

Consultation Report

in respect of:

Former Air Products Site, Acrefair

on behalf of:

Air Products PLC

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1.0. Introduction

1.1. This community consultation process follows on from a period of consultation from Friday the 24th October to Friday the 16th of November 2011 on the development brief. The following were consulted during this period:

- Cefn Community Council as well as heads of service in Housing, Environment, Highways and Assets from Wrexham County Borough Council. Internal contacts within Wrexham County Borough Council were also consulted.
- Three Registered Social Landlords; Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Pennaf and Wales and West.
- The following statutory bodies; Cadw, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Environment Agency for Wales, Countryside Council for Wales, Dee Valley Water, Welsh Water and Scottish Power.
- Several interested parties were also consulted including: Plas Kynaston Canal Group, Llangollen Railway and Wrexham Area Civic Society.
- In addition to this 195 neighbouring and adjacent properties were consulted.

1.2. The following document sets out a summary of stakeholder consultation, details the consultation methods, looks at some of the key feedback and analyses the survey results. A response is also given on how the consultation results will affect the future decisions made about the project.

2.0. Stakeholder Consultation

2.1. During the development of the scheme we have been involved in lengthy pre-application discussions with Wrexham County Borough Council. In particular the planning policy context and development control issues were discussed. In addition to this, experts from Highways and Landscape and Trees were consulted to facilitate a greater understanding of the context of the site and establish standpoint of various stakeholders/officers within the Council.

2.2. In July of 2001 the scheme was presented to the Design Commission for Wales for Design Review. A summary of their feedback and the resulting responses is summarised here:

- Although information was provided on nearby towns, there was felt to be little provided on the area immediately surrounding the site.

It was felt that there was ample analysis, however it was agreed that a vernacular section would be added to the contextual analysis.

- It was suggested that connections across the site should be maximised and this should be the design driver for the whole scheme along with historical features integrated into the pedestrian network.

It was felt that these principles had been fully established in the design and that the graphics needed changing to ensure this was clear.

- It was suggested a second major entrance would help to prevent congestion and avoid an insular cul-de-sac development.

It was felt the level change and mature trees along the boundary where the second major entrance was suggested would make this unfeasible. Instead a stronger link along King Street is proposed.

- It was suggested that the road and block layout was unconvincing, and that public squares would be incompatible with road junctions.

The block forms will be reviewed and made more organic. It was felt that the concern with squares and junctions was unfounded due to the low traffic movement through the site.

- The Design Review panel encouraged a commitment to higher environmental standards than the statutory minimum.

3.0. Community Consultation Method

3.1. Prior to the consultation the following advertising was carried out:

- Event advertised in local newspapers: The Leader and North Wales Daily Post.
- Event Featured on Council's Website.
- 160 leaflets delivered to residents closest to the site.
- Leaflets placed in local shops.
- Social Club Committee was involved in the process and informed of dates
- Social Club Committee received "preview" presentation prior to public consultation.

3.2. A series of boards were created to give the community some background information about the site and the analysis we carried out to inform our design work. The first board provided an introduction to the site and its overall context. The second gave summaries of the reports undertaken on archaeology, ecology, rivers and flooding, heritage, land remediation, landscape and ecology. The third looked at design features of the surrounding area and outlined a selection of design cues that this had informed. The final board provided an opportunity to have an input in creating an option for the site. This allowed them to pick multiple choice options for density, house types, additional uses and green space treatment. A survey was produced (please see appendix A) that provided a section in which to state a preference for these options, along with space to provide information about how residents used the area of Acrefair and its facilities. Space was also offered in which to comment and give opinion on the proposals so far. It was felt that the presentation of the masterplan would appear more interactive if it was printed out and laid out on a table for community members to comment on and annotate.

3.3. The consultation event was held over two days. One session during the day and another in the evening for those who were unable to attend due to work commitments. The display boards were set up at the Social Club with signage at the entrances indicating the location of the event. Attendees were signed in, provided with a copy of the survey and given a brief talk through of the boards. Members of the team were then on hand to answer any questions and to discuss the scheme with community members, encouraging them to comment and give feedback.

4.0. Key Feedback

4.1. This section provides an overview of the written and verbal feedback during the consultation, to give a contextual understanding leading into the results of the survey. The section is divided into five key issues; Housing, Additional Uses, Traffic, Green Space and Local Facilities. A response is given to the feedback following each section.

4.2. Housing

- Especially high interest was expressed for affordable housing for the elderly with disabled access.
- There was also need expressed for more rental properties, affordable housing and starter homes.
- Concern was expressed by some that the scheme would be purely social housing and residents were keen that the scheme did not become like the nearby “Plas Madoc” development. These fears were addressed by members of the team.

25% of the houses built on the site will be affordable and there is a possibility of including a retirement village on the site. Appropriate operators will be considered in this matter. This development is a combination of private and Registered Social Landlord properties not Council housing, so the scheme will not bear any similarity to the Plas Madoc development.

4.3. Additional Uses

- In terms of retail, high interest was expressed in having a small supermarket on the site, even when it was explained that this option would not allow space for any other additional uses.
- Many residents, particularly the more elderly expressed disappointment at the lack of food retail provision in Acrefair and the distances they had to travel to do their shopping.
- Interest was also expressed in food retail, a parade of shops, a restaurant and local facilities. It was mentioned by many residents that Acrefair has a number of pubs already and another would not necessarily be needed.
- The only strong opposition to retail uses on the site was voiced by the Plas Kynaston Canal Group, a local interest group concerned with the introduction of a new retail centre in the area and the impact this could have upon the existing centre of Cefn Mawr.

We will look at the potential of including a small supermarket on the site. However the development brief constrains the size to 300sq/. This possibility also addressed the concerns of distances travelled to reach food retail. In terms of additional uses the suggestions are noted. The realisation of these will depend on market demand. It is important that flexibility is maintained to respond to any changes in the economic climate.

4.4. Traffic

- Due to the location of housing and recreational/social facilities on different sides of the road it was felt to be very important that traffic calming measures or some form of crossing was provided across Llangollen Road.
- The pedestrian and cycle links between the proposed housing and the area around the social club were fully supported by members of the community.
- There was concern expressed that the scheme would increase levels of traffic along Bethania Road.

Traffic calming measures have been committed to. The type is yet to be confirmed but there is agreement to this suggestion in principle. Support of walking and cycling links is excellent and reflected in the final masterplan. We are not increasing the traffic from the site. The Social Club can operate in a much more intense way but as it is a local facility it is more likely that people will travel there by foot. Any changes in use (for example to football pitches) would be during the weekend in the main and the local network has no issues.

4.5. Green Space

- There was a general consensus that the location of the recreation area was appropriate
- There were varied views as to what the final greenspace treatment of the site should be. A small majority favoured an intensification of the sports provision.
- Residents of Bethania Road expressed concern that increased traffic and potential floodlighting of pitches could be disruptive.
- The idea of providing children's play areas was supported both as part of the recreation area and interspersed within the housing development.
- Some concern was expressed by a few residents that sports facilities existed in close proximity to the site and felt there wasn't need for any more.

The survey results show a very slight preference for creation of parkland and playing pitches. Further consideration will be given to whether this option of an intensification of green space is most suitable for the site, taking into account the cost implications. The issues about increased traffic on Bethania

Road are addressed above, and there is no flood lighting proposed on the site. The masterplan shows areas of play throughout the housing development in line with resident feedback.

4.6. Local Facilities

- Many residents expressed a need for social spaces for both young people and the elderly, to get young people off the street and to offer a place for more elderly people to meet and interact with one another.
- It was felt by some that this housing scheme in addition to other schemes in the area would put an increased pressure on local schools and limit the availability of spaces.

The development brief requires clear contributions to the local school for expansion. Any dwelling built with over two bedrooms will be required to make contributions of around £2000 to primary and secondary schools, with the financial contributions increasing with the size of the dwelling .Facilities will be improved at the Social Club, and there is a possibility of community uses on the retail area. Outline planning permission will seek permission for these uses.

5.0. Survey Results

5.1. This section looks at the results of the survey in more detail and provides a brief commentary on each. After asking the attendees for some details about who they were and whereabouts in the area they lived, the survey asked a series of questions about their habits. These questions and the results are detailed below:

5.2. How often do you visit Acrefair?

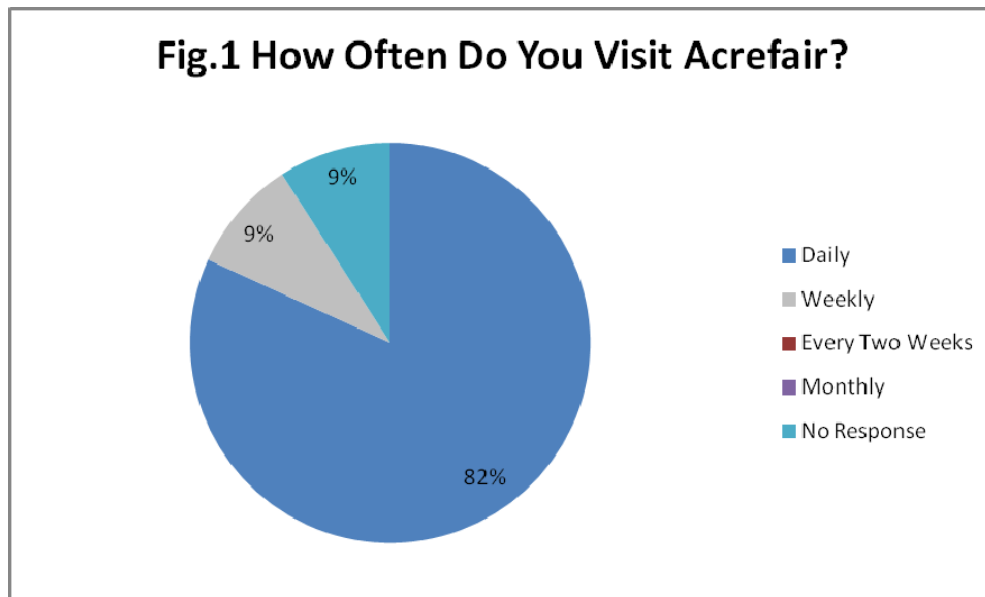


Figure 1 shows that almost all the attendees of the event visited Acrefair daily. A minority visited only weekly. There were no attendees who visited less regularly, although a number did not respond to this question.

5.3. For what reasons do you visit Acrefair?

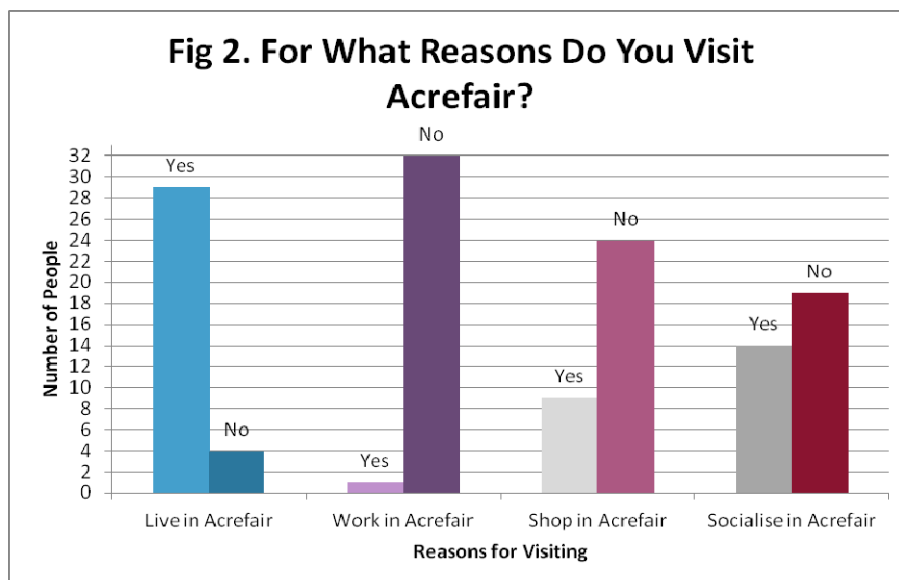


Fig2. Shows that a high proportion of attendees live in Acrefair, very few work in the settlement, and a larger number shop and socialise there.

5.4. The following questions related to the final board, where residents were asked to provide answers to multiple choice questions relating to: Housing Density, Housing Type, Additional Uses and Green Space Treatment. These questions and the results are detailed below.

5.5. How Dense Should Housing Development on the Air Products Site Be?

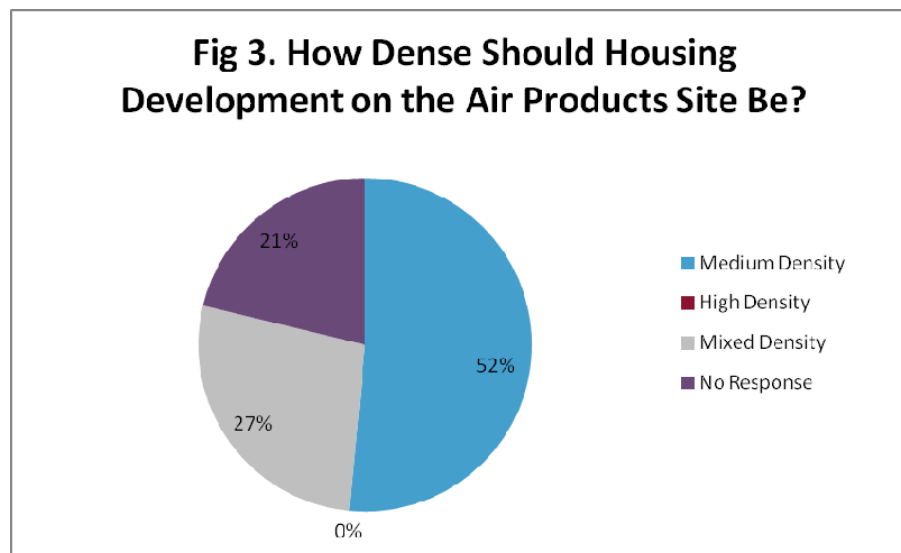


Figure 3 Shows an overall preference for medium density housing from attendees, and a smaller preference for mixed density. None of the attendees considered high density housing to be suitable for the scheme.

5.6. What Sort of Housing Types Should be on the Air Product Site?

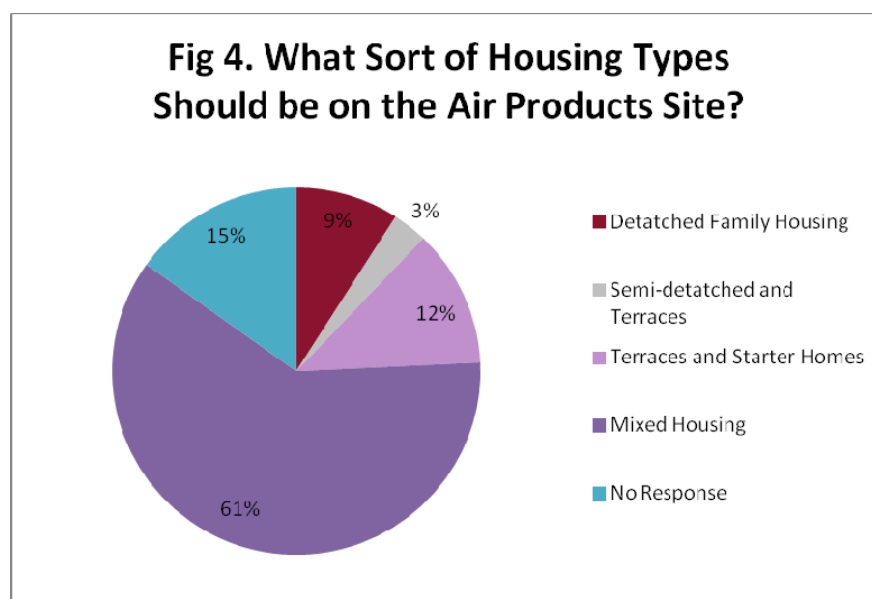


Figure 4 shows that the majority of attendees favoured mixed housing.

5.7. What Sort of Commercial Development Would You Like to See?

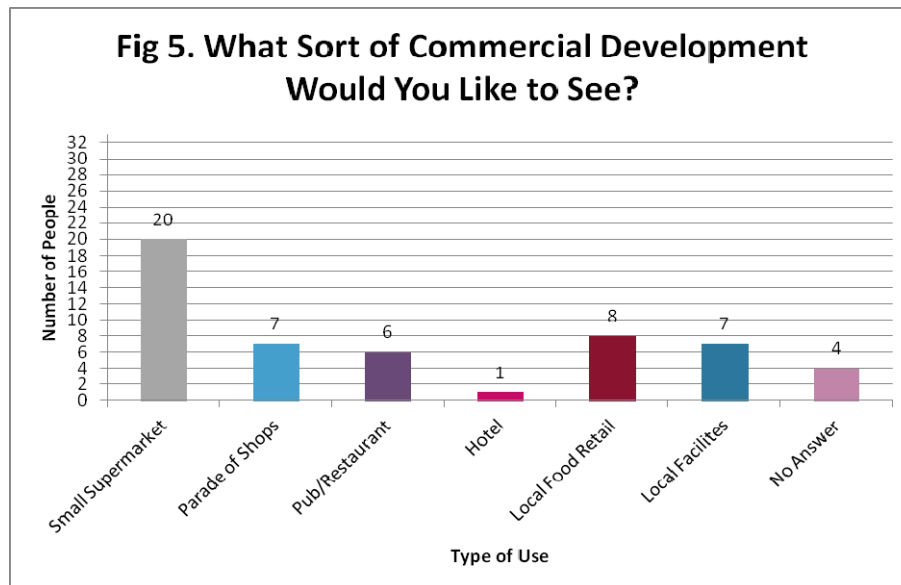


Figure 5 shows the additional uses that attendees preferred. There is a clear preference for the inclusion of small supermarket. The least popular option was the hotel.

5.8. What kind of Green Space Treatment Would You Prefer?

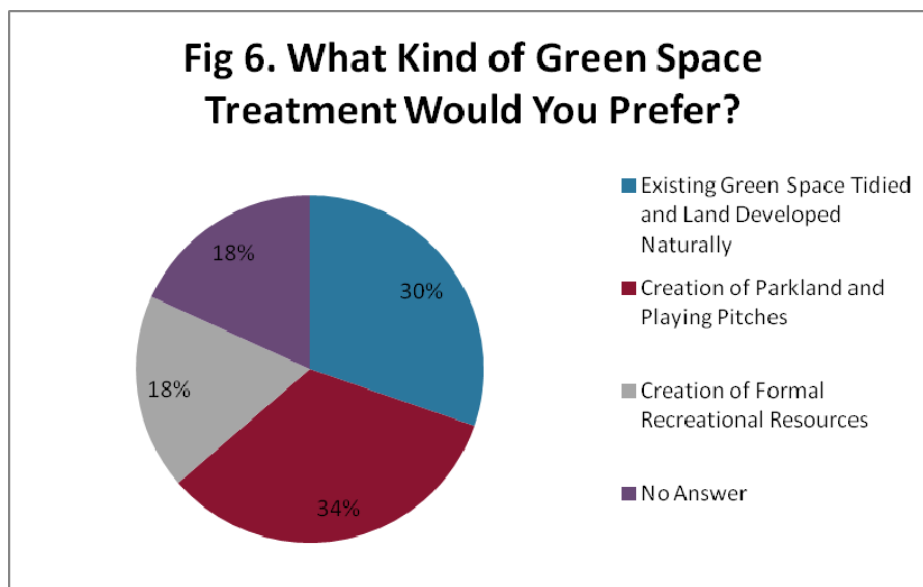


Figure 6 shows a fairly balanced mix of responses to the green space options. There is a small majority in favour of creation of parkland and playing pitches.

- 5.9. To summarise the results of the survey in terms of design preferences we can see that there is a clear preference for medium density housing and a slightly lower preference for mixed density. In terms of size and tenure the majority of residents felt that a mixture would be most appropriate on the site. There was a general preference for a small supermarket and for food retail uses. Preferences for green space were mixed with survey respondents divided between creation of parkland and playing pitches or general tidying of the land. However feedback during consultation also favoured an intensification of recreational uses.

6.0. Conclusion

- 6.1. Having undertaken the community consultation it can be observed that there is general support for the scheme. Many residents were pleased that the empty site was going to be developed and the majority gave positive feedback on the designs. A clear steer has been given on housing density, type and the uses residents would like to see on the site. Where possible the feedback has been taken into account and reflected in the final masterplan. Other issues are up for discussion at the reserved matters stage.

Appendix A: Sample Survey

The Works | Acrefair



We are extremely keen to understand your thoughts on the development of the Air Products factory site at Acrefair and would be grateful if you could complete the following questionnaire;

About you:

Name **Tel.**
Address
Post Code **E-mail**

(Please note: Your information will be used for the purposes of this consultation only and will not be circulated to others)

Acrefair Village;

How often do you visit Acrefair? Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Every 2 Weeks ☐ Monthly ☐

For what reasons do you visit Acrefair? I live in Acrefair ☐ I work in Acrefair ☐

I shop in Acrefair ☐ I socialise in Acrefair ☐ Other

How do you think Acrefair could be improved?

What sort of development would you like to see on the Air Products factory site?

A master plan for the site;

e*SCAPE Urbanists have put together some initial thoughts on how development on the Air Products factory site might look. Please take a look at the draft master plan on the consultation boards and table tops;

What do you think of the scheme put forward already?

We would also like to get some more detailed feedback on the level, type and layout of development you would like to see on the Air Products factory site. Please take a look at consultation board number 3 to help answer the questions overleaf;

Housing

Recent planning documents have identified a need for housing in Acrefair and we would like to get your input on how housing might look on the factory site.

Step 1: How dense should housing development on the Air Products Factory be?

High Density ☐ Medium Density ☐ Mixed density ☐

Comment

Step 2: What sort of housing types should be on the Air Products Factory site?

Large family housing ☐ Semi-detached homes ☐ Small starter homes ☐ Mixed Housing ☐

Comment

Uses

There is also opportunity for the site to contain commercial development along Llangollen Road. There is space for either a supermarket or a mixture of other smaller commercial uses.

Step 3: What sort of commercial development would you like to see?

1. A supermarket ☐
2. Any of the following;

A row of small shops ☐ A gastro pub ☐ Hotel ☐ Small Supermarket ☐ Cafe ☐

Local facilities ☐ Other

Green Space

The northern parcel of land on the site is situated amongst a belt of mature trees and presents opportunities for greater provision of green space in Acrefair.

Step 4: How would you like this green space to be used?

1. Existing green space to be tidied and land to develop naturally ☐
2. Creation of a country park at the heart of Acrefair ☐
3. Incorporation of recreational uses (such as sports pitches) alongside parkland ☐

Comment

Thank you for your time! Please contact the team at e*SCAPE Urbanists if you have any questions.

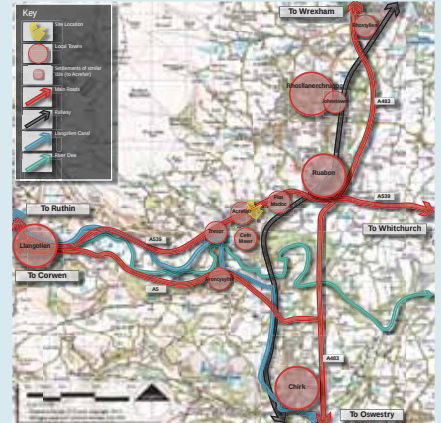
Appendix B: Display Boards

The Works ACREFAIR

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

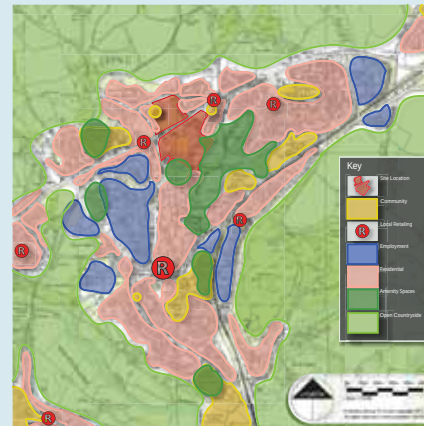
Today's Exhibition

- This exhibition is designed to seek your views on the redevelopment of the former Air Products site in Acrefair following its recent closure and subsequent identification as a Mixed Use site by Wrexham County Borough Council in their Local Development Plan and recently consulted upon planning brief for the site. The intention would then be to submit an Outline Planning Application at the site before seeking interest from prospective developers who will ultimately take on the site and deliver mixed use proposals.
- We are engaging with the local community to ensure that the site is redeveloped in a way that is reflective of the needs and preferences of the local community. This exhibition is a key opportunity for local residents and businesses to have their say on the emerging proposals.
- The settlement of Acrefair is located in the County Borough of Wrexham and straddles one of the key inland transport routes into North Wales. The settlement developed during the industrial revolution, however, Acrefair like a number of locations across the country is going through a transformation.



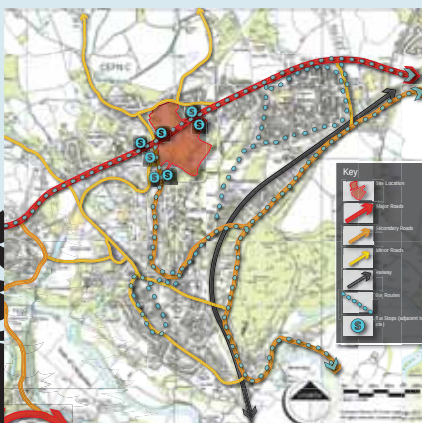
Topography

- The area around Acrefair sits within a undulating landscape which runs south towards the River Dee valley.
- The Acrefair Works site is relatively flat as a result of its previous industrial use.
- The site is divided into two halves, an upper site and a lower site.
- A small valley is located to the south east of the upper site which is a remnant of a historic tramway route.



Surrounding Area

- A few historic village centres retain community facilities and local shops.
- The main retail centre is Cefn Mawr just south of the site.
- Historical industrial areas are located on the lower slopes or valley bottoms.
- Older housing is located on valley slopes while later and larger housing estates lie at the edge of Cefn Mawr and at Plas Madoc.



Transport Links

- The A539 Llangollen Road runs between the two halves of the site.
- Acrefair is well connected to surrounding villages.
- Local buses connect it with Wrexham, Llangollen, Oswestry and Barmouth.
- Nearby, Ruabon train station provides a service to Holyhead via Chester where it is possible to connect to other regional destinations.



Surrounding Settlements

- Cefn Mawr is the largest 'village' within the surrounding area.
- Acrefair is next largest with a different retail offering.
- Plas Madoc is next largest, due to the size of the residential area.
- Rhosymedre and Trevor are small villages that sit within the cluster.

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DEVELOPING A DESIGN



Design Parameters

- The Design Parameters Plan (above) provides the foundations on which to explore different development options. This was developed from a thorough assessment of the site and its unique characteristics as well as a study of the surrounding towns and villages. More information on our assessment is contained on the previous boards.
- The masterplan must address the needs of the local community and wider area, whilst integrating with the surrounding landscape and building patterns. The site is an integral part of Acrefair and should connect the village with the surrounding area. The Council have recently published a consultation draft Planning Brief for the site which provides the specific detailed design and planning guidance for this site, from which this design has evolved.
- It is also important that the plan reflects the character of the area, rather than a generic style of development. As part of developing proposals for this site we have studied the surrounding settlements (as recommended in the Council's guide) looking at what makes the area unique as well as the style and materials used - a selection of our assessment is shown to the right.

Design Cues

- Following our assessments we have arrived at a number of design cues that should be developed as part of the proposals for this site.
- At this stage the exact uses, number and size of the different elements is not fixed, but it is important to consider the appropriateness against these design cues and the design parameters.
- Not all of these 'design cues' will be appropriate at the outline planning application stage, however, understanding them at this stage allows the design proposals to 'build in' accommodation for them later on in the process.

The following 'design cues' are identified as important to the eventual design:

- The focal point of settlements sit on high ground overlooking the valley.
- Settlements wrap around the ridge and slopes of the valley with streets that follow the contours of the land.
- Primary junction/square at the heart of the settlement with streets and lanes that radiate out from the centre.
- Narrow streets and lanes slow traffic. Curving streets and lanes provide unfolding views coupled with Forecourt spaces add interest to the streets

- Peaceful green spaces at the heart of settlements and tree lined avenues add valuable greenspace.
- Houses and shops overlook streets and public spaces, making them feel safe.
- Use of bay windows at the first floor.
- Shop fronts with lots of activity create a lively atmosphere on the street and in public spaces.
- Properties with front gardens and forecourts show a clear boundary between public and private space.
- Varied style of architecture, building heights and sizes frame views through the village and create visual interest.

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UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

Archaeology

- We have undertaken overground and underground investigations to establish whether there are any elements of archaeological importance on the site.
- The only archaeological feature worthy of note is a former kiln, which should remain unaffected by proposals.
- The design parameters developed for the site seek to place the kiln within a parkland area allowing for preservation and interpretation.

The River Dee

- The nearby River Dee is an Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Surface and storm water drainage from this site will require on-site disposal and mitigation to ensure slow release into this sensitive environment.
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems will be used to collect and filter storm and surface water from the site to ensure that it is both clean and appropriately released into the river system.

Land Remediation

- The site has been used for industrial purposes for nearly 300 years, however, following detailed surveys it has been proven that there are no signs of pollution on the site that would preclude development.
- There is likely to be the need for further detailed investigations when the final designs are presented for planning permission but it is unlikely that significant remediation will be necessary on all or part of the site.

Ecology

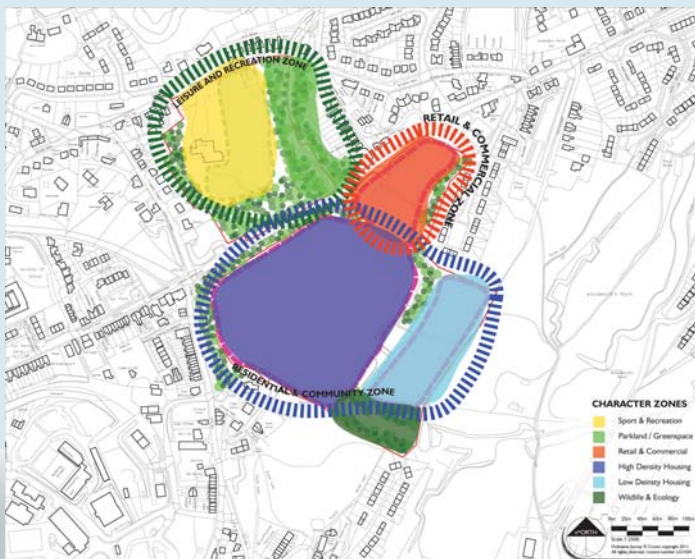
- The site's former use for industry means that there are relatively few naturalistic habitats on the site. These are confined to the site's peripheries.
- A Phase 1 habitat survey has been undertaken and it concluded that no species will be directly effected by the proposals, but further studies may be required to further understand specific habitats on the periphery of the development plots as more detailed proposals come forward.

World Heritage Site Status

- The site is located 1 mile to the north of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and canal which is a Grade 1 listed building and a world heritage site. The site is not visible from the World Heritage Site.
- The site is visible from a number of approaches to the site and it is important that proposals for this site help to establish a sense of arrival along the Llangollen Road, helping to make a positive contribution to this important tourist attraction.

Landscape and Trees

- The potential areas of development have been designed to minimise the impact upon any trees at the site. These areas, mainly to the perimeters of the site have a high environmental quality and offer some amenity to new and existing residents.
- A Phase 1 Arboricultural Survey along with other more detailed studies will be required as the project progresses, but at this stage it is sufficient to design around them.



Character & Development Zones

- Following the site assessment there are five different character zones that can be identified;
- The retail and commercial area (shown red) is placed to benefit from the road frontage to Llangollen Road as well as forming a focal point for any new development.
- To the south, two areas of housing character (both shown in different blues) are identified based around different densities, however, collectively they combine to create a residential zone.
- Across the Llangollen Road lies the existing social club (Yellow) which provides a focus for sport and recreation activities. This coupled with the narrow valley (green) offers significant opportunities for sport and recreation provision in this zone.
- These five areas provide the framework for developing any proposals for this site, working with the opportunities and constraints outlined above.
- An indicative masterplan has been developed to show one way in which this might be delivered in line with the Design Parameters.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- As previously noted this work is designed to support an outline planning application and therefore there is a lot of flexibility in the approach we take with the planning application. We value your views and ideas on what might be the best design as well as what uses might be suitable on the site.
- Board 2 has shown that there are likely three components to this scheme - the housing component, the commercial/retail component and the leisure and recreation component, based around the existing social club.

- This board details the options open to both the consultant team and the community in terms of the final proposals for the outline planning application. Please look at them carefully, ask questions of the team here today, and use the feedback sheets provided to leave your ideas and suggestions.
- We want to help ensure what gets developed is appropriate for the community, working in partnership with Wrexham Council to ensure that this site supports the views and aspirations of the people who live and work in Acrefair.

Step 1 - Density

- This relates to the number of houses and their arrangement and the space surrounding them.
- Medium density provides lots of space but provides fewer bigger houses.
- High density provides good enclosure and building lines but limits space.
- Mixed density can create a varied and interesting street scene.



Medium Density



High Density



Mixed Density

Step 2 - House Types

- What kind of houses does the area need? How should the mix be balanced?
- Should there be more large, detached family homes with generous gardens at a higher price?
- Or is there a need for smaller start-up homes for first time buyers at a more affordable level?



Detached Family Homes



Semi-Detached and Terraces



Smaller Terraces and Starter Homes

Step 3 - Additional Uses

- Is it better to have a small supermarket and forgo other surrounding uses?
- Or would a range or small parade of shops be more suitable or meet your needs?
- Would a hotel be appropriate on the site?
- A cafe, restaurant or pub could provide a good place for the evening or a Sunday lunch?
- What facilities are lacking in Acrefair that might be provided on this site?



Small Supermarket



Parade of Shops



Pub or Restaurant



Hotel



Local Food Retail



Other Uses

Step 4 - Open Space

- The greenspace next to the Social Club is a significant asset to the community. How much work should be done to this area of green space?
- Does it just need a bit of tidying up?
- Or would new recreational facilities and redesigned greenspace be preferable?



Tidy the existing green elements



Parkland and Playing Pitches



Formal Recreational Resource

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INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN

