

Re: APP/H6955/A/18/3219039

Land Opposite Madras School, Penley, Wrexham

I objected to this planning application and I sincerely hope that this appeal will be dismissed.

1. WCBC Planning Department rejected this application because it was outside the settlement limit in a SLA.

The application site is outside the settlement boundary of Penley and on the very western edge of the village. The centre of the village has shifted since WWII from this area, with the church, primary school and village hall, further east to where there is a large secondary school, and across the road a small shop, a day centre for the elderly (the Rainbow Centre), the 8-bed Polish Hospital (the last remnant of the American Hospital), a business park for micro businesses and a new 110 unit housing estate, all on the site of the former American Hospital dating from WWII. And even further east is the children's playground.

In the two years prior to this application there were five other applications resulting in approval of 39 new houses all to the southern and eastern side of Penley. In the ten years before that 110 houses were built in Penmere Park on the former hospital site. The 2017 electoral roll shows a total of 372 houses altogether in Penley, up from 224 before Penmere Park was started, an increase of over 60% in just over a decade. All of these houses are of a similar modern design that is popular with developers at the moment. The area around the application site is now special and unique in Penley.

The application site is in an area that still reflects the character that all of Penley once had. It is in an open area of the SLA, the closest buildings widely dispersed, reflecting the agricultural heritage of Penley. On one side is the church, the present building only 120 years old, but the site of a church since the 15th century. Across the A539 Overton Road is the Grade II listed Madras School and its former school house. Behind them and to the west are playing fields and then open farmland. To the east are two dwellings and then more open land belonging to the cottage and more playing fields belonging to the secondary school. Across Hollybush Lane, more usually known as Vicarage Lane, is the former vicarage set well back in about 4 acres of open pastureland. To the north of the site along the lane there are a few houses, mainly former farm workers cottages, and houses converted from a former smallholding, in all no more than 8 dwellings. Sitting among the houses on the east side of the lane is the village hall, a wooden hut transported from the WWI military training base in Park Hall in Shropshire in the 1920s by local farmers. All this, set in a Special Landscape Area, tells the history, heritage and culture of Penley, so different from what the rest of the village has become as the result of seemingly unending development since WWII.

Having a modern housing development in the middle of the rural area described above would certainly change its character. The appeal for Big Green Farm (APP/H6955/A/15/3139131) was dismissed for this very reason: **'concerns regarding the effect of the proposed development on the character of the area and the visual qualities of the SLA.'**

The rest of Penley is changing from an open rural village of mixed house types and appearance to a dormitory town of light red brick with solar panelled roofs where a car is essential to access almost all amenities: supermarkets, other shops, P.O., banks, libraries, surgeries, dentists, entertainment, employment.

2. In his Planning Appeal Statement, the agent makes several points that I must address.

Para. 2.1 and 5.0 The successful appeal APP/H6955/A/17/3186707 for Big Green Farm was for the redundant farm buildings and the hard surfaced farmyard between them, which were situated immediately next door to residential buildings on both sides. It is not comparable to the

site under review. Whereas the unsuccessful appeal 3139131 for the farmland of Big Green Farm certainly is comparable.

Para. 3.1.1 The agent says, 'Due to the pavement, signs, and lay-by the site clearly adjoins various facilities.' This is a misrepresentation. The pavement extends further west for about half a mile to a little group of farmhouses, probably put in originally so children could walk safely to school along the A539. One sign indicates the turn to the village hall, but others warn of the presence of a school, a sharpish turn, a 'slowdown' for a school, a 20mph limit, a bus stop for the school and all the signs one would expect as one approaches a settlement on an A road. The lay-by belongs to the school and is there for a school bus only. Any car parked there would do so illegally.

Para. 3.1.2 To the west of the employment/business park are about a dozen houses, to the east of the the business park are the other 360. How can the appellant disagree with the officer's statement?

Para 3.1.3. It is appalling to think that the appellant wants to put the access to this proposed estate directly opposite the school. Every school in Wales must be suffering the same congestion and dangers from cars near a school. At school leaving and arriving times cars are parked all along the A539 at the very point where children who walk to school need to cross the road. And now add another hazard?

Para. 3.2 Proximity to bus stops? What good is a bus stop if there are no buses? At the moment 3 or 4 buses, depending on the day, go through Penley, but the service is heavily subsidised and could be withdrawn at any time, as happened twice without any warning in 2017 and is expected to happen again with government budgets continuing to be cut.

Para. 3.3 Development here would entail the loss of good agricultural land, i.e. good for this area where, as the agent stated, most of the land is Grade 3, which is excellent for grazing. That is exactly what this area is noted for and is what the land is used for now.

The Planning Department of WCBC have had to consider 7 separate similar applications in the last 2 years. I think it made the correct decision in refusing this application.

I would be grateful to receive a copy of the appeal decision, either on paper or email.

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