provide for a viable agricultural enterprise); where the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling (the outbuildings are being retained and converted and the structural report demonstrates this); where any inherent characteristics of merit in the building are retained (the conversion will retain the scale, massing, features and materiality of the outbuildings); where the resulting curtilage does not constitute an undesirable intrusion into the landscape, create access problems, nor require the provision of services at public cost (the curtilage is being reduced, the landscape is being restored/enhanced, the access is being improved and no services at public cost will be required); and where the floor plan of the existing building is sufficient to create a habitable dwelling (this too is being met as a single dwelling is proposed).

The applicant considers that the spirit of the associated **LPGN3** "Converting Rural Buildings" note is also therefore met.

POLICY H5 "Housing in the Countryside" : provides an exception to PS1 (which directs development to within existing settlement limits) where the proposal complies with Policy H3 (which it does). However, this policy is not really relevant since there is already a dwelling on site and the proposal simply involves replacing it like for like without any increase in new dwelling numbers.

replacement of an existing dwelling and the conversion of redundant farm buildings is proposed.

POLICY H10 "Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside" : provides the ability to propose replacement dwellings subject to a set of criteria.

- Criteria (a) states that the existing dwelling is habitable or capable of being made habitable without substantial reconstruction or substantial increases in floor area. The Pre-app confirmed that it met this criteria.
- Criteria (b) states that the existing dwelling is not of architectural or historic interest, or is a prefabricated or temporary structure : the current dwelling does not fall within this description/category, as confirmed by the pre-app guidance letter.

- Criteria (c) states that new dwelling should be located on the site of the original dwelling (the plans show that this is the case) **OR** that it is located within the curtilage of the existing dwelling (which it is); where it reflects the floor area, form, bulk, and character of the original dwelling (which it does) and where it satisfies Policy GDP1 (which again it meets). Having met the first criteria there is no need to satisfy the other criteria, but we have shown that it meets all four sub-criteria of (c).

The Policy does not provide any recommended floorspace or volume increase levels.

Looking at **LPGN13** "Housing in the Countryside" this guidance note states that house extensions / replacement dwellings should not result in an increase of more than one third (33%) in the floor area of the original dwelling.

As the accommodation schedule demonstrates the overall **floorspace** will be reducing from 1,439 sqm to 1,040 sqm representing a **reduction of 25%**. Building **volume** is also reducing from 5,727 cum to 3,555 cum representing a **reduction of 38%**.

If one took the existing house in isolation and compared it to the new house then there would be an increase, however, the applicant considers that the decision maker must consider the overall and wider site in context especially where the proposal is involving a net reduction in residential demise.

Additionally, the applicant considers that relying upon the LPGN13 comes with a health warning and degree of caution with respect to the question of what weight can realistically be afforded it, not least because the relevant Planning Acts (2004 and 2012) are clear as to the Regulations under which such guidance is published and the fact is that unless a document has been through "examination" (which it hasn't) its weight is tempered and diluted. In view of this, the applicant considers that only very limited weight can be given to this document and moreover, there are a series of examples across the County Borough where replacement dwellings have far exceeded this non-adopted guidance percentage.

Furthermore, the applicant considers that there are multiple benefits that this proposal will exceptionally deliver, namely :

- Enhancement to openness of the countryside
- Removal of several unsightly and poor-quality buildings
- Landscaping improvements and visual enhancements through demolition and landscape planting/restoration

- Biodiversity net gain benefits
- Acceptance that PD will be removed, thus controlling any future extensions, etc
- Retention of traditional buildings through conversion
- The reduction in building volume and floorspace
- A tighter/reduced curtilage demise
- Highway safety benefits
- Quality conversion and replacement dwelling scheme reflective of the local vernacular and character.

The weight that should be applied to these by the decision maker must be significant and substantial as they are material considerations that merit such weight and would clearly outweigh the very limited weight afforded to LPGN13.

SUMMARY

We sincerely hope that this material is a welcome addition to the extant application, certain items have naturally been superseded, whilst others are new and supplementary to that already consulted upon.

I imagine that the case officer may wish to re-consult on some of this for completeness but the applicant hopes that this won't delay a positive determination by too long.

In the meantime, I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement and notification that this information has been safely received and details of the new case officer with whom we will need to liaise with at your very earliest convenience.

Please contact me at any time on either the office number or my mobile (07971 446630) should you need me to clarify any particular aspect of this application.

Yours sincerely



Justin Paul BA BTP MRTPI

Cc

D Hopkins