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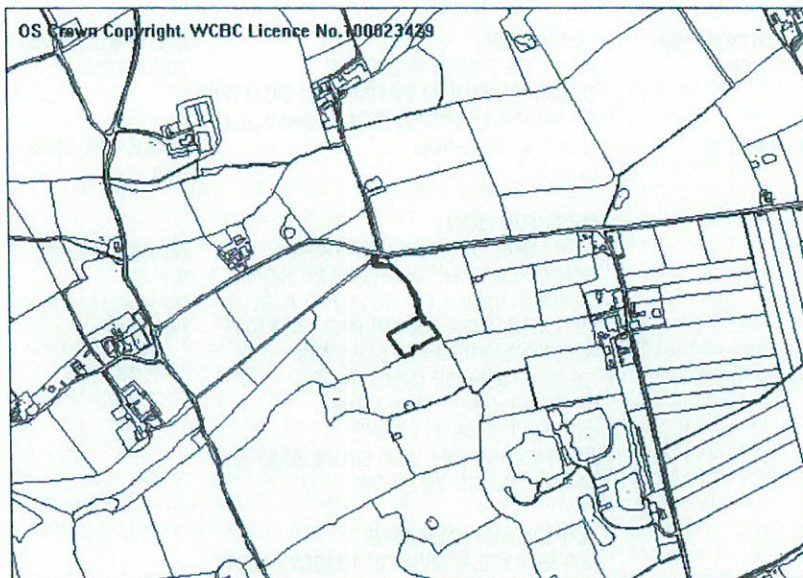
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT –
3 March 2014

APPLICATION NO: P/2013 /0660	LOCATION: PART OF FIELD WEST OF COMMONWOOD FARM AND SOUTH OF BORRAS ROAD COMMONWOOD	DATE RECEIVED: 20/09/2013
COMMUNITY: Holt	HOLT WREXHAM LL13 9TF	CASE OFFICER: FL3
WARD: Holt	DESCRIPTION: DRILLING OF EXPLORATION BOREHOLE (REQUIRING 24 HOUR OPERATIONS) TO REMOVE A CORE OF COAL FOR SAMPLING AND SITE RESTORATION FOLLOWING CESSATION OF DRILLING OPERATIONS. DRILLING OPERATIONS TO TAKE APPROXIMATELY 60 DAYS AND A MAXIMUM OF 75 DAYS	AGENT NAME: R P S DR KATHARINE BLYTHE
APPLICANT(S) NAME: MR EUAN BROWN GP ENERGY LTD		

THE SITE

The development site is within agricultural use and is accessed from Borrass Road which is a rural classified road. There is a public footpath which abuts the site to the north and mature trees and hedgerows within and adjacent to the site. There are a number of residential properties within 500m of the site, the nearest, Common Wood Farm, being approximately 440m. There are a number of listed buildings within 500m of the site including Borrass Head which is a grade II*. The proposal site lies within Licence Area PEDL 187 which is issued by the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

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PROPOSAL

The application is for the drilling of an exploration borehole, requiring 24 hour operations, to remove a core of coal for sampling and restoration of the site following cessation of the drilling operations. Drilling operations are anticipated to take approximately 60 days and a maximum of 75 days.

The proposed development would involve the erection of a drilling rig which would typically extend up to 18m in height and to a maximum of 27m in height. Other equipment which would be imported to site include a water pump, cement pump, portacabin, tool storage shed and toilet facilities, a double-bunded fuel tank, water tank, pill tank, fire extinguishers, low intensity flood lighting for the drill floor and rig and a tractor. The site would be screened using acoustic barriers 3.3m in height and solid fencing 2.4m in height.

Since the application was submitted the applicant has advised that they wish to use a different construction method at the site from that originally proposed in the supporting information submitted alongside the planning application. The revised construction method would involve the use of Dura-Base, a composite matting system which removes the need for the use of aggregate, thereby reducing the vehicle movements necessary. The use of Dura-Base matting would also reduce the need for the excavation of soils within the site and therefore the creation of soil bunds. In place of soil bunds the applicant is proposing the use of acoustic panels. The change in construction method also

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reduces the duration of both the site preparation phase and the decommissioning/restoration phase from two weeks to approximately 7 days.

There are three main phases to the proposal, (1) Site preparation, (2) Drilling and (3) Decommissioning/restoration:

Site Preparation

Site preparation would take approximately 7 days and would involve the importation of equipment to site as well as preparation of the site compound through limited cut and fill to create a flat working area and the erection of fencing and acoustic screens around the periphery of the site.

Vehicle movements during this phase were originally predicted to include approximately 20-30 movements per day over the course of a week for the delivery of hardcore. However, since submission of the application the Applicant has advised that they wish to revise their construction methods to include the use of a composite mat system specifically designed for the creation of temporary site access and working platforms which would negate the need for the importation of hardcore. This would considerably reduce vehicle movements which are predicted to be 50 HGV movements (2 way) over a week for the delivery of matting, fencing and other equipment and 2 movements of a 32 tonne self-propelled drilling rig.

Drilling

Drilling would take approximately 60 days. The borehole would be drilled vertically to approximately 950m. From approximately 950m to 1170m the borehole would be cored and the core retrieved for testing. The diameter of the borehole would vary at depth, ranging from 254mm in diameter at surface to no greater than 220mm at depth. Water, brine, drilling starch and biodegradable viscosifiers comprise the drilling fluid to be used. The borehole would not be dewatered to produce gas as the purpose of the proposal is to test the properties of the coal and gas content.

Vehicle movements at the beginning of the drilling phase include delivery of site cabins and other equipment and are predicted to be up to 100 movements over 2 days (or 50 2 way movements). Once this has been completed vehicle movements are predicted to be much less and average 8 (2 way movements) per day over a 6 week period.

Drilling would take place over a 24 hour period and would therefore involve night time working. The Applicant has advised that hours of delivery will be restricted to normal working hours but due to shift work requirements workers access to the site will also be required on a 24 hour basis.

Decommissioning/Restoration

Decommissioning/restoration of the site would take approximately 7 days. Once the core has been extracted the borehole would be 'abandoned' in accordance with DECC, Coal Authority and HSE requirements. The steel casing of the drill hole would be cut to approximately 4m below ground level

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and the well would be cemented up to the top of the cut casing. Following abandonment of the well the site would be restored. Vehicle movements during this phase would include the removal of all equipment, vehicles and machinery used on the site, including fencing. Up to 100 movements over a two day period are predicted for the removal of site cabins and other equipment and up to 50 movements are predicted over a week for the removal of fencing and matting.

Supporting Information Submitted

Site Location PEDL 187 – Site 2 Figure 2 Revision A
Case in support of the Drilling of an Exploration Borehole for the purpose of Mineral Exploration at land south of Borrass Road, Borrass Head, Wrexham.
Arboricultural Impact Assessment
HH102 Rig Specifications Figure 5b
Schramm Rig Specifications Figure 5a
Indicative Site Layout (Schramm) PEDL 187 – Site 2 Figure 4 Revision A
Site Plan PEDL 187 – Site 2 Figure 3 Revision A
License Area PEDL 187 Figure 1
Great Crested Newt Outline Mitigation Strategy

Additional Information Submitted

- Environmental Noise Assessment for Proposed Coalbed Methane Appraisal Borehole at Borrass Road, Wrexham
- Outline Traffic Management Plan
- Technical Note addressing comments made by the Local Highway Authority
- Document titled: Changes to site construction including the use of "Dura-Base", relating to: Drilling of exploration borehole for mineral exploration south of Borrass Road
- Temporary mineral appraisal well – method statement
- Chemical safety data sheets
- Guidelines for the suspension and abandonment of wells: Issue 4, July 2012
- Letter to Natural Resources Wales, dated the 14th January 2014 regarding the integrity of cement and measures to notify nearby abstractors
- Geophysical Survey Report
- Geophysical Survey – Wrexham, Figure 01

Screening Opinion

The proposed development falls within Schedule 2 Paragraph 2 and has therefore been screened for EIA. The application area, at 0.56ha, is below the threshold identified within column 2 of the EIA regulations Schedule 2 for deep drilling. Published guidance advises that EIA is unlikely to be required for exploratory drilling operations although the sensitivity of the site should be considered as well as whether the drilling will involve fracking. The proposal site is not within a sensitive area as defined by the EIA regulations and the characteristics of the development, location of development and characteristics of the impact are such that any impacts would be localised and temporary. This type of development is well regulated by Natural Resources Wales and the HSE who will ensure that well design and methods used minimise risk to human health and the environment. A view has been sought

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from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) given the nature of the groundwater in this location, however, NRW consider that no EIA is required in this instance. No dewatering of the coal is proposed and localised impacts such as noise and dust can be adequately controlled by condition. In this instance therefore no EIA has been required.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 (2005)

Outside the development boundary

Not allocated for a particular use

Policy PS2, PS3: Strategic Policy - Broad Locations of Development

Policy PS9: Minerals

Policy PS11: Strategic Policy - Biodiversity

Policy GDP1: General Principles for Development - Development Objectives

Policy EC4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland

Policy EC6: Biodiversity Conservation

Policy EC11: Archaeology

Policy EC13: Surface Water Run-off

Policy EC14: Protection of Controlled Waters

Policy T8: Parking

Policy MW8: Restoration of Mineral Working Sites

Local Planning Guidance Notes; 7. Landscape and Development, 17. Trees and Development. 23. Biodiversity and development are also relevant.

TAN5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

TAN11: Noise (1997)

TAN18: Transport (2007)

MPPW

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council:

Holt: Highlight issues which could be of concern if not adequately addressed including noise and traffic. No objection subject to traffic being routed along Shepherds Lane.

Gresford: Asked a number of detailed questions regarding highways, bunding, management of water, reinstatement of the site. Raise concerns regarding water pollution, excessive noise, increased heavy traffic movements and any resultant damage. Request conditions to control noise.

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Have a meeting to discuss the application scheduled for the 6th of February. Request that should Members of the Planning Committee be minded to approve the application the decision notice is not issued until comments of the Community Council have been reported on the 7th of February. In the event that the Community Council raises any issues which are material and which were not considered by Members at the Planning Committee request that a report is taken back to Planning Committee to allow Members the opportunity to consider the additional issues raised.

Local Ward Member (Holt)

(Councillor Morris): No comments received

Adjoining Ward Member
(Gresford East and West)

Councillor A.Bailey: Wishes to stay neutral until Planning Committee

Marford and Hosely

Councillor M.Edwards: No comments received

Rosset

Councillor H.Jones: No comments received

Highways:

No objection subject to the inclusion of conditions to secure access improvements proposed, parking and turning provision, the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan and to prevent release of surface water onto the highway.

Public Rights of Way:

Advise that drivers using the site should be made aware of the potential for conflict with pedestrians.

Welsh Water:

No comments received

Natural Resources Wales: *Further comments:* No objection subject to further information provided which includes information on: Drilling operations including isolation of the Principal Aquifer and Source Protection Zone and methods to minimise loss of drilling fluids to formation; proposed drilling fluids including preparation, storage and disposal; well abandonment; Proposed cementing of the borehole casing and how its integrity will be tested, emergency contact details that the public can use to contact Dart Energy. Request a number of conditions to prevent pollution to the water environment.

Other comments made include protected species and the need for an appropriate ecological compliance audit scheme and biosecurity risk

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	assessments. Need to ensure no water abstractions in the vicinity will be affected, need to ensure construction of drainage system will not impact on water courses, further details of how waste water will be managed.
Public Protection:	Request a condition to secure the noise mitigation measures proposed within the submitted Environmental Noise Assessment. Request a condition specifying noise limits at nearby sensitive properties.
Airbus:	No aerodrome safeguarding objection
CPAT:	Following receipt of the Archaeophysical report conclude that the archaeological potential appears low. Recommend that a watching brief during stripping of top soils is conditioned.
Wales and West Utilities:	Advise that Wales and West apparatus may be directly affected by these proposals. Identify measures which should be taken to ensure apparatus is not adversely affected by the proposed development.
Press Advert:	Expired 08.11.2013
Site Notices:	Expired 28.10.2013

Non-statutory Consultation undertaken by the Applicant

In addition to the statutory consultation undertaken by the Local Planning Authority the Applicant undertook their own consultation which comprised:

- Three public exhibitions at Acton, Holt and Gresford held on the 25th, 26th and 27th of November respectively.
- The public exhibitions were advertised by direct mailing to just under 3000 addresses and posters were sent to the relevant Community Councils to be displayed on local notice boards.
- Consulted with the Community Councils closest to the proposal site, including Acton, Gresford, Holt and Rossett and presentations given to Holt and Acton Community Councils.

Other representations from local residents:

At the time of writing the report 28 letters and emails of objection/concern have been received, including a letter of objection from the North Wales Assembly Member and a letter raising concern from the MP for Wrexham.

Issues, concerns and objections to the proposal include:

- Highways related issues
- Detrimental impact on the quiet rural character of the area
- Unacceptable and detrimental noise levels and dust/air pollution
- Visual impact
- Risk to human health
- Pollution of water
- Pollution of soil
- Risk of subsidence

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- Release of gas
- Lack of baseline data
- Level of consultation undertaken
- Uncertainty regarding long term impacts
- Lack of community benefit
- Hours of operation
- Impact on protected species
- Level of restoration to be undertaken on the site
- Past performance of the Applicant
- Availability of alternative sites
- Impact on property prices
- Vibration
- Light pollution
- Impact on agricultural land

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Background/Introduction: Much of Wrexham is underlain by the North Wales Coalfield which has historically been exploited at various locations both at depth and at surface.

The management of mine gas, or coal bed methane has historically been done as a safety measure or as part of site remediation, however, following experience in the US, Canada and Australia it is now being pursued within the UK on a commercial basis. There are three main stages, each of which requires planning permission: Exploration, Appraisal and Production. This proposal is the first stage in the evaluation of the area for the extraction of coal bed methane, exploration and is a requirement of the licence.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has issued a licence for an area, known as PEDL 187 which covers approximately 80km² of land in Wrexham County Borough Council. The licence block excludes the area around Gresford and Llay which has been the subject of underground coal mining. The proposal site is located within the PEDL 187 area.

This proposal is for the temporary drilling of an exploratory borehole to remove a core of coal for sampling and restoration of the site following cessation of the drilling operations. Drilling operations are anticipated to take approximately 60 days and a maximum of 75 days.

In order to carry out operations for the exploration and exploitation of coal bed methane the applicant has secured a licence from DECC. As such, the Applicant can only carry out such exploratory activities within the licence block area. The Applicant has selected the area to ensure that there will be minimal impact on any receptors.

The Applicant would extract and test a core of coal from the application site in order to test for the presence of gas within the coals, its permeability and cleat structure. In the event that the Applicant considers further analysis is merited within the PEDL 187 area they would need to apply for planning permission.

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There has been much attention in the media regarding the use of fracking, particularly in relation to shale gas. This application does not propose the use of fracking.

Principle of the development and Need: Policy PS1 seeks to direct new development to within defined settlement limits and employment areas. However, minerals can only be worked where they occur and oil and gas can only be worked where they occur and where licences have been issued. This application relates to the PEDL 187 licence block which covers an area of approximately 80km². Minerals Planning Policy Wales states that where oil and gas operations can be carried out in an environmentally acceptable way and consistent with the principles of sustainable development, there is no case in land use planning terms for placing more restrictions than are necessary to ensure the protection of the environment.

The proposal site is located outside a defined settlement boundary in a rural area within a site which is currently in agricultural use. The Applicant has selected the application site as they consider it is less constrained than other locations within the licence block. The proposal is temporary and would take place over a relatively short period of time and the site will be restored back to its original use.

Highways and Access: The application site is located from an existing farm access off Borrás Road, which is a narrow, rural classified road subject to a 60mph speed limit. Typical vehicle speeds are likely to be less than this given the geometry of the road and the Highways Officer has recommended that visibility splays of 2.4 x 70m in the westerly direction measured to the centreline of the adjoining highway and 2.4m x 120m in the easterly direction measured to the nearside edge of the adjoining highway are provided.

The proposed development would be served predominantly by HGVs during the preparation and restoration phases. The largest vehicle that would be required is the drilling rig carrier, which would weigh 51 metric ton and be approximately 15m in length and just under 3m in width and just under 4.5m in height. The Applicant has undertaken Swept Path Analysis to demonstrate that the roads can accommodate the proposed vehicles. The Applicant has devised the proposed access taking into account the presence of a below surface gas pipeline in the vicinity of the site access. Measures to ensure the pipe is protected are proposed including on-going liaison with a representative of Wales and West Utilities Ltd during construction.

There are a number of public footpaths around the site, though no footpaths would be directly affected by the proposed development. Highways have not objected to the proposed development but request that the Applicant is made aware of the presence of the footpath.

The proposal will generate significant additional HGV movements to the site; however, this will only be during the preparation phase and

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decommissioning/restoration phase and will be over a number of days. It is not considered necessary to require the highway is upgraded, as temporary traffic control measures can ensure the development does not have an unacceptable impact on the safety of users of the highway. The Applicant has proposed routing of HGVs via Shepherds Road/Buck Road and the use of a traffic management system using stop-go boards when HGVs are accessing the site and restricting heavy vehicle movements to between the hours of 07:00 and 19:00. Measures to ensure any damage caused to the local highway network from the proposed activities is repaired are also proposed.

The proposed details are considered acceptable and in line with the requirements of Technical Advice Note 18. Highways have concluded that the proposal is acceptable subject to the inclusion of conditions to ensure works are carried out in accordance with the approved details, to secure the submission of a Construction Management Plan and to ensure no private surface water run-off is allowed to enter the adjoining highway.

Ecology: There are several ponds within 250m of the proposal site and others up to 500m away. The site is located within an area known to accommodate great crested newts. No ponds will be directly affected by the proposal, however, the proposal will result in the temporary loss of terrestrial habitat of limited value to great crested newts. Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are proposed in order to ensure that great crested newts are not harmed. In the long term it is proposed to restore the land back to agriculture, therefore in the long term there will be no loss of terrestrial habitat.

Given the temporary nature of the proposed activity it is considered that, subject to the inclusion of appropriate conditions the proposal is acceptable on ecology grounds.

Trees: There are a number of mature oak trees which border the application site. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) submitted in support of the application concludes that subject to compliance with the protection measures proposed within the AIA the proposed development would not have any adverse impact upon the trees.

Subject to the inclusion of appropriate conditions the proposal accords with Policy EC4 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.

Landscape and visual impact: The proposal involves the erection of a drilling rig of up to 27m in height and which would be visible from a much wider area. The proposal site is relatively flat and is not within a designated landscape area. Borrass Woods is located just over 400m to the south of the proposal site which is a Special Landscape Area and there are a number of listed buildings within close proximity of the proposal site.

The proposal would involve the construction of a site compound which will typically include a generator, pumps, portacabins, bowsers/water tanks, tanks for fuel and drill fluid, fire and gas detection devices, low intensity flood lighting and tractors. The Applicant proposes the use of acoustic screening which

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would help minimise the visual impact of the site compound, as well as solid panels where acoustic panels are not used. The Applicant proposes panels will be specified in a solid green colour.

The 24 hour operation will require flood lighting on site. In order to minimise the impact of flood lighting low intensity flood lighting is proposed for the drill floor and low intensity lighting for the rig which would be oriented inwards towards the site. Any visual impact would be short term during drilling operations and following completion of the drilling the site would be restored back to agriculture. Therefore, in the long term there would be no change in character resulting from the proposed development.

Subject to the inclusion of conditions to ensure the site is satisfactorily restored, the proposal would have no long term impact upon the wider visual amenities of the area.

Amenity - Noise: There are a small number of residential properties within 400m of the proposal site and which may be affected by the proposal by virtue of noise.

TAN 11 provides advice on noise and advises that below 45dB noise does not need to be considered as a determining factor in granting planning permission. Minerals Planning Guidance 11 advises that the night time limit should be 42dB LAq 1hour, and this is reinforced in MTAN 2:Coal.

The proposal would involve drilling, 24 hours per day, over at least a 60 day period. The proposal site is within a rural area, however, no baseline noise monitoring has been undertaken in support of the application given the temporary nature of the proposal.

The Applicant submitted an Environmental Noise Assessment in support of the proposal which predicted noise levels at Longfield Farm, Commonwood Farm, Daisy Bank and Well cottage to reach 43dB LAeq1hour and noise levels at Springfield and Westfield to reach 42dB LAeq1hour. Noise levels at other properties are not predicted to exceed 40dB LAeq1hour. The report states that these noise levels are below World Health Organisation (WHO) sleep disturbance criterion, however they do not meet the 2009 updated WHO guideline for external night-time noise which is specified as Night noise guideline (NNG) Lnight, outside = 40dB. Public Protection have advised that this is unlikely to result in unacceptable noise levels within the nearest noise sensitive properties taking into account the temporary nature of the proposed works and the limited level of exceedance.

The predictions contained within the Environmental Noise Assessment are based upon the use of acoustic screens around the site. A series of noise mitigation measures are proposed within the assessment which include the use of acoustic screens, limiting particularly noisy operations to day time hours where possible, limiting vehicle movements at night-time and

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developing a noise management plan for the site which includes provision for monitoring, managing complaints and review.

In addition to noise generated by the drilling activities on the site vehicle movements has the potential to generate noise and disturbance. Access to the site is required generally during working hours and it is considered feasible to restrict the majority of vehicle movements to within daytime hours. Access to the site by workers may be required outside daytime hours, however, the Applicant has proposed the use of a mini bus primarily confined to the beginning and end of 12 hour shifts to minimise traffic movements.

Given the nature of the proposed activities and the noise levels predicted it is considered the use of conditions to control the activities on the site is necessary.

On balance, although the proposed development would introduce a noisy activity into a characteristically quite rural area, given the short term, temporary nature of the operations and the mitigation proposed by the Applicant, together with appropriate conditions Public Protection raise no objections in relation to noise.

Amenity - Dust: Dust may be caused by the drilling activities, as a result of vehicle movements and as a result of any ground works within the site during both site preparation and restoration. Since the planning application was submitted the Applicant has revised construction method which would involve the use of a composite matting system instead of aggregate. The potential for the release of dust is therefore significantly reduced as a result of the change to construction method. Facilities to clean and wash vehicle wheels before entering the highway would be provided which should minimise the release of dust and debris onto the public highway.

The drilling will be carefully controlled and monitored should any dust be released water would be sprayed.

It is considered that the proposed development is unlikely to generate significant levels of dust and that mitigation measures proposed by the Applicant are sufficient to minimise dust emissions in the event that they do arise.

Archaeology: The site is located within an area of high archaeological sensitivity. The Applicant has submitted a geophysical survey report which concluded that the site has very low archaeological potential, however, one anomaly was identified on the site which given the artefact finds in the locality could be of interest.

The impact of the proposed drilling would be relatively limited, however, topsoil stripping and compression from movement of heavy vehicles and plant could impact sub-surface archaeology.

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The Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) has requested that a condition be imposed to ensure the area of the anomaly is stripped under controlled conditions and an archaeological watching brief be conducted.

Pollution of Groundwater and Surface water: Pollution of groundwater has been raised as a concern by consultees, both statutory and non-statutory. In order to address concerns raised the Applicant has supplied further information regarding the drilling fluid to be used and the method of constructing the borehole as well as details regarding abandonment and restoration.

The proposal would involve the drilling down to a depth of approximately 1170m and would drill through different geological strata including the Kinnerton formation which is a major aquifer. The proposed development falls within Zone III of the Bretton, Gorstella, Pulford and Meadow Foods source protection zone which forms part of the catchment area for sources of potable water. Drilling at depth can, if not carefully controlled, create a pathway for gases and fluids from different strata which may contaminate the aquifer. The borehole design is regulated by both Natural Resources Wales, who monitor the environmental aspects and the HSE who monitor well integrity and safety. NRW has been consulted on the application and following the submission of information regarding well construction, drill fluid and well abandonment, do not object to the proposed development.

Concerns have been raised about the lack of baseline data provided by the Applicant regarding the existing state of the environment, including the aquifer. Many of the concerns raised relate to activities which are not proposed in this application including fracking and lateral drilling, however, any these activities would require a separate planning application which would be considered on its own merits.

The drilling of boreholes for mineral exploration is a well established, well regulated activity. Given the nature and scale of the proposed operation it is not considered reasonable to require the Applicant to undertake a detailed baseline of the existing environment.

The Applicant has proposed the use of Sustainable Drainage System and Soakaway. Following the amendment of the construction methods proposed, which involves the use of an interlocking composite matting system, it is considered necessary to secure full details of the surface water drainage and disposal of foul water to prevent both pollution of the water environment and to prevent flooding of the highway.

Given the level of regulation and the measures proposed by the Applicant to ensure the aquifer is protected the proposed development is not considered to cause pollution of the aquifer, in line with policies GDP 1 and EC14 of the adopted UDP.

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Economic benefits: Direct and indirect: This application is short term and temporary and the economic benefits will therefore be relatively limited. The Applicant has advised that local staff and service contractors will be employed where possible which would have direct economic benefit.

Mineral exploration is a vital step in enabling extraction to be undertaken on a commercial scale. Whilst not all test sites will lead to commercial exploitation of a resource, the ability of an operator to undertake exploration activities is an important aspect of the commercial exploitation of minerals and therefore has indirect economic benefits. It also enables a greater understanding of the geology of the area which itself could generate economic benefits.

Pollution from the release of gas: Concern has been raised regarding the release of gases, including radon and methane. Radon is a naturally occurring gas which forms part of the decay series of uranium and which is linked to an increase risk of lung cancer at high levels. Measures to reduce exposure to Radon are required through building regulations. Radon levels in the application area are naturally high and concern has been raised about the release of radon as a result of the proposal. This proposal is not considered likely to give rise to a significant increase in the release of radon and in this respect is no different to drilling of any other type of bore hole. The site is in agricultural use so any additional radon released would be released into the atmosphere and would not accumulate, as it would within a building.

Methane is contained within coal seams and can be released when coal is dewatered or when coal is being extracted. This proposal does not involve the dewatering of the coal as the purpose is to test the properties of the coal and not to release gas. Gas testing equipment will be present on site and monitoring undertaken to ensure gas is not being produced.

Risk of Subsidence: Concern has been raised about the risk of subsidence. The integrity of the borehole will be tested by the Applicant and regulated by the HSE. There is no dewatering or extensive removal of supporting strata, so the conditions that could potentially cause subsidence would not arise. The nature of the bore hole, the methodology used and the absence of any land uses on the site that could be susceptible to subsidence mean that the risk posed by subsidence as a result of this proposal is considered to be very low.

Pollution of soil and impact on agricultural land: Concern has been raised regarding soil pollution and the impact of the proposed development on agricultural land. The proposal site is currently within agricultural use and would be restored back to agriculture following cessation of drilling operations. There will therefore be no long term loss of agricultural land. Measures to prevent the pollution of water and the release of dust will ensure that surrounding agricultural land would not be adversely affected by the proposed development.

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Vibration: Whilst vibration would be caused by drilling this would be actively controlled and minimised to improve efficiency of the operation. Any loss of amenity caused by vibration would be short term and temporary.

Conclusion: The proposal is a short term, temporary use of land for exploratory purposes.

The proposal has the potential to cause nuisance through noise, visual and traffic movements. Measures to minimise disturbance have been proposed by the Applicant and the use of conditions will ensure safeguards are in place. This type of activity is well regulated by a number of different bodies who will collectively ensure that the operations do not have a detrimental impact on the environment and human health.

Concern has been raised regarding the commercial exploitation of Coal Bed Methane and techniques used during exploitation these activities would require a separate planning permission. Determination of this application should be made on its own merits and not on the basis of any future application that it may lead to.

RECOMMENDATION: That permission be GRANTED

CONDITION(S)

1. The development shall commence not later than the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.
2. The operator of the site shall notify the Mineral Planning Authority in writing within seven days of the dates of the following:
 - i. implementation of this planning permission;
 - ii. completion of final restoration of the site
3. Except as otherwise required by conditions attached to this planning permission, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved documents and plans received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th September 2013 (unless otherwise stated):
 - Application Form
 - Case in support of the Drilling of an Exploration Borehole for the purpose of Mineral Exploration at land south of Borrass Road, Borrass Head, Wrexham
 - Figure 1: Licence Area PEDL 187
 - Figure 2: Site Location PEDL 187 - Site 2
 - Figure 3: Site Plan PEDL 187 - Site 2
 - Figure 4: Indicative Site Layout (Schramm) PEDL 187 - Site 2
 - Figure 5a: Schramm Rig Specifications
 - Figure 5b HH102 Rig Specifications
 - Letter to Emma Broad, dated the 3rd September 2013, reference 1437/L001
 - Environmental Noise Assessment for Proposed Coalbed Methane Appraisal Borehole at Borrass Road, by Wrexham

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- Technical Note addressing comments made by local highway authority by AECOM dated 6th December 2013, received by the Local Planning Authority on 10th January 2014
 - Site at Commonwood, Holt Outline Traffic Management Plan Dated December 2013, received by the Local Planning Authority on 10th January 2014
 - Document titled: Changes to site construction including the use of "Dura-Base", relating to drilling of exploration borehole for mineral exploration south of Borrass Road, received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th January 2014
 - Temporary mineral appraisal well - method statement
 - Chemical safety data sheets
 - Guidelines for the suspension and abandonment of wells: Issue 4, July 2012, received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th January 2014
 - Letter to Natural Resources Wales, dated the 14th January 2014 regarding the integrity of cement and measures to notify nearby abstractors, received by the Local Planning Authority on 6th February 2014
 - Geophysical Survey Report received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th November 2013
 - Geophysical Survey - Wrexham, Figure 01 received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th November 2013
4. The development hereby permitted shall cease not later than the expiration of 1 year from the date of commencement of development. The site shall be cleared of all buildings, plant and machinery associated with the use and the land restored to its previous condition within this time period.
 5. Prior to first use of the development the site shall be laid out in strict accordance with layout plans No Drg. No. 6031111-SK001 & 6031111-SK004 Dated 06/12/2013.
 6. No part of the development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan including provisions for contractor parking has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the plan as is approved has been fully implemented.
 7. Full details of a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface water drainage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved scheme shall be fully implemented as approved prior to any drilling operations taking place. No private surface water run off shall be permitted to flow from the development site onto the adjoining highway.
 8. No part of the development shall commence until a detailed ecological method statement including timescales has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The ecological method statement shall include details of Reasonable Avoidance Measures and biosecurity risk assessments. The method statement shall be full implemented as approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 9. No equipment, machinery, plant or materials of any kind in connection with the development shall be brought onto the site until tree protection fencing and ground protection measures have been implemented in strict accordance with details which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include specification and

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location for the fencing. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavations be made.

10. The tree protection fencing and ground protection measures approved in connection with condition no. 9 shall be kept in place until all external site works have been completed and the removal of the fencing has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

11. No part of the development shall commence until a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in strict accordance with Method Statement as is approved. The Method Statement shall include the following:

- (i) A specification for tree protection fencing and ground protection measures that comply with British Standard 5837:2005;
- (ii) A Tree Protection Plan showing the location of the trees to be removed and retained with their crown spreads, Root Protection Areas, Construction Exclusion Zones, and location of protective fencing and ground protection measures accurately plotted;
- (iii) A full specification for any access, driveway, path, underground services or wall foundations within retained tree Root Protection Areas or Construction Exclusion Zone, including any related sections and method for avoiding damage to retained trees;
- (iv) Details of general arboricultural matters including proposed practices with regards to cement mixing, material storage and fires;
- (v) Details of the frequency of supervisory visits and procedures for notifying the findings of such visits to the Local Planning Authority;
- (vi) Method for protecting retained trees during demolition works;
- (vii) Details of all proposed tree works, including felling and pruning.

12. The following activities should not be carried out under any circumstances:

- i) No fires should be lit within 10 metres of the nearest point of the canopy of any retained tree.
- ii) No works, including earth works and the bringing onto site of machinery or materials shall proceed until the approved tree protection measures are put in place, with the exception of the approved tree works.
- iii) No equipment, signage, fencing, tree protection barriers, materials, components, vehicles or structures shall be attached to or supported by a retained tree.
- iv) No mixing of cement or use of other materials or substances shall take place within tree root protection areas or tree construction exclusion zones, or close enough to these that seepage or displacement of those materials or substances could cause them to enter tree root protection areas or tree construction exclusion zones.
- v) No alterations or variations to the approved works or tree protection schemes shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

13. Within 3 months of commencement of development a scheme for the restoration of the site together with timescale for the works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall

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include measures to remediate any damaged soils. The scheme as approved shall be fully implemented in all respects within the agreed timescale.

14. During the site set-up and restoration phases, as defined within the Outline Traffic Management Plan, between 07.00 hours and 19.00 hours, the noise levels arising from the development shall not exceed 50dB $L_{Aeq\ 1-hr}$, at any noise sensitive property situated nearby. During the drilling phase, as defined within the Outline Traffic Management Plan, between 07.00 hours and 19.00 hours, the noise levels arising from the development shall not exceed 45dB $L_{Aeq\ 1-hr}$, at any noise sensitive property situated nearby. For all phases of the development, between 19.00 hours and 07.00 hours, the noise levels arising from the development shall not exceed 42dB $L_{Aeq\ 1-hr}$, at any noise sensitive property situated nearby. The noise levels shall be determined at any nearby noise sensitive property. Measurements shall be made in accordance with the recommendations contained in Paragraph 88 of MTAN 1, i.e. at least 3.5 metres from a façade to prevent reflection of noise by any façade that faces the noise source.

15. Noise mitigation identified within paragraph 6.1 of the Environmental Noise Assessment for Proposed Coalbed Methane Appraisal Borehole at Borras Road, by Wrexham, shall be implemented for the duration of the development.

16. HGVs shall not access the site between the hours of 19:00 and 07:00 except in emergency.

17. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during the undertaking of any ground works in the development area, so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief will be undertaken to the standards laid down by the Institute for Archaeologists. The Local Planning Authority will be informed in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development, of the name of the said archaeological contractor. A copy of the watching brief report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR tel: 01938 553670 within two months of the fieldwork being completed.

18. No development shall take place until a method statement / construction environmental management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement / construction environmental management plan and unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All operations shall be carried out in accordance with approved details.

19. Facilities for the storage of oils, fuels or chemicals shall be sited on impervious bases and surrounded by impervious bund walls. The volume of the bunded compound shall be at least equivalent to the capacity of the tank plus 10%. If there is multiple tankage, the compound shall be at least equivalent to the capacity of the largest tank, or the combined capacity of interconnected tanks plus 10%. All filling points, vents, gauges and sight glasses must be located within the bund. The drainage system of the bund shall be sealed with no discharge to any watercourse, land or underground strata. Associated pipe work shall be located above ground and protected

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from accidental damage. All filling points and tank overflow pipe outlets shall be detailed to discharge downwards into the bund.

REASON(S)

1. To comply with Section 91(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. To enable the Local Planning Authority to adequately monitor the development.
3. To ensure that the development fully complies with the appropriate policies and standards.
4. To limit the impact of the site on local amenity and ensure restoration is completed within a reasonable timescale.
5. In the interest of the free and safe movement of traffic on the adjacent highway and to ensure the formation of a safe and satisfactory access, in accordance with policy GDP1 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
6. In the interest of the free and safe movement of traffic on the adjacent highway, in accordance with policies GDP1 and T8 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
7. In the interests of highway safety and to prevent pollution of the water environment, in accordance with policies GDP1 and EC13 of the UDP.
8. To protect biodiversity on the site which may otherwise be damaged by the development hereby permitted, in accordance with policy EC6 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
9. To ensure that the retained trees are adequately protected during development in the interests of amenity, in accordance with policy EC4 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
10. To ensure that the retained trees are adequately protected during development in the interests of amenity, in accordance with policy EC4 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
11. To ensure the work is carried out to accepted arboricultural practices for the long term well being of the tree(s), in accordance with policy EC4 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
12. To ensure that the retained trees are adequately protected during development in the interests of amenity, in accordance with policy EC4 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
13. To ensure the site is adequately restored back to agricultural land, in accordance with policy EC2 of the adopted UDP.
14. In the interest of safety and the free flow of traffic on the adjoining highway.
15. In the interests of residential amenity, in accordance with policy GDP1 of the adopted UDP.
16. In the interests of residential amenity, in accordance with policy GDP1 of the adopted UDP.
17. In the interests of preserving the archaeological interest of the site, in accordance with policy EC11 of the adopted UDP.
18. To prevent pollution of the environment and harm to human health, in accordance with policy GDP 1 of the adopted UDP.

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19. To prevent pollution of the environment and harm to human health, in accordance with policy GDP 1 of the adopted UDP.

NOTE(S) TO APPLICANT

Highways

Your attention is drawn to item nos. 1,3,4&5 of the highways supplementary notes attached.

Public Footpath No.2 - Allington runs along The Parks Farm access directly opposite the development site and should not be interfered with. You should liaise with the Public Rights of Way Section to discuss the proposed development. Please contact Mr Sean Hanratty on Tel: 01978 729761

Environmental Protection

The method statement/construction environmental management plan referred to in condition 18 shall refer to:

- The construction of the compound and borehole.
- The type and nature of material to be imported and /or stored on site in more detail.
- Construction methods
- Any necessary pollution prevention methods
- The loading and unloading of plant and materials
- Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction
- A scheme for recycling /disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
- Information on the persons/bodies responsible for particular activities associated with the method statement. This should demonstrate that they are qualified for the activity they are undertaking.
- Aftercare and maintenance arrangements.

You are advised to ensure full waste duty of care checks are carried out to ensure that waste produced is sent to a suitably permitted site via a registered waste carrier. Records of waste movements should be kept either on site or at a secure location and be available should Natural Resources Wales want to check them.

Gas apparatus

You are advised that gas apparatus may be present within the site. You are advised to contact Wales and West Utilities and to comply with general conditions to be observed for the protection of apparatus and the prevention of disruption to gas supplies. The specification for safe working in the vicinity of pipelines and associated installations operating above 2 bar gauge - requirements for 3rd parties (June 2013)
