



**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION
OF 23 AFFORDABLE RESIDENTIAL
DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING,
LANDSCAPING AND ANCILLARY WORKS ON
LAND AT WOODLANDS FARM, NORTH OF
DODDS LANE, GWERSYLLT, WREXHAM**

WOODLANDS FARM HOUSING SCHEME

PLANNING STATEMENT

NOVEMBER 2018



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the erection of 23 affordable residential dwellings with associated parking, landscaping and ancillary works on land at Woodlands Farm, North of Dodds Lane, Gwersyllt, Wrexham. All of the proposed dwellings would be affordable homes.

This application is the resubmission of a planning application for a residential scheme at the site following a refusal to grant planning permission in 2016 (Reference P/2016/0694).

Several changes to the scheme have been made in light of the consultation responses and feedback received regarding the original application. These changes include:

- The scheme has been reconfigured to provide a logical extension of the existing housing on the eastern boundary of Gwersyllt.
- The Proposed Development is now for 100% affordable housing units and is comprised of one, two and three bedroom properties to meet local demand.
- The development has been reconfigured to maximise the undeveloped gap on the northern side of Dodds Lane.
- An existing field boundary has been used to form the eastern limit of the development to form a logical defensive boundary to the edge of the scheme.
- The existing hedgerow on the eastern boundary will be protected, and the planting enhanced, to provide an improved wildlife corridor that would benefit bats and GCN. This will also provide screening of the development on the approach from Rhosrobin.
- A GCN Habitat Management Area would be provided to the east of the Site.
- The open space area has been re-positioned within the development so that it is more integrated and benefits further from natural surveillance.
- Bat survey information has been provided.

The improvements to the scheme are considered to overcome the reasons for refusal. Furthermore, the Proposed Development provides an opportunity to deliver much needed affordable housing in a sustainable location.

The Proposed Development has been shown to have very limited impact on the purposes and openness of the Green Barrier. Furthermore, very exceptional circumstances exist

to outweigh the minimal harm that the proposal would cause and comprise the following considerations:

- WCBC cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply;
- The Proposed Development would be for 100% affordable homes. As such this development would make a significant contribution to the recognised shortfall of this tenure of property within Wrexham;
- The Site was previously occupied by a farm house and associated outbuildings which were subject to a planning permission for residential development until April 2017; and
- The Proposed Development would not constitute inappropriate development under the emerging Affordable Housing Exception Site Policy H3 which supports affordable housing on land outside but immediately adjoining settlement limits.

A number of environmental assessments / supporting documents have been provided as follows:

- Transport Statement;
- Arboricultural Survey;
- Soils and Agricultural Land Survey;
- Ecological Assessment;
- Geo-environmental Report
- Utilities Statement;
- Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS);
- Design and Access Statement;
- Pre-application Consultation report

These assessments / supporting documents demonstrate that the Proposed Development would be in accordance with the development management policies of the Unitary Development Plan.

It is apparent from an assessment of the statutory Development Plan and other material planning considerations that the Proposed Development is either in conformity with, or supports the objectives of the relevant planning context. In light of the above, it is considered that planning permission should be granted without delay.

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Appendix H – Utilities Statement
Appendix I – Pre-Application Consultation Report

Planning Drawings

Drawing Reference	Drawing Title
1957-01-SK001	Location Plan
C861.001D	Application Site
C861.002D	Topographic Survey
C861.070P	Proposed Site Layout
C861.077B	Site Sections
C861.110G	House Type 1 Plans
C861.111B	House Type 1 Elevations
C861.120F	House Type 2 Plans
C861.122B	House Type 2 Elevations
C861.160C	Walk Up Flats Type 5 Ground Floor Plan
C861.161B	Walk Up Flats Type 5 First Floor Plan
C861.162B	Walk Up Flats Type 5 Elevations 1
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C861.170C	Bungalow Type 3 Floor Plan
C861.171B	Bungalow Type 3 Elevations
C861.175B	Bungalow Type 3 (Corner) Floor Plans
C861.176B	Bungalow Type 3 (Corner) Elevations
C861.200B	House Type 4 Plans
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Landscape Figures

Figure 1 Landscape and Visual Context
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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the erection of 23 affordable residential dwellings with associated parking, landscaping and ancillary works on land at Woodlands Farm, North of Dodds Lane, Gwersyllt, Wrexham. All of the proposed dwellings would be affordable homes in accordance with the definition contained in Section 5 of Technical Advice Note 2: Planning and Affordable Housing.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 A planning application (Reference: P/2016/0694) for the first phase of a proposed housing development on land at Woodlands Farm was refused planning permission on 5th September 2016. The reasons for refusing application P/2016/0694 can be summarised as follows:

- unacceptable impacts on the Green Barrier;
- concerns with regard to the layout of the development and the location of the proposed open space;
- insufficient information to assess the impact that the development would have on bats; and
- inadequate mitigation proposals put forward in respect of Great Crested Newts (GCN).

- 1.2.2 WWH has appointed Axis to assemble a planning application, of which this Planning Statement forms part, for a revised scheme for a proposed housing development at Woodlands Farm, Gwersyllt. The revised scheme and this application has been prepared to address the reasons for refusing the P/2016/0694 application. The application Site location is identified on Drawing 1957-01-SK001 and occupies an area of approximately 1.52 hectares.

- 1.2.3 Several changes to the scheme have been made in light of the consultation responses and feedback received regarding the original application. These changes include:

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- The scheme has been reconfigured to provide a logical extension of the existing housing on the eastern boundary of Gwersyllt, minimising the encroachment into the green barrier.
 - The Proposed Development is now for 100% affordable housing units and is comprised of one, two and three bedroom properties to meet local demand.
 - The development has been reconfigured to maximise the undeveloped gap on the northern side of Dodds Lane. The effect of which is to maintain the existing separation between the former farmhouse, which was granted planning permission to form 4no. residential units in 2014, and New Rhosrobin.
 - An existing field boundary has been used to form the eastern boundary of the development. This along with an existing sewer easement, which cannot be developed on, serves to form a logical defensive boundary to the edge of the Proposed Development.
 - The existing hedgerow on the eastern boundary will be protected, and the planting enhanced, to provide an improved wildlife corridor that would benefit bats and GCN. This will also provide further screening of the development on the approach from Rhosrobin.
 - A GCN Habitat Management Area would be provided to the east of the Site, this would include provision of hibernacula.
 - New hedgerow planting is proposed to provide enhanced connectivity between a proposed GCN Habitat Management Area and the existing hedgerow corridor along the eastern boundary of the development, which provides onwards connectivity to the wider GCN population in the area.
 - The open space area has been re-positioned within the development so that it is more integrated and benefits further from natural surveillance.
 - Bat survey information has been provided.

1.2.4 The improvements to the scheme are considered to overcome the reasons for refusal. The Proposed Development provides an opportunity to deliver much needed affordable housing in a sustainable location with minimal effects on the green barrier and open countryside. Indeed, the revised proposals provide an opportunity to achieve an end result in which the eastern edge of Gwersyllt is more rural in character and less defined by views of built development than it is at present.

1.2.5 Residential developments have previously been found to be acceptable in the Green Barrier (such as Planning Permission Reference P/2015/0790 for the development

of 56 dwellings at Boozey Field) where they would form a logical ‘rounding off’ of a settlement and provide a strong, logical and defensible settlement boundary. In this regard, and given the modified design for the Proposed Development, approval of this scheme would not be inconsistent with other decisions in this area.

1.3 The Applicant

1.3.1 The Applicant for the Proposed Development is Wales and West Housing Association which is part of the Wales and West Housing Group.

1.3.2 WWH is one of the largest housing associations in Wales. WWH’s responsibility to stakeholders is not only substantial but wide ranging. WWH are a charitable, not for profit organisation operating within 15 local authorities across the Country managing over 11,500 properties and providing homes and services to more than 17,000 people. Complementing this core duty is an equally important responsibility for the welfare and wellbeing of all its residents and the communities that they are part of. WWH has a proven track record in the development and delivery of affordable housing solutions to meet an identified need.

1.4 The Proposal

1.4.1 The Applicant is seeking planning permission for the erection of 23 affordable residential dwellings and ancillary development, on land at Woodlands Farm, north of Dodds Lane, Gwersyllt, Wrexham. The application would deliver:

- the construction of 23 homes, 100% of which are to be affordable units;
- the undergrounding of a 415 volt (LV) overhead line;
- creation of new public open space;
- trees / landscaping;
- on site roads and other infrastructure;
- provision of new pedestrian links from the Site to adjacent public footways; and
- ecological mitigation measures including an area to be set aside and managed to provide favourable conditions for great crested newts.

1.4.2 The house types would be as follows:

- 10no. semi-detached 3 bed dwellings;
- 6no. semi-detached 2 bed dwellings;
- 1no. detached 2 bed bungalow;

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- 2no. semi-detached 2 bed bungalow; and
 - 4no. 1 bed flats.

- 1.4.3 This proposed layout was developed following feedback from the Council resulting from the refusal of the previous application. A number of affordable housing schemes have been considered for the Site to address points raised by the Council and enable a viable 100% affordable scheme to be developed. The early alternatives considered included the incorporation of additional bungalows. These bungalows were located in the area that is now proposed to form part of the amenity space. Based on initial feedback from WCBC, it was decided to remove the additional bungalows from the scheme as they could not be integrated sufficiently in to the design to avoid causing detrimental impacts upon the Green Barrier.
- 1.4.4 The proposal would incorporate an area of open space. The open space has been relocated from the original scheme in order for it to benefit from natural surveillance and help retain separation of Gwersyllt from Rhosrobin.
- 1.4.5 An area of land to the south east of the main housing development would be safeguarded for nature conservation purposes, providing a long-term sustainable biodiversity benefit at this location. Native species planting would be provided within the development to provide ecological connectivity, foraging, shelter, breeding and roosting opportunities. Bat and bird boxes would also assist in ensuring that the biodiversity value of the Site would be maintained. The layout of the Proposed Development and the location of the proposed nature conservation mitigation area is shown on Figure 4 of the Ecological Assessment (contained in Appendix D).
- 1.4.6 There is a section of 415 volt (LV) overhead line located along the Site's southern boundary, along the footpath of Dodds Lane. In order to accommodate the Proposed Development, the aforementioned infrastructure will require undergrounding across the frontage of the Site in order to construct the proposed Site entrance. Whilst it is possible that these works could be undertaken under Permitted Development (PD) rights by a Statutory Undertaker, the works are being applied for as part of this planning application in the event that a third party undertake the works and so PD rights are not triggered.
- 1.4.7 The farmhouse and outbuildings which were proposed to be demolished under the original application were demolished in 2017 due to issues of antisocial behaviour

and the irreparable condition of the buildings. As such, the Proposed Development does not include any demolition work.

- 1.4.8 Further details of the design and layout of the development is provided within the Design and Access Statement contained in Appendix A.

1.5 The Site and Surroundings

- 1.5.1 The application Site covers an area of approximately 1.52 hectares and is located to the north of Dodds Lane, on the eastern periphery of Gwersyllt, within 500m of the village centre and approximately 2km to the north west of Wrexham Town Centre.
- 1.5.2 The Site is currently vacant but was in use for agricultural grazing purposes prior to Wales and West purchasing the site in 2015. The Site consists of a field with trees and shrubs located along its boundaries. An area of hardstanding is located within the south of the application Site where the buildings of Woodlands Farm were located, these buildings were demolished in 2017 due to issues of antisocial behaviour.
- 1.5.3 The Site is surrounded by agricultural land to the north and east. There is a right of access for agricultural vehicles along the western boundary of the Site. This access would be re-routed if planning permission is granted, maintaining access to the fields to the north of the Site.
- 1.5.4 There are existing Council properties on the eastern edge of Gwersyllt which back onto the western boundary of the application Site and are accessed off Pen-Y-Llyn. Dodds Lane is situated along the Site's southern boundary, beyond which is the playing field associated with Gwersyllt PC School.
- 1.5.5 The Site is in a sustainable location, with excellent access, within easy walking and cycling distance of a number of key service requirements, including, but not limited to; Gwersyllt Community Primary School (150m); Ysgol Bryn Alyne Secondary School (1km); Gwersyllt railway station (400m); Gwersyllt Parish Church (700m); and shopping facilities (200m). Employment providers are well provided for including, amongst others, Mold Road Industrial Estate (300m) and Rhosddu Industrial Estate (850m).

1.6 Planning History

- 1.6.1 As described above the Site is currently occupied by agricultural fields and hardstanding associated with the former Woodlands Farm buildings.
- 1.6.2 On the 22nd April 2014 planning permission was granted for the conversion of the existing agricultural buildings to form four residential units with associated parking and infrastructure subject to 19 planning conditions and a planning obligation. The permission reference is P/2013/0396.
- 1.6.3 On 5th September 2016 an application (P/2016/0694) was refused for a residential development of 27 properties at the former Woodlands Farm. The original proposed scheme comprised the demolition of the existing farm buildings, the undergrounding of 415 Volt (LV) overhead line, erection of 27no. dwellings with associated infrastructure including roads, services and amenities.
- 1.6.4 The application that this Planning Statement relates to is for a revised residential scheme at the Site.

1.7 Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The applicant has reviewed the project against The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regs'). The application does not represent a Schedule 1 Project (mandatory EIA), and has therefore been considered against Schedule 2 of the EIA Regs to determine whether or not it should be accompanied by an EIA Regs compliant Environmental Statement (ES). The development would be 'screened' against Paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 (Urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas). The relevant threshold is that listed alongside the corresponding development description within Schedule 2. The relevant thresholds are development including more than 150 dwellinghouses or with a site area in excess of 5 hectares. The proposal relates to the construction of 23 houses on approximately 1.52 hectares of land, accordingly, the development does not represent a Schedule 2 project and so EIA is not required.

1.8 Scope of the Planning Application

- 1.8.1 In addition to the application forms, certificates and drawings; a validation statement is submitted identifying the relevant national and local validation requirements that have been complied with by the application.

1.8.2 This Planning Statement is divided into five sections. Section 1 provides the introduction and background to the proposals. Section 2 provides an overview of the local need for additional housing and the role that the Proposed Development plays in meeting this need. Section 3 provide a summary of the more detailed assessments provided in support of the application which are deemed to be material planning considerations. Section 4 provides an assessment of the proposals against relevant national and local planning policies and, finally, Section 5 draws some concise conclusions to the Statement.

2.0 THE NEED FOR HOUSING

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Planning Policy Wales Edition 9 (November 2016) (PPW), which is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs) and circulars, is the national planning policy for Wales and sets out the land use policies of the Welsh Government. Locally, Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 (UDP) provides the statutory Development Plan for the application Site. This section of the Planning Statement only addresses national and local planning policy concerning housing land supply and affordable housing provision. All other policies of relevance to the Proposed Development have been considered in Section 4.0 of this Statement.

2.2 Definition of Affordable Housing

- 2.2.1 Affordable housing is defined in Section 5.0 of TAN 2 as “*housing where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers. However, it is recognised that some schemes may provide for staircasing to full ownership and where this is the case there must be secure arrangements in place to ensure the recycling of capital receipts to provide replacement affordable housing*”. TAN 2 confirms that affordable housing includes social-rented housing and intermediate housing. All of the proposed dwellings would be affordable homes, in accordance with the definition provided in TAN 2.

2.3 Housing Land Supply

WCBC’s Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) (Jan 2015), WCBC Housing Land Monitoring Statement (April 2017) and Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013 - 2028 Background Paper 08 Housing Supply and Delivery (January 2018)

- 2.3.1 The most contemporary documents relating to housing land supply available on the WCBC website are the Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) (Jan 2015), WCBC Housing Land Monitoring Statement (April 2017) and the Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013 - 2028 Background Paper 08 Housing Supply and Delivery (BP08) (January 2018).
- 2.3.2 The five year housing land supply calculation within the 2015 JHLAS comprised sites with planning permission (outline or full) and sites allocated for housing in adopted

development plans, categorised as prescribed in TAN 1, totalling 1304 units. The average rate of historic annual housing completions over the previous 10 year period was then used to calculate the housing land supply figure in years. This provided a figure of 3.1 years, below the 5 years required by PPW.

- 2.3.3 The WCBC Housing Land Monitoring Statement (April 2017) (HLMS) updated some of the figures contained within the 2015 JHLAS in respect of housing land supply figures. The revised figures showed a supply of 1392 units expected to come forward in the 5 year period considered in the HLMS. Based on the annual completions data contained within the 2017 HLMS, this would equate to 3.3 years of land supply. Although this figure provided an increase from the supply identified in the 2015 JHLAS, the 2017 HLMS illustrated a continued significant shortfall from the 5 year supply required by PPW.
- 2.3.4 BP08, the most recent document produced by WCBC to consider housing land supply illustrates a more positive picture and states a housing land supply figure of 6.7 years based on predictions of the number of dwellings that could be built between 2018 and 2023 based on a supply of LDP allocations, committed sites, s106 sites and windfalls. Furthermore, this document confirms that if all anticipated completions are realised then a land supply of more than 5 years can be sustained until the final year of the plan. BP08 goes on to provide an estimate of the amount of affordable housing that could be delivered based on the sources of supply used to calculate the housing land supply figures, this estimate is considered in Section 2.3 of this statement.
- 2.3.5 It is recognised that at present there is no housing provision target in absence of an adopted LDP and as such the land supply estimates provided are not definitive. However, they give an indication of the level of deficit in housing land supply that has been experienced in recent years in the County Borough, and of the optimistic position WCBC foresees for the remaining years of the LDP plan period (2013 to 2028). As the LDP has not yet been adopted, limited weight can be afforded to the land supply figures provided in BP08 and the position remains that based on the extant UDP there is no 5 year housing land supply.

2.4 Affordable Housing Statement

- 2.4.1 Policy H7 of the UDP states that *“Where there is a proven lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the Council will negotiate with developers to provide an element*

of affordable housing in new proposals of 25 or more homes. The initial benefit of discounted prices will be retained for subsequent and future occupants through the scheme's management by a suitable local housing body with the aid of legal agreements." WCBC's Local Planning Guidance Note (LPG) 28 'Affordable Housing' explains that the Council will normally expect 25% of the total site capacity to be provided as affordable housing.

- 2.4.2 The WCBC Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) (2015) identifies an annual shortfall of 69 affordable dwellings in the 'Western border' sub-area, of which Gwersyllt falls within. This shortfall is the largest of all the sub-areas identified in Wrexham and forms 44% of the total shortfall across the County. The 2017 update to the LHMA (published in 2018) reiterates the need for affordable housing across the County Borough and that the greatest need for affordable dwellings is in the Western Border area. Within the LDP plan period, the need for affordable housing in the Wrexham Border area is estimated at 1155 properties, this need forms 49% of the total need for 2355 affordable properties across the County Borough in the LDP plan period.
- 2.4.3 The potential amount of affordable housing that could be delivered from the sources of supply used to calculate the housing land supply figures contained within BP08 has been estimated at 1319 across the LDP plan period (based on allocated sites providing affordable housing units in accordance with the quotas set out in LDP Policy H2). This supply would fulfil only 56% of the identified need for affordable dwellings during the LDP plan period across the County Borough. Tables 20 and 21 of BP08 state that the allocated sites and large known windfalls within the Western Border area, are expected to contribute 256 affordable homes across the LDP plan period, equating to 22% of the affordable houses required in the Western Border over the LDP plan period.
- 2.4.4 As such, although a 5 year land supply has been identified for every year of the LDP plan period (as set out in Section 2.2), the clear need for affordable housing reiterated by WCBC in recent years would not be met through the supply of sites detailed in BP08. Therefore, other sustainable ways to meet the significant shortfall in affordable housing delivery across the County Borough (of 44%) **will need to be found**.
- 2.4.5 Within the WCBC Local Housing Strategy 2013-2018 the Council reiterate that there is currently a shortage of affordable homes to either buy or rent in Wrexham. The

Council also confirm in the strategy that their highest priority to secure affordable housing is through on-site delivery, an approach which is in line with national guidance. WCBC's Local Planning Guidance Note (LPG) 28 'Affordable Housing' explains that the Council will normally expect 25% of the total site capacity to be provided as affordable housing. The LDP Deposit Plan Policy H2 proposes thresholds that vary by area, a threshold of 30% is proposed for the North West sub market area, of which Gwersyllt falls within.

- 2.4.6 The Proposed Development would provide 23 dwellings, 100% of which would be managed by WWH as affordable units. The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to the existing Council properties at Pen-y-Llyn and would enable local people to stay in Gwersyllt by providing additional, much needed affordable housing in the area.
- 2.4.7 The 2017 update to the LHMA confirms that the greatest need with regard to the size of affordable units are two bedroom properties for both under and over 65s with some three bed general needs (under 65s). The Proposed Development would provide a mix of properties which would cater to this need.

2.5 Conclusion

- 2.5.1 At present the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. However, BPO08, which supports the emerging development plan, shows that the proposed housing allocations would deliver a 5 year housing land supply if adopted in the current form. Nevertheless, even taking into account the proposed allocations, there would be a significant shortfall in supply of affordable housing with the proposed allocations and windfall sites only predicted to provide 22% of the affordable housing requirements for the Western Border area.
- 2.5.2 The Proposed Development would provide 23 dwellings, 100% of which would be managed by WWH as affordable units. As such this development provides a valuable opportunity to help manage the current shortfall of this much needed housing stock.

3.0 RELEVANT TECHNICAL MATTERS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Pre-application engagement with WCBC was undertaken to review an amended scheme following the refusal to grant planning application P/2016/0694. The scope of documents/assessments to be submitted in support of the application has been informed by the pre-application engagement undertaken for the original application and by the reasons for refusal of application P/2016/0694. The conclusions of assessments into the matters of interest are detailed within the following sections. The assessments cover the topics of traffic and transportation, arboriculture, ecology and nature conservation and SuDS design. Whilst not specifically requested by WCBC a Geo Environmental Assessment and Utilities Assessment were also undertaken for the original application. Additional assessments on landscape and arboriculture have been completed to inform this application.

3.2 Landscape

- 3.2.1 An Appraisal of the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development has been carried out. This has been undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), and has been informed by desk and field based work (site visit in March 2018).

The Site and its Surroundings

- 3.2.2 The Site is located at the edge of Gwersyllt (refer to Drawing 1957-01-SK001) for location). At present, it comprises predominantly open grassland, with hedgerows along the boundaries, which include several mature trees. The landform of the Site falls by approximately 5m from the western boundary to the eastern boundary. Areas of hardstanding are located towards the southern edge of the site, associated with a number of farm buildings that have recently been demolished.
- 3.2.3 The Site is bounded to the west by existing two-storey housing on Pen-Y-Lyn. The upper rear windows of many of these properties overlook the Site. The southern boundary is with Rhosrobin Road, and is defined by a tall hedge. A school and a student referral centre, and associated playing fields are situated on the opposite side of the road. The eastern and northern boundaries of the Site adjoin fields.
- 3.2.4 The Site is not clearly visible from properties at the edges of Bradley (approximately 190m to the north) or from New Rhosrobin (approximately 70-300m to the south-

east) due to a combination of vegetation cover along intervening field boundaries, and localised variations in landform.

- 3.2.5 A public footpath runs along the southern edge of Bradley. Views south in the direction of the Site are available from the western end of this path, with the existing vegetation at the northern edge of the Site visible. Views from the majority of the path are restricted by vegetation cover or by landform.
- 3.2.6 The Site is not covered by any landscape designations at either a national or local level.

Landscape Character

- 3.2.7 The Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance (adopted 2007) subdivides the Borough into a series of four broad landscape types and twenty-seven geographically distinct landscape character areas (LCA).
- 3.2.8 The Proposed Development would be located within the Rural/Urban Villages landscape type and within LCA 8: Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass. An extract from the SPG, detailing this LCA is included as Appendix 1. The presence of semi-rural villages with extensive suburban development is noted as a key characteristic.

Visual Context

- 3.2.9 A series of photographs from the area surrounding the Site are illustrated on Figures 2a-b (refer to Figure 1 for photograph locations). These indicate the receiving landscape into which the Proposed Development would be introduced. It should be noted that photographs were undertaken in winter and so provide a worst case position in terms of visibility/screening from vegetation.
- 3.2.10 Photograph 1 illustrates the view towards the Site through a gap in the roadside hedge along the B5425 Ffordd Newydd Llai. The properties immediately west of the Site, on Pen-Y-Lyn are largely hidden from view by landform, with the upper elevations of some properties visible.
- 3.2.11 Photographs 2 and 3 illustrate the view towards the Site from the public footpath at the southern edge of Bradley. Vegetation cover provides a visual screen, both along the Site boundary, and in the woodland that the footpath runs through, and as described in the preceding Section, views from the majority of this footpath are well screened.

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- 3.2.12 Photograph 4 illustrates the view towards the Site from Rhosrobin Road immediately to the south. The view is through the existing access point (currently closed with security fencing).

Appraisal of Development

- 3.2.13 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of grassland and of some sections of hedgerow. The majority of boundary vegetation including mature trees would be retained and new native tree planting provided around the eastern and southern perimeter would maintain and enhance the existing character of the area. Landscape proposals include provision for areas of green space. The Proposed Development would result in an increase of the footprint of built development within the Site, which would be adverse, but would also result in a more diverse mix of vegetation types, which would be beneficial.
- 3.2.14 In respect of landscape character, there would be little change. The Proposed Development would form a logical natural extension to the existing housing on Pen-Y-Lyn, with landscape treatment to the eastern and southern boundaries of the site providing screening of the existing urban edge of this area of Gwersyllt and the Proposed Development.
- 3.2.15 Temporarily, views from the south would be opened up due to the partial loss of hedgerow north of Rhosrobin Road, resulting in a limited increase in the influence of built development locally. However, replacement planting would mitigate this in the medium term and the edge of Gwersyllt would become more effectively screened by vegetation than is currently the case. Other characteristics of the landscape would remain. Change would be small in scale, and would not be significant.
- 3.2.16 Visually, the Proposed Development would be very prominent initially from properties on the eastern side of Pen-Y-Lyn. Clear views of construction activity and the new houses would be visible from the rear of these properties at close range.
- 3.2.17 From the south, the loss of sections of the roadside hedgerow north of Dodds Lane, to accommodate the Site access and visibility splays would open up views temporarily. A replacement hedgerow and further native tree planting to the north of this would reinstate the continuity of roadside vegetation (behind the visibility splays) and provide a reinforced screen in the medium term, so that the proposed new housing would not be in open view, and with views reverting to similar to baseline.

Short-term visual effects would be significant, but would reduce to non-significant levels in the medium-term.

- 3.2.18 Elsewhere, there would be localised visibility of new roofs through breaks in vegetation or landform, but the Proposed Development would be a minor addition to the view at worst. The retention of existing vegetation on Site would play a key role in this, and consequently visual effects from locations to the north and east would not be significant. There is in fact an opportunity to achieve an end result in which the eastern edge of Gwersyllt is more rural in character and less defined by views of built development than it is at present (currently properties on Pen-Y-Lyn are relatively prominent).

3.3 Traffic and Transportation

- 3.3.1 A Transport Statement has been prepared to examine the traffic and transportation effects of the Proposed Development on the local highways network and is included as Appendix B to this Statement.
- 3.3.2 The Proposed Development would be accessed from Dodds Lane via a new priority controlled T-junction with Dodds Lane. Dodds Lane serves as a local distributor route between the settlements of Rhosrobin, to the southeast, and Gwersyllt, to the northwest.
- 3.3.3 Historical traffic data for the area shows that prevailing traffic levels during the recorded peak hours illustrates a general tidal flow pattern with eastbound movement along Dodds Lane/Rhosrobin Road being more dominant during the AM period and westbound trips along this route being the peak demand during the PM peak. It is considered that this observed tidal flow reflects journey to work movements to/from the main centre of Wrexham to the south of the Site.
- 3.3.4 Based upon a review of road traffic incident data, the nature of the local accident history is typical of such a local network which includes priority controlled junctions, and there are no material highway safety issues within the vicinity of the Site.
- 3.3.5 The Site represents a sustainable location for a residential development, being located within an acceptable walk/cycle catchment of key everyday destinations such as local shopping facilities and schools, and accessible by both bus and rail services to/from key local employment centres. These services are anticipated to reduce the need for residents at the Site to utilise the car for everyday journeys.

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- 3.3.6 Analysis of trip generation from the Proposed Development demonstrates that the scheme is not anticipated to generate a substantive level of peak hour travel demand, with maximum two-way vehicle movements being just 11 vehicles per hour. Such levels of traffic are the equivalent of 1 vehicle movement every 5 minutes and are unlikely to result in any noticeable impact upon local network operating conditions.
- 3.3.7 Whilst the scheme originally proposed (Reference P/2016/0694) was considered to be acceptable in respect of highways, the splays proposed in the original scheme were identified as excessive. As such, the splays have been reduced in the proposed scheme to meet standard.

3.4 Arboriculture

- 3.4.1 An assessment of the existing arboricultural resources at the Site has been undertaken by JCA Ltd. and included as Appendix C to this Statement.
- 3.4.2 A tree survey was undertaken during July 2016 of the trees within the application boundary of the original scheme. The additional area to be included in the revised scheme which was not included in the original survey was surveyed in October 2017. All trees were inspected from ground level. Species surveyed include Hawthorn, Common Ash, Blackthorn, Wych Elm, Field Maple, Scots Pine, Lombardy Poplar, English Oak, Elder, Goat Willow, Holly, Leylandii and Apple.
- 3.4.3 The tree survey revealed a total of 28 items of vegetation (19 individual trees, 4 groups of trees and 5 hedgerows). Of these, 4 trees were identified as retention category 'A', 6 trees and 2 hedgerows were identified as retention category 'B' and 9 trees, 4 groups and 3 hedgerows were identified as retention category 'C'.
- 3.4.4 The location of each tree is plotted on the associated Tree Constraints Plan contained within Appendix C. This plan identifies the retention category of each tree (Retention A: green canopy, Retention B: blue canopy, Retention C: grey canopy, Retention U: red canopy), the crown spread, and also the associated rooting zone (Root Protection Area or RPA shown in gold). As a general rule, those trees listed as retention category 'A' or 'B' are the most valuable items and as such the removal of these is undesirable.
- 3.4.5 The Proposed Development would involve the removal of a minimal number of trees and hedgerows, with mature trees being retained within the scheme. The landscape

scheme includes the planning of native trees and hedgerows, which would more than compensate those lost by the development.

3.5 Ecology and Nature Conservation

- 3.5.1 An assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Development upon ecology and nature conservation has been undertaken by Avian Ecology Ltd and is included as Appendix D to this Statement.
- 3.5.2 This assessment presents baseline information on habitats and ecological features both within the Site and the immediate surrounding area. The potential presence of protected species and habitats and sites of nature conservation interest is identified.
- 3.5.3 Great crested newts are known to be present at the waterbodies located within 500m of the Site however there are no known great crested newt ponds located within 250m of the Site. Habitats within the Site provide some foraging opportunities as well as potential places that could be used for shelter and refuge. Habitat creation and compensation is proposed both within the Proposed Development area and on nearby land which will complement the wider conservation objectives for great crested newts within the Borough. A detailed Method Statement for the protection of great crested newts during the construction phase will be agreed in consultation with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Wrexham County Borough Council. Works will proceed either under Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) or under a European Protected Species derogation licence granted by NRW if required.
- 3.5.4 The proposed surface water drainage route crosses a small section of a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) to its outfall. This will result in small-scale and temporary habitat loss during the excavation of a narrow trench for the drainage pipe and creation of the outfall point joining the small watercourse. Through design measures, a detailed method statement and tool box talks, effects on habitats within and around the LWS will be avoided.
- 3.5.5 Derelict buildings within the Site were considered to have potential to support roosting bats, although no direct evidence of roosting bats was observed during activity surveys undertaken in 2012. Emergence and re-entry surveys were undertaken in 2016 and found no evidence of roosting bats within the agricultural buildings, adjacent trees or derelict farmhouse. The buildings present at the Site have since been demolished for safety reasons.

3.5.6 Embedded design features are provided, including green buffers and landscape planting using native species appropriate to the locality, bird and bat boxes and new hibernacula features will maintain biodiversity value and ecological connectivity, and provide shelter, foraging, breeding and roosting opportunities. Ecological connectivity will be maintained through the provision of landscape planting and green space, which will be managed to provide long-term habitat and species interest around the Site. In addition, the separate area of land to be set aside and managed specifically to provide favourable habitat conditions for great crested newts (as shown on Figure 4 of the Ecological Assessment) would provide a long-term sustainable biodiversity benefit at this location.

3.5.7 Providing the implementation of the proposed mitigation, the potential for adverse impacts on protected and notable species or habitats is considered to be negligible.

3.6 Contaminated Land

3.6.1 A Geo-Environmental assessment has been undertaken on the Proposed Development area by REFA Consulting Engineers and is included as Appendix E to this Statement. The following paragraphs summarise the assessment.

3.6.2 An environmental and engineering desk study has been undertaken based upon existing reports, services location information, geological, hydrogeology and hydrological information, a commercially available database and old Ordnance Survey maps.

3.6.3 A walkover survey and intrusive ground investigation works have been undertaken to assess the presence, nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination at the Site. A program of gas and groundwater monitoring has also been undertaken. This information has been used to identify any need for remedial action at the Site.

3.6.4 The initial desk study of this Site has identified a history of the Site being in agricultural usage throughout the whole of its recorded history. The Site contains an area of farmyard along with a ditch line along with areas of wetlands and a former fish pond and stone track situated within the north eastern corner.

3.6.5 The Site investigation comprised 20 trial pits and 5 window sample holes. The sampling and laboratory testing of representative samples of soil from the investigative works has confirmed the absence of elevated levels of contaminants

and as such no specific remediation is recommended in relation to soil or groundwater contamination.

- 3.6.6 The Site is located within an area where full radon gas precautions are required to all properties and extensions to properties. Accordingly it will be necessary for suitable radon protection measures to be included within the proposed structures as recommended in BRE Publication BR22 Radon: “Guidance on Protective Measures for New Buildings”.

3.7 Agricultural Land

- 3.7.1 An agricultural land and soils survey was completed in November 2017 and is contained within Appendix F. The National Soil Map identifies the Site to be within the Salop Association comprising mainly slowly permeable fine loamy and clayey soils. The survey found the soils to comprise medium or heavy clay loam topsoils with a permeable upper soil of the same texture, which overlie a slowly permeable clay soil. The soils are freely to imperfectly draining and have a moderate capacity to absorb excess winter rainfall.
- 3.7.2 The agricultural quality of the land at the Site has also been assessed. The Site comprises 79% subgrade 3a soils however this land is limited by wetness as a high clay content of the topsoil and dense lower soil would restrict access for farm machinery during wet periods and therefore limit land flexibility. The high stone content of topsoils in the southern portion of the Site has also been identified as a constraint to cultivation, crop harvesting and crop growth. The remaining 21% of the Site has been found to be subgrade 3b. However the use of this area for agricultural purposes is considered to be limited by slope (a gradient of 8°) which would restrict the safe and efficient use of farm machinery. As such, the use of the Site for agricultural purposes in practical terms would be limited.

3.8 Sustainable Drainage Assessment

- 3.8.1 A surface water drainage system has been designed by REFA Consulting Engineers. This has been informed by investigations at the Site examining the potential for soakaway into the underlying strata.
- 3.8.2 A surface water drainage statement and associated drainage design is contained at Appendix G of the report. This details how a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) comprising cellular storage and discharge to a watercourse within the Applicant's

land ownership would be implemented as part of the development. The maintenance of the cellular storage would be undertaken by WWH or their appointed maintenance company. Flows will be restricted to equivalent “Greenfield” run off rates, with on-site attenuation for storms up to and including the 1 in 100 year event plus 30% climate change.

- 3.8.3 Site levels will be designed to direct water away from the proposed properties and the properties would be sited at a minimum of 150mm above surrounding ground levels as standard practice which will negate this potentially very low risk of flooding.

3.9 Utilities

- 3.9.1 The Site is serviced by all the necessary utilities i.e. telecoms, electricity, gas and water. The Applicant has commissioned a utilities assessment for the Site which demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity available from all of the utilities providers for the proposed scale of development. The Utilities Statement has been submitted in support of the planning application as Appendix H to this Statement.
- 3.9.2 Standard utilities connections would be required into the Site. The only significant diversion required as a result of the development would be a 415 volt (LV) overhead line located in along the southern boundary of the Site. It is proposed that this line would be buried underground as part of the development.
- 3.9.3 Two main foul water sewers cross the Site, running in a north south direction. The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid impacting the sewers, including their associated easements. It is proposed to drain foul water from part of the site into the existing 225mm diameter foul water sewer crossing the site with the remainder of the foul water discharging to an existing foul water manhole within the site.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section undertakes an appraisal of the proposed housing development in the context of the current extant and emerging planning policy framework.

4.1.2 Following on from this introduction, the policy appraisal is divided into four principal sections. Section 4.2 provides a brief overview of the relevant policy context and identifies the principal documents to which further reference is made. Section 4.3 sets out the detailed policy framework against which this planning application should be considered and a detailed assessment of how the proposal accords or otherwise with that framework. Finally, Section 4.4 draws a number of concise conclusions.

4.2 Planning Policy Context

The Statutory Development Plan

4.2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (September 2004) and paragraph 3.1.3 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 9 - November 2016) requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2.2 In the case of the Proposed Development the relevant statutory Development Plan comprises the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011, which was adopted on the 14th February 2005.

Material Considerations

4.2.3 There is no strict definition of what constitutes a ‘material consideration’ in planning legislation, although case law indicates that any consideration, which relates to the use or development of land is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

4.2.4 Material considerations can include national planning policy, emerging development plan policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), as well as other land use and environmental factors which could influence the acceptability of development.

4.2.5 Paragraph 2.14.1 of PPW states that:

“The weight to be attached to an emerging LDP (or revision) when determining planning applications will in general depend on the stage it has reached, but does not simply increase as the plan progresses towards adoption...”

Thus in considering what weight to give to the specific policies in an emerging LDP that apply to a particular proposal, local planning authorities will need to consider carefully the underlying evidence and background to the policies.”

- 4.2.6 It is anticipated that such material considerations will include (but not be limited to) the following:

The Emerging Development Plan

- Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 - 2028) - Deposit Plan (March 2018)

Other National, Regional and Local Planning Considerations

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 9 (November 2016);
- TAN 1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (January 2015); and
- TAN 2: Planning and Affordable Housing (June 2006).

- 4.2.7 A further material planning consideration is the established ‘need’ for the development which is set out in Section 2.0 of this Statement.

4.3 The Statutory Development Plan - Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 (February 2005)

- 4.3.1 The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in February 2005. Its primary functions are to set out planning policies and to provide a basis for decisions on planning applications and to make proposals for development and the use of land.

- 4.3.2 Policies contained within the statutory Development Plan that are considered of particular relevance to the proposal (with the exception of Green Barrier policies which are dealt with in the following section of this statement) are summarised below.

- 4.3.3 **Strategic Policies PS1, PS2 and PS3** set out requirements for the location of new development in broad terms.

- 4.3.4 **Policy PS1** states that “*new development for housing, employment, and community services will be directed to within defined settlement limits/employment areas.*”

Policy PS2 states that *“development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.”*

Policy PS3 states that *“development should use previously developed brownfield land comprising vacant, derelict or underused land in preference to the use of greenfield land, wherever possible, particularly so where greenfield land is of ecological, landscape or amenity value, or comprises agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a quality.”*

- 4.3.5 Whilst the proposed Site is not contained within a defined settlement limit, the development would form a logical and sustainable extension to the eastern extremity of the settlement of Gwersyllt. The policy discussion that prefixes policies PS1, PS2 and PS3 identifies that the strategy for the plan is to allocate housing development within and adjacent to existing built up areas, to make optimum use of previously developed or vacant land; to make use of spare capacity in infrastructure and services; and to focus on locations with reasonable public transport, walking and cycling links.
- 4.3.6 In this regard the Proposed Development meets these aims. A large proportion of the Site was developed previously with a farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings, and until recently was subject to a planning permission for residential housing. There is adequate infrastructure provision to serve the proposed housing and the Site is very well located in terms of public transport, walking and cycling links.
- 4.3.7 Previous sections of this report have examined effects on the countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, the quality of the natural environment and impacts on agricultural land. The assessments have shown that the development would have negligible effects on these matters.
- 4.3.8 Embedded design features including green buffers, landscape planting appropriate to the locality and new hibernacular features would maintain biodiversity value within the Site. A strip of land to the south east of the main housing development would be safeguarded for use as a wildlife area and, as stated in the Ecological Assessment (Appendix D), this would provide a biodiversity benefit at this location.
- 4.3.9 Accordingly the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with policy thrust of PS1, PS2 and PS3.

4.3.10 **Policy GDP1** 'Development Objectives' provides an overarching development policy and explains that all new development should:

- a) *"Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*
- b) *Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.*
- d) *Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.*
- e) *Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.*
- f) *Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air...and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.*
- g) *Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.*
- i) *Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding..."*

4.3.11 The proposal has been designed to fit with the context of the Site and other near-by housing developments and offer a logical, seamless extension to the existing housing estate on Pen-Y-Llyn. The range of homes being provided responds to the character of the setting and the needs of the local communities.

4.3.12 Section 3.0 summarises the various assessments that have been undertaken to support the application. These assessments, allied with the Design and Access Statement, demonstrate how the proposals accord with the various development objectives set out in GDP1.

4.3.13 Section 5.0 of the UDP contains policies relating to Environment and Conservation. Relevant policies within this section of the UDP are set out below.

4.3.14 **Policy EC1** 'Green barriers' sets out that *"development will only be granted planning permission if it is for agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and*

recreation, cemeteries and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green barrier and do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it” [emphasis added].

- 4.3.15 A full and detailed analysis of effects on the Green Barrier is provided in the following section of this statement. The analysis concludes that the Proposed Development would give rise to very limited harm on the purposes of the Green Barrier and that effects on openness would be minimal. Nonetheless, on the basis of the current UDP policies the Proposed Development would represent inappropriate development. As such a number of very exceptional circumstances have been described that demonstrate the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the limited harm that the development would have on the Green Barrier.
- 4.3.16 **Policy EC2** concerns agricultural land and states that “*Development on agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a will only be permitted if it does not lead to the irreversible loss of that land.*” As set out in Section 3.0 an Agricultural Land Classification Survey (ALCS) has been undertaken. This survey has confirmed the Site is formed of 79% grade 3a land and 21% grade 3b land. Whilst much of the site is graded as 3a land the gradient of the Site would restrict the safe, efficient and practical use of the Site for agricultural purposes and the site is therefore of limited value from an agricultural perspective. As such it is considered that the Proposed Development would accord with the thrust of the policy which is to ensure development does not lead to the loss of the highest quality agricultural land.
- 4.3.17 **Policy EC4** ‘Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland’ explains that “*Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted.*”
- 4.3.18 **Policy EC6** concerns ‘Biodiversity Conservation’ and only permits development to take place close to sites of biodiversity interest where it can be clearly demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site. The policy goes on to state that measures to improve the biodiversity value of sites and enhance their natural conservation value interest and landscape quality will be supported.

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- 4.3.19 An Ecological Assessment has been undertaken and is included as Appendix D to this statement respectively, the assessment is supported by surveys for bats and great crested newts. The assessment has shown that there are unlikely to be adverse effects on local populations of any species. Numerous mitigation measures are proposed to ensure the biodiversity value of the Site and ecological connectivity is maintained. Design measures, a detailed method statement and tool box talks would avoid the proposed surface water drainage pipeline and outfall causing effects on habitats within and around the LWS. The Ecological Assessment identifies that the embedded design features including native species landscape planting will maintain biodiversity value and ecological connectivity, and provide additional shelter, foraging, breeding and roosting opportunities. Although some minimal tree and hedge removal would be required to facilitate the development, this would comprise the loss of features that are widespread, common and of low intrinsic value. Similar and higher quality habitat is available in the surrounding area. Extensive native species planting is proposed within the development and as such these impacts would be mitigated. As such it is considered that the Proposed Development supports policy EC4 and EC6.
- 4.3.20 **Policy EC13** ‘Surface Water Run-off’ states that *“development which would result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the water environment due to additional surface water run-off will not be permitted.”*
- 4.3.21 Appendix G to this Statement contains details of the SuDS scheme which provides justification for the chosen surface water drainage solution. The scheme proposes the use of cellular storage and a surface water outfall connection to a nearby watercourse within the land ownership of the Applicant. There would be no unacceptable adverse impact upon the water environment through the introduction of additional surface water run-off. The approach demonstrates accordance with Policy EC13.
- 4.3.22 Other policies relevant to the Proposed Development include **Policy H5**, Housing in the Countryside; **Policy CLF5**, Open Space Requirements from new Residential Developments; and, **Policy MW9**, Protection of Mineral Resources.
- 4.3.23 **Policy H5** seeks to limit the provision of new dwellings outside settlement limits. Based on the foregoing analysis of the Proposed Development it is considered that the Proposed Development does not frustrate the aims of the policy which are cited in paragraph 6.12 of the UDP as:

“6.12 This policy is designed to prevent new housing in the form of isolated dwellings, the consolidation of sporadic groups, or the extension of ribbon development in the countryside as it would result in a loss of visual quality and landscape character and adversely affect agriculture.”

- 4.3.24 **Policy CLF5** requires the provision of open space on developments of over 10 residential units at a minimum level of 0.4 hectare per 50 dwellings. This policy requires that the open space must be *“conveniently located for users, and usable for playing field(s) and/or equipped children's play area(s) and open amenity area(s)”*. Based on the proposed 23 units, a minimum provision of 1,840m² of open space is required. This area is provided through shared open space within the southern section of the development at a location that would benefit from natural surveillance. The proposal therefore meets the requirements set out within Policy CLF5.
- 4.3.25 Part of the Site is subject to **Policy MW9** for the ‘Protection of Mineral Resources’. However, the Site is in close proximity to existing residential areas and as such it would not be practical to extract minerals without significant disruption to amenity. As such it is considered unlikely that the minerals beneath the Site could be exploited. Therefore Policy MW9 is not considered to be engaged.

4.4 Green Barrier

- 4.4.1 The Site lies within the Green Barrier as defined by the UDP Proposals Map and the Deposit Plan Proposals Map. As such the consideration of effects on the Green Barrier are relevant to the assessment of conformity with the Statutory Development Plan, in particular **Policy EC1**, as well as being a material planning consideration.
- 4.4.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Chapter 4 provides policy guidance on development in Green Belts and local designations such as green wedges. PPW paragraph 4.8.10 identifies that *“Local designations such as green wedges may be justified where land is required to serve the same purpose to a Green Belt (see 4.8.3), but these designations do not convey the permanence of a Green Belt.”* The local designation of green wedge in Wrexham is referred to as ‘Green Barrier’ in the UDP and ‘Green Wedge’ in the Deposit LDP. The term Green Barrier shall be used for the purposes of this appraisal.
- 4.4.3 As identified in paragraph 5.2 of the UDP, the UDP designations of Green Barrier are intended to serve four out of five of the same purposes as Green Belt. As identified in PPW (paragraph 4.8.3), these purposes are to:

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- prevent the coalescence of large towns and cities with other settlements;
 - assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - protect the setting of an urban area; and
 - assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.4.4 PPW also refers to an additional purpose of Green Belt and local designations; to manage urban form through controlled expansion of urban areas. The degree of harm that the Proposed Development would have on the stated purposes of the Green Barrier is set out below.

To prevent the coalescence of large towns and cities with other settlements

4.4.5 The Strategic Green Wedge Review Stage 1 (February 2016) acknowledges that whilst Gwersyllt and Rhosrobin are not currently connected, the settlements are in such close proximity that this area of Green Barrier has the character of urban edge. This is particularly apparent along the stretch of Dodds Lane which passes through the Green Barrier and features the Proposed Development Site on one side and the primary school playing field on the other side. The playing field is elevated from Dodds Lane and borders the footpath with a brick wall topped by metal railings, contributing to the feeling of urban edge and continuity in this stretch of Green Barrier.

4.4.6 The Proposed Development maintains a physical separation between the two settlements and the Proposed Development has been designed so as to ensure that although the physical gap between the settlements would be reduced, the distinctiveness between the settlements would be maintained. The school playing field south of Dodds Lane, the amenity space within the development and land east of the Proposed Development Site would continue to physically separate the two settlements once the residential scheme is built out. Therefore the Proposed Development would not contribute to the physical or perceived coalescence of Gwersyllt and Rhosrobin and would not harm this purpose if the Green Barrier.

4.4.7 Based on the forgoing it is concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in the coalescence of large towns and cities with other settlements, or indeed Gwersyllt with Rhosrobin. This was recognised in the officer's report on the original proposal which stated that the development would "*not result in the coalescence of New Rhosrobin ad Gwersyllt*".

To manage urban form through controlled expansion of urban areas.

- 4.4.8 As confirmed in the Strategic Green Wedge Review Stage 1 (February 2016), “the area between Gwersyllt and Rhosrobin is characterised by ribbon development, with only the playing field of Gwersyllt Primary School dividing the two settlements”; notably, the Proposed Development Site is not recognised in this review as dividing the two settlements.
- 4.4.9 The Proposed Development would form a logical and sustainable extension to the eastern extremity of the settlement of Gwersyllt and has been designed for be seen as a natural extension to the current housing estate. The established tree lines and sewer easement along the eastern boundary of the Proposed Development would form a natural barrier and clear, defensible edge to the settlement. The presence of such a boundary was a key consideration in the determination of the Boozey Field residential development (Planning Permission Reference: P/2015/0790).
- 4.4.10 Much of the Site is previously developed, and until recently (April 2017) was subject to a planning permission for residential housing. There is adequate infrastructure provision to serve the proposed housing and the Site is very well located in terms of public transport, walking and cycling links. The Green Barrier designation between Bradley, Rhosrobin and Gwersyllt would continue to control the expansion of Gwersyllt at sensitive landscape sites where the Green Barrier is of a high quality.
- 4.4.11 For the aforementioned reasons, the Proposed Development would comprise a controlled expansion to the settlement of Gwersyllt and would not conflict with this purpose of the Green Barrier.

To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- 4.4.12 The Proposed Development would be located along the existing edge of the settlement of Gwersyllt with minimal encroachment outside the settlement boundary. The Site is not open to the public and the amount of development bordering Dodd’s Lane is limited. The Proposed Development location does not project into an area of unbounded countryside and The Strategic Green Wedge Review Stage 1 (February 2016) confirms the area between Rhosrobin and Gwersyllt is characterised by ribbon development. Developing it would be a natural rounding off of the settlement of Gwersyllt, particularly given the opportunity to utilise an existing tree line to strengthen the boundary between Gwersyllt and the adjacent fields.

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- 4.4.13 The Proposed Development has been designed to be sympathetic to its surroundings by incorporating tree and shrub planting and large areas of open space. The land south east of the development is higher than the development Site and, along with the existing line of mature established trees, would provide screening of the development on the approach towards Gwersyllt from Rhosrobin.
- 4.4.14 The location of the Site is not characterised as open countryside, rather it is urban edge characterised by ribbon development. Indeed, the site itself was occupied by farm buildings until recently. The Proposed Development would result in minimal encroachment into the countryside and, as noted in the landscape assessment, it presents an opportunity to achieve an end result in which the eastern edge of Gwersyllt is more rural in character and less defined by views of built development than it is at present. On this basis there is considered to be limited harm to this purpose of the Green Barrier.

To protect the setting of an urban area.

- 4.4.15 The Proposed Development would integrate with the existing settlement boundary along the western boundary of the Site providing a natural extension to the existing housing estate. It would be contained along the northern and eastern sides within existing tree lines which, along with the screening provided by the dip in topography at the Site, would provide a strong visual enclosure to the development.
- 4.4.16 The Proposed Development would feature a green buffer zone along Dodds Lane with the proposed houses set back from the road by approximately 6m (at the narrowest point). In this regard the resulting development would maintain the current setting of the area.
- 4.4.17 The Proposed Development is not considered to cause harm to the setting of the urban area and presents an opportunity to improve the visual amenity of the eastern boundary of Gwersyllt.

To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 4.4.18 The Proposed Development Site comprises an area of developed land which was, until recently, subject to a planning permission for residential development.

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- 4.4.19 There are no opportunities within Gwersyllt to develop a proposal of this nature on derelict or other urban land. For these reasons, this purpose of the Green Barrier is not considered to be engaged.

Openness

- 4.4.20 The concept of ‘openness’ continues to be a subject of contention covered in numerous Court of Appeal judgements (*Turner v SSCLG [2016] EWCA Civ, Samuel Smith v North Yorkshire County Council [2017] EWHC 442, Privett v Gravesham Borough Council [2016] EWHC 1276*). Whilst considering openness in the Court of Appeal during *Turner v SSCLG [2016] EWCA Civ.*, Sales LJ explained:

“The word ‘openness’ is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case.”

- 4.4.21 These factors can include how built up the Green Barrier is, factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness (such as: greenness; views from a distance across open fields; and the footprint, bulk, height and mass and prominence) and the nature, duration and remediability of the Proposed Development.
- 4.4.22 With regard to the Proposed Development, the development would be contained to the east by mature established trees and hedgerow and to the south by Dodds Lane, maintaining the current degree of ‘greenness’. The Proposed Development would provide an opportunity to achieve an end result in which the eastern edge of Gwersyllt is more rural in character and less defined by views of built development than it is at present (currently properties on Pen-Y-Lyn are relatively prominent). The Stage 1 review identified that the presence of existing development in this area of Green Barrier results in breaks in views and the overall sense of openness across the wider area. This confirms that this area of the Green Barrier is not ‘open’ and unencumbered from existing development. In this regard the footprint and massing of the Proposed Development would not be out of character within the context of Dodds Lane, Pen-y-Llyn and the surrounding area.
- 4.4.23 As previously mentioned, until April 2017 there was a permission for residential development at the Site and a farmhouse and numerous outbuildings stood at this site until mid-2017, only being demolished due to health and safety reasons. Therefore, the nature of the Site has, for many years, been one of a developed site.

Based on the above it is concluded that any impact on the openness of the Green Barrier caused by the Proposed Development would at worst be marginal.

Purposes and Openness Assessment Conclusion

4.4.24 An appraisal of the of the impact of the Proposed Development on the purposes of the Green Barrier has been undertaken, this has established:

- The Proposed Development would not result in the coalescence of large towns and cities with other settlements, or indeed coalescence of Gwersyllt with Rhosrobin.
- There would be very limited encroachment into the countryside, which in this location is already characterised by ribbon development. Furthermore, until last year the site was occupied by farm buildings which were historically subject to a planning permission for re-development into multiple residential units.
- The Proposed Development would not harm the setting of the urban area, to the contrary, the Proposed Development would provide an opportunity to improve the visual amenity of the eastern boundary of Gwersyllt.
- There are no opportunities within Gwersyllt to develop a proposal of this nature on derelict or other urban land and so its inclusion in the Green Barrier does not assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

4.4.25 In relation to openness the Council's Green Barrier assessment recognises that the presence of existing development affects the sense of openness in this area. This allied to the fact that the development has been designed to limit impact on openness through sensitive design means the Proposed Development would have very limited impact on the openness of the green barrier in this location.

Very Exceptional Circumstances

4.4.26 Paragraphs 4.8.14 and 4.8.15 of PPW state that:

"When considering applications for planning permission in Green Belts or green wedges, a presumption against inappropriate development will apply. Local planning authorities should attach substantial weight to any harmful impact which a development would have on a Green Belt or green wedge. Inappropriate development should not be granted planning permission except in very exceptional

circumstances where other considerations clearly outweigh the harm which such development would do to the Green Belt or green wedge.”

- 4.4.27 The Proposed Development would cause limited harm to the openness of the Green Barrier and therefore constitutes inappropriate development. In accordance with paragraph 4.8.15 of PPW, very exceptional circumstances need to be demonstrated in order for the development to be granted planning permission. The very exceptional circumstances should be proportionate to the degree of harm resulting from the Proposed Development.
- 4.4.28 In this case the very exceptional circumstances primarily relate to the need for affordable housing in Wrexham, as detailed in Section 2 of this statement.
- 4.4.29 WCBC cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply as they do not have an adopted plan with an unexpired plan period. Despite being able to demonstrate a housing land supply in excess of 5 years for the remaining years of the emerging LDP, the sites contributing to this supply are expected to only deliver 56% of the identified need for affordable homes across the County Borough and 22% of the identified need for affordable homes in the Western Border area (which Gwersyllt falls within). It is therefore clear that there is a demonstrable and vital need to increase the supply of affordable housing in Wrexham and in particular in the Western Border area.
- 4.4.30 As the Proposed Development is for 100% affordable housing it will make an invaluable contribution to meet this pressing social requirement for the Council. It is exceptional for a scheme of this nature to come forward, particularly in an area which has such a pressing need for affordable housing. Planning Policy Wales recognises that development in green barrier (or green wedge) is not inappropriate where it delivers affordable housing for local needs under development plan policies. The emerging development plan includes a policy for affordable housing exception sites (Policy H3). The emerging policy recognises that affordable housing exception sites on the edge of settlements could contribute to reducing this imbalance for affordable homes over the lifetime of the plan, The Proposed Development would accord with the emerging policy and would therefore not constitute inappropriate development in green barrier.
- 4.4.31 In summary the case for very exceptional circumstances is justified through the following considerations:

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- WCBC cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply;
 - The Proposed Development would be for 100% affordable homes. As such this development would make a significant contribution to the recognised shortfall of this tenure of property within Wrexham;
 - The Site was previously occupied by a farm house and associated outbuildings which were subject to a planning permission for residential development until April 2017; and
 - The Proposed Development would not constitute inappropriate development under the emerging Affordable Housing Exception Site Policy H3 which supports affordable housing on land outside but immediately adjoining settlement limits.

4.4.32 On this basis, the very exceptional circumstances are considered to outweigh the very minimal harm that the Proposed Development would do to the Green Barrier in this location.

4.5 Other Material Considerations

Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 - 2028) - Deposit Plan (March 2018)

- 4.5.1 Wrexham County Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the County Borough. The LDP is the Council's land use plan that will establish where and how much new development will take place in the County Borough over the period 2013 – 2028. It will also identify which areas need to be protected from development and will replace the existing Unitary Development Plan (UDP, 1996-2011) once adopted (currently programmed for Spring 2019).
- 4.5.2 The Deposit Plan went through public consultation from April – May 2018. The document sets out the key national, regional and local policies, plans and guidance that have shaped the Deposit Plan and identifies the key issues and opportunities facing the County Borough. The plan sets out the strategic policies and proposals as well as topic, criteria and area based policies. A proposals map also forms part of the Deposit Plan and details relevant land allocations.
- 4.5.3 The elements of the Deposit Plan identified below are material considerations in the determination of the planning application.
- 4.5.4 **Objective SO5** of the Deposit Plan is to “*Facilitate mixed diverse communities by delivering housing, including affordable homes to meet the needs of the County Borough*”. One of the ways by which this will be achieved is by “*Ensuring a range*

and choice of tenures and house types that meet specific needs such as the provision of affordable housing, family accommodation, housing for the elderly, the disabled, students and pitches for the gypsy and traveller community”.

- 4.5.5 **Policy SP1**, Housing Provision, details the housing requirement across the County Borough for the LDP plan period and aims to deliver the right amount and type of housing to meet the need in the area. **Policy H2**, Affordable Housing, sets out the requirements for housing development to provide affordable housing contributions. This is supplemented by **Policy H3**, Affordable Housing Exception Sites, which states:

“Affordable housing exception sites will be permitted on land outside but immediately adjoining settlement limits provided:

- i. There is an identified need for affordable housing in the area which is unlikely to be met by any development opportunities within the existing settlement limits; and*
- ii. The units are retained for affordable housing in perpetuity; and*
- iii. The site forms a logical extension to the settlement limit.”*

- 4.5.6 The supporting text to Policy H3 recognises the imbalance of 2355 affordable homes over the LDP plan period and states that “Development of affordable housing exception sites on the edge of settlements could contribute to reducing this imbalance over the lifetime of the plan”. Development that meets Policy H3 is identified as an exception to Policy H7: Housing in the Countryside.
- 4.5.7 The Proposed Development accords with emerging Policy H3 and would therefore be supported under this emerging policy. Given, the demonstrable need for affordable housing in the area this represents a very important material consideration.
- 4.5.8 **Policy DM1** sets the overarching development management policy and seeks to ensure satisfactory standards in new developments, including the implementation of high quality, sustainable design, accessibility and compatibility of land use amongst other key material planning considerations. The assessments provided in support of the application, as summarised in Section 3.0, and the accompanying Design and Access Statement demonstrate compliance with the various limbs of this overarching policy.

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- 4.5.9 A review of other relevant development management policies has shown that the Proposed Development would accord with the policies of emerging LDP. The Proposed Development is considered to be supported by Policy H3 and would deliver affordable housing under this policy to meet a need evidenced by the Deposit Plan. Accordingly, the strong compliance with the Deposit Plan is an important material consideration in this application.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 9 (November 2016) and Technical Advice Notes

- 4.5.10 Planning Policy Wales (PPW), which is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs) and circulars, is the national planning policy for Wales and sets out the land use policies of the Welsh Government. The policies of relevance to the Proposed Development have been considered in the subsequent section. PPW and the TANs are material to decisions on individual planning applications and, as such, it is important to consider how the Proposed Development fits within this policy context.
- 4.5.11 The housing land supply aspects within Chapter 9 of Planning Policy Wales are dealt with at Section 2.0 of this Statement. The following chapters of PPW are also considered relevant to the Proposed Development and are dealt with below:
- Planning for Sustainability (Chapter 4); and
 - Housing (Chapter 9);
- 4.5.12 Paragraph 4.2.2 of PPW states that the planning system provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development to ensure that social, economic and environmental issues are balanced and integrated, at the same time.
- 4.5.13 Section 4.3 sets out the key principles of sustainable development, which include:
- Putting people and their quality of life now and in the future, at the centre of decision making;
 - Engagement and involvement, ensuring that everyone has the chance to obtain information, see how decisions are made and take part in decision-making;
 - Taking a long term perspective to safeguard the interests of future generations, whilst at the same time meeting needs of people today;
 - Respecting environmental limits; and

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- Tackling climate change.

4.5.14 Section 4.4 provides the policy objectives of PPW which include:

- Promoting resource-efficient and climate change resilient settlement patterns that minimise land-take (and especially extensions to the area of impermeable surfaces) and urban sprawl, especially through preference for the re-use of suitable previously developed land and buildings, wherever possible avoiding development on greenfield sites;
- Play an appropriate role to facilitate sustainable building standards and secure the provision of infrastructure to form the physical basis for sustainable communities;
- Locate developments so as to minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car; and
- Ensure that all local communities – both urban and rural – have sufficient good quality housing for their needs, including affordable housing for local needs and for special needs where appropriate, in safe neighbourhoods.

4.5.15 The Site has been sustainably located in close proximity to a number of key service requirements, including, but not limited to; Gwersyllt Community Primary School (150m); Ysgol Bryn Alyne Secondary School (1km); Gwersyllt railway station (400m); Gwersyllt Parish Church (700m); and shopping facilities (200m). Employment providers are well provided for including, amongst others, Mold Road Industrial Estate (300m) and Rhosddu Industrial Estate (850m). Further information on the design of the proposed housing and access to amenities is provided within the Design and Access Statement.

4.5.16 As set out earlier within this Statement does not conflict with the purpose of including land within the Green Barrier but would cause limited harm to the openness of the Green Barrier. However, as set out earlier in this section, very exceptional circumstances exist which outweigh the limited harm of the openness of the green barrier. The most compelling of which are the need for housing in Wrexham, particularly in the 'Western Border' area, and the uniqueness of the Proposed Development in supplying 100% affordable properties. In the context of the very exceptional circumstances, the limited harm that would be caused to the openness of the Green Barrier is demonstrably outweighed.

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- 4.5.17 As previously set out, the development of the Site would not harm the countryside or landscape character in this location. The embedded design measures would ensure that the development would not have adverse effects on the local populations of any species and would provide a long term biodiversity benefit to the area of land proposed to be managed to favour habitat conditions for great crested newts. On this basis, and in the context of the very exceptional circumstances, the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of PPW.

Prosperity for All: The National Strategy (September 2017)

- 4.5.18 The National Strategy is part of the *Taking Wales Forward* Government Programme. The National Strategy places the key commitments of this programme in the long-term context and sets out how they fit with the wider Welsh public services to achieve prosperity for all. In doing so the document aims to better direct the public service to help and support the population to live healthy, prosperous and rewarding lives.
- 4.5.19 Housing is identified as one of the priority areas considered to have the greatest potential contribution to long-term prosperity and well-being. Page 24 of the National Strategy identifies the vision, main issues and commitments of the Welsh assembly with regard to housing. The challenging climate of the housing market in Wales is recognised along with the need for targeted Government intervention to maximise housing supply and respond to the housing needs of the population. One of the commitments identified in the strategy is to deliver “20,000 new affordable homes by 2021, and make more homes available at affordable rent in every part of Wales”. This commitment at a national level further contributes to the weight that should be applied to the need for housing in Wales when considering proposals for residential schemes.

Review of affordable housing supply in Wales and Review of the delivery of housing through the planning system

- 4.5.20 In April 2018, the Housing and Regeneration Minister Rebecca Evans announced an independent review of affordable housing supply in Wales. The review seeks to examine whether more can be done to increase the supply of affordable housing in Wales.
- 4.5.21 On 2nd May 2018 Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs announced a review into the delivery of housing through the planning system.

This review was initiated in response to the current housing land supply position and the related situation regarding the delivery of LDP housing requirements.

- 4.5.22 The instigation of these review processes at Government level further demonstrate the Government's understanding of the national housing supply situation and commitment to enable more people to access affordable housing.

4.6 Planning Policy Conclusions

- 4.6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) and paragraph 3.1.3 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (November 2016) require that applications are determined against the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.6.2 An assessment of the proposal against relevant development plan policy, as well as other relevant emerging and adopted planning policy, which may be considered as material to the determination, has been undertaken. This process has demonstrated that whilst there is limited conflict with some policies of the Development Plan, very exceptional circumstances exist and the proposal therefore complies with the provisions of the of the Development Plan when taken as a whole and when considered along with other material considerations, including PPW.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Wales and West Housing have applied for planning permission for a revised scheme for a proposed housing development at Woodlands Farm, Gwersyllt. The revised scheme has been prepared to address the reasons for refusing the P/2016/0694 application.
- 5.1.2 The improvements to the scheme are considered to overcome the reasons for refusal. The Proposed Development provides an opportunity to deliver much needed affordable housing in a sustainable location with minimal effects on the green barrier and open countryside. Indeed, the revised proposals provide an opportunity to achieve an end result in which the eastern edge of Gwersyllt is more rural in character and less defined by views of built development than it is at present.
- 5.1.3 A number of assessments have been provided in support of the application which demonstrate that the Proposed Development would be in accordance with the development management policies of the Unitary Development Plan.
- 5.1.4 It is apparent from the assessment of the statutory Development Plan and other material planning considerations in the text above, that the Proposed Development is either in conformity with, or supports the objectives of the relevant planning context.
- 5.1.5 The Proposed Development would form a logical extension to the existing housing on Pen-Y-Llyn and has been shown to have very limited impact on the purposes and openness of the Green Barrier. Furthermore, very exceptional circumstances exist to outweigh the minimal harm that the proposal would cause and comprise the following considerations:
- WCBC cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply;
 - The Proposed Development would be for 100% affordable homes. As such this development would make a significant contribution to the recognised shortfall of this tenure of property within Wrexham;
 - The Site was previously occupied by a farm house and associated outbuildings which were subject to a planning permission for residential development until April 2017; and
 - The Proposed Development would not constitute inappropriate development under the emerging Affordable Housing Exception Site Policy H3 which supports affordable housing on land outside but immediately adjoining settlement limits.

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- 5.1.6 The Proposed Development would contribute to local and national objectives to increase the supply of affordable housing and the shortfall of affordable properties across the LDP plan period, particularly in the Western Border area. This should be provided considerable weight in the determination of this planning application.
- 5.1.7 The site is wholly available and capable of delivering a logical and sustainable expansion of Gwersyllt. In light of the above, it is considered that, in accordance with both the PCPA and PPW, planning permission should be granted without delay.

APPENDICES

PLANNING DRAWINGS

FIGURES