

PROPOSAL

Residential development for five proposed affordable houses.

HISTORY

None.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The proposal is in the open countryside, outside of the settlement of Worthenbury and within the Special Landscape Area as indicated in the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan. Policies PS1, PS2, GDP1, EC5, H5, H8 and EC7 of the UDP refer.

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council:	Refuse on grounds of loss of amenity, possible flooding, highway risks, lack of demand for properties
Local Member:	Notified 27.10.15
Public Protection:	Recommends Condition ZP06 – hours of construction and notes regarding contamination, noise, burning of waste and dust.
Highways:	Have made the following comments: - The existing junction is of a nature that highways would not be able to support any significant residential development in this location which would result in a significant increase in vehicle movements. - A roundabout has been proposed by the applicant, however, this section of Shocklach Lane is subject to 60mph. Whilst speed limits have been reviewed they have not been implemented. Until a 30mph speed limit is introduced a mini roundabout cannot be considered. - Given the geometry of the road at this junction, a mini roundabout to comply with design standards may not be possible. - A T junction would be reliant on speed limits being reduced to 30mph. A Transport Assessment would need to include off-site improvements, a speed survey and appropriate visibility splays.
Welsh Water:	No objections
Natural Resource Wales:	Applicant should follow the recommendations within the submitted ecological report, whilst the

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- private foul drainage system will require an Environmental Permit
- Ramblers: Consulted 27.10.15
- Neighbours: 36 letters of objection on following grounds:
- Policy objections on basis with Special Landscape Area and does not constitute a logical extension to settlement (contrary to Policy H8).
 - Impact on setting of Conservation Area and contrary to Character Assessment and setting of nearby listed buildings and poor design of properties.
 - No demand for housing, not sustainable with no services.
 - Road network not good, dangerous access, traffic management measures would have a negative impact, public footpath affected.
 - Flooding with surface water causing problems.
 - Removal of hedgerow, impact on wildlife and archaeological concerns.
 - Misleading and incorrect information provided.
 - Should be a moratorium on future development.
- 5 letters of support on grounds of:
- Need for affordable houses.
 - House prices expensive in the village.
 - No social housing in village and need to attract younger generation.
 - Increased traffic will not have an adverse impact.
 - Design reflects nearby existing development.
 - Will not be a loss of amenity.
 - Any proposal to make junction safer would be welcomed.
- 4 Site Notices: Expired 18.11.15

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Policy: The proposal is in open countryside, outside the identified settlement limit of Worthenbury and within the Special Landscape Area as indicated in the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan. Policies PS1, GDP1, EC5, H5, H8 and EC7 of the UDP refer.

Policy H5 allows for residential development outside of settlement limits subject to compliance with Policy H8 – affordable housing rural exception sites. The policy allows small scale development for affordable housing purposes on land outside but adjoining existing settlement limits. In broad terms the proposal accords with this policy as 5 units for affordable purposes are proposed although the information submitted with the application is now two years out of date and I would question the accuracy. There does,

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however, seem to be support for managing the units by Grwp Cynefin depending on the future tenure of the properties and our own HMA (March 2015) does show a need for affordable homes in this local housing market area. However, part (a) of policy H8 states that the site should 'form a logical extension to the settlement limit' and that development should 'reflect the surrounding townscape and landscape in form, bulk, design and materials'. The location of the site is segregated by the B5069 which currently acts as a defensible and logical boundary to the settlement, ensuring the protection of the open countryside from development beyond the settlement limit. The site clearly forms part of a larger field parcel with frontage along Mulsford Lane and the B5069 and developing a small part of this site and introducing a relatively substantial change to the junction by way of a roundabout or other potential access arrangements would be detrimental to the open countryside location contrary to part a) of H8 and part a) of GDP1. The site also lies in a Special Landscape Area where the priority is to conserve and enhance the landscape and there is clearly a policy conflict here between policy H8 and EC5 however given that the site forms part of a larger field parcel in this location and any development on this site will, in my view, have an adverse visual impact on the landscape contrary to policy EC5.

For the benefit of members, a copy of the proposed site plan is shown below.

Conservation – Heritage Assets: The proposal is within a large, open field prominent from the Worthenbury Conservation Area and on the main route out of the village. The adopted Conservation Area Character Assessment recognises the open aspect of the field and the far reaching views as important to the special character of the Conservation Area. Listed buildings are also present directly to the north and south of the site, the setting of which would be compromised by any new development. Any development within this location would have a significant detrimental effect upon the character of the Conservation Area and wider landscape setting. Key views would be largely obliterated, development would be highly visible within the low-lying surroundings, preventing any sensitive integration with the open countryside

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and hereby diminishing the rural character along this part of the Conservation Area.

Highways: The proposed development site is located at the junction of Mulsford Lane/B5069 Shocklach Lane. Mulsford Lane is an unclassified road subject to a 60mph limit. However, highways estimate typical vehicle speeds at being no more than 30mph given the geometry of the road along this section.

This section of Mulsford Lane is typically only 4.3m wide and cannot easily accommodate the simultaneous passage of 2 no. vehicles and is considered too narrow to support any significant additional residential development. Improvements regarding the width and footpath provision would need to be included should the applicant pursue a proposal to provide a mini roundabout.

Current situation: Based on the current junction layout, Highways would not support any significant residential development in this location given highway safety implications.

Proposed mini roundabout: Mulsford Lane/B5069 junction. The section of the B5069 Shocklach Lane is subject to a 60mph speed limit. Whilst Highways have reviewed speed limits in this location, no reduced speed limit has been implemented as yet. Until a 30mph speed limit is introduced a roundabout cannot be considered. Given the geometry of the road at this junction, constructing a mini roundabout in this location which complies with current design standards may prove difficult.

Possible alternative access: The construction of a T-junction along the straight section of the B5069 is another possible option. A transport assessment would be required to include a speed survey to determine appropriate visibility splays for any proposed access and 2.0m wide footpath along the site frontage. However, such a proposal is likely to be reliant on the prevailing speed limit being reduced to 30mph. Such a proposal would require the removal/setting back of a significant section of existing hedgerows fronting the development site.

Ecology: An ecological appraisal has been submitted within the application. However, if the application was progressed positively, additional ecological information would be required to fully assess the proposals.

CONCLUSION

The proposal is located outside the settlement for Worthenbury and within a Special Landscape Area where priority is given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. As such, the development would be inappropriate and detrimental to the character of the landscape. The site would be prominent from the Conservation Area and development in this location would have a significant detrimental impact upon the character of the

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Conservation Area and the wider landscape setting. The setting of nearby listed buildings would also be compromised.

Despite the inappropriateness of the location the design of the properties, located prominently would also have a significant negative impact on the Conservation Area and the wider landscape.

The proposal is unacceptable and I cannot support the application.

RECOMMENDATION: That permission be REFUSED

REASON(S)

1. The proposed site is outside the identified settlement of Worthenbury and within a Special Landscape Area and contrary to policies PS1, GDP1 and EC5 of the Wrexham UDP and as such would be inappropriate development which would be detrimental to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. The proposal is also contrary to policies H5 and H8 which enable exceptions for housing in the countryside. The proposed site does not form a logical extension to the settlement and would not reflect the character of the surrounding landscape and would conflict with policies H5 and H8 of the Wrexham UDP.
 2. Despite the inappropriateness of the location of the development, the house types are bland in appearance and form, lacking any quality of design, interest or distinctive features characteristic of the Local Area. Prominently placed they will have a significant negative impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its special sense of place. As such, the proposal would be contrary to PS2, GDP1(a) and EC7 of the Wrexham UDP.
 3. The site is within a large open field prominent from the Worthenbury Conservation Area and on a main route out of the village. Any development within this location would have a significant detrimental effect upon the character of the Conservation Area and the wider landscape setting. The setting of nearby Listed Buildings would also be compromised. The proposal as such would be contrary to policies GDP1(a), PS2 and EC7 of the Wrexham UDP and the adopted Conservation Area Character Assessment for Worthenbury Conservation Area.
 4. The proposed means of access to the site will be likely to urbanise the site and immediate area with substantial highway works to provide a safe access and/or the removal/setting back of existing established hedgerow, which would be detrimental to the Conservation Area and the wider landscape setting. Proposal as such would be contrary to GDP1(a), PS2, EC5 and EC7 of the Wrexham UDP and the adopted Conservation Area Character Assessment for Worthenbury Conservation Area.
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