Cassidy+Ashton

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Architecture + Building Surveying + Town Planning

Broad Oak Farm, Rossett
Planning Statement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Cassidy and Ashton in support of the full planning application for the "*Change of use and conversion of barns to form 13 no. residential units and associated works including part demolition"* at the site of Broad Oak Farm, Rossett.

1.2 The aim of the proposal is to create a high quality, attractive residential development which makes best use of the existing buildings present on site, improving the condition of the landscape and character / openness of the countryside in this part of the Wrexham area.

1.3 The farm has been vacant and although still registered, has not functioned as an agricultural holding for over 15 years. Whilst a previous planning application for residential conversion of the buildings was submitted in 2010, this application was withdrawn. The current application provides for a reduction in the number of units and does not include any work units / offices.

1.4 It is important that positive action takes place to ensure the site is reused in a productive manner, to the benefit of the environment and wider community, before further deterioration occurs. It is considered that residential is the only viable alternative use to enable the redevelopment of the farm to take place.

1.5 This statement intends to review the planning considerations relevant to the scheme and demonstrate compliance with policy at a local and national level. In addition, several material planning considerations are addressed in Chapter 5, alongside separate surveys and supplemental notes regarding highways, ecology, flood risk and structural condition.

1.6 This statement is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying application documents, inclusive of:

- Application form
- Design and Access Statement
- Location plan
- Existing site plan
- Demolition plan
- Proposed site plan
- Existing floor plans / elevations
- Proposed floor plans / elevations
- Phase 1 Ecology Survey
- Bat Survey and Mitigation Report
- Structural Inspection Report
- Ecology Supplemental Note
- Highways Supplemental Note
- Structural Supplemental Note
- Flood Risk Supplemental Note
- Pre Application Consultation Report

2.0 SITE AND CONTEXT

2.1 Broad Oak Farm is a former pig rearing farm which ceased production in 2001. The application site comprises 0.66 ha of land including several traditional brick built barns and several portal concrete framed barns with brick infill walls. In addition there are two silo storage tank structures. The main farmhouse stands within the south east section of the site with garage, workshop buildings and garden area. There are further vacant barn buildings in the northern section of the site, which are excluded from the application.

2.2 Broad Oak Farm is located on Llyndir Lane, Rossett, close to the Chester Wrexham Railway Line and bound by agricultural land on all sides. Rossett lies 5 miles north east of Wrexham and 6 miles south west of Chester. Junction 7 of the A483, 1.5 miles from the site provides excellent access to the regional road network. Chester Road passes through Rossett 500m east of the site. Route 1 operated by Arriva runs between Wrexham Bus Station and Chester Railway Station via Gresford, Marford, Rossett, Pulford and Chester Business Park. This route provides a 10 minute frequent service in both directions from Mondays to Saturdays and a 30 minute service on Sundays.

2.3 Rossett contains a variety of services and facilities, including a primary school, secondary school, pubs, church, village hall, takeaway, convenience stores etc.

FARM HISTORY

2.4 The farm historically operated as one of 4 farms in the local area working in the pig production business, with the other farms being Collynie Farm on Llyndir Lane, Moorside Farm in Parkside and Burton Meadows Farm on Llyndir Lane.

2.5 British pig farming declined significantly during the 1990's when cheaper meat became available from modern production units in mainland Europe. Two of the other local farms were vacated during this period. Moorside farm gained planning permission for conversion to residential use. Collynie Farm was converted for business use at Rossett Business Village. Burton Meadows farm remains in use as the sole focus for production in the area.

2.6 The buildings at Broad Oak are not suitable for any other agricultural purpose, having been constructed specifically for pig farming. Their layout and design are not appropriate for modern agricultural requirements and the economies of scale / mechanised handling that is essential for commercially successful modern farming. As such, whilst the farmhouse has remained occupied by the farmer, the rest of the buildings on site have remained largely empty.

2.7 The farmhouse is located at the southern section of the site and is accessed by a separate entrance off Lyndir Lane, with garage driveway and garden areas. A large brick wall separates the main farmyard from the farmhouse garden.

BUILDINGS

2.8 For the purposes of this application, the barns are split into buildings A to G, as shown on the existing site layout plan.

2.9 **Building A** is a large L shaped barn comprising of two storeys. There are various openings at ground and first floor level, with diamond brick air vents and brick eaves corbelling providing building detail. The barn has a pitched slate roof and is traditional in form, some sections of wall have been infilled with stone. There is a large lean to metal framed structure attached to the southern elevation which forms a covered storage area for vehicles (Structure C). Structures A and B comprise two silo storage tanks and a small brick single storey outbuilding.

2.10 **Building B** is a large 3 storey height brick built barn with slate roof and brick corbelling at eaves level. The internal area provides a ground floor level and double height first floor.

2.11 **Building C** attached to the rear of the building is a metal framed hay store barn with metal sheet roof.

2.12 **Building D** is a large single storey L shaped barn with concrete frame, sheet roof and brick infill walls.

2.13 **Buildings E and F** form an L shape and comprise concrete and steel portal framed barns with brick and timber cladding infill and pitched roofs.

2.14 **Building G** is a single storey brick built barn with timber roof structure and cement sheet roof.

PLANNING HISTORY

2.15 The site has previously been considered for residential purposes and was the subject of planning applications in 2009 and 2010 for development of 24 and then 21 dwellings, alongside home – work units. These applications were subsequently withdrawn.

Application Reference	Proposal	Date	Decision
P/2010/0510	Change Of Use And Part Re-Development To A Live/Work Development Comprising 21 No. Dwellings, Offices Together With Associated Access And Landscaping.	16/06/2010	Withdrawn
P/2008/1334	Change Of Use And Part Redevelopment To Form 24 No. Dwellings, 24 No. Work Units And Management Offices, Together With Associated Access And Landscaping.	16/06/2009	Withdrawn

PLANNING PRECEDENT

2.16 Aside from Broad Oak Farm, there are several comparable developments in the surrounding area which can act as planning precedent when assessing this application.

Cornish Hall

2.17 This application represents a similar site with vacant, dilapidated barn buildings at a farm no longer used for agricultural purposes. The scheme has been completed and involved the restoration and conversion of barns to create 5 dwellings with associated landscaping.

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
P/2012/0569	Listed Building Consent For Change Of Use And Conversion Of Vacant	Cornish Hall, Wrexham Road,	Approved

	Agricultural Buildings For Residential Development (5 No. Units)	Holt, Wrexham. LL13 9SW	

Gamford Farm

2.18 This approved scheme, while yet to be developed represents a comparable nearby site within the local area. Existing barns are to be converted with the openness of the site and appearance of the landscape improved through demolition of all other buildings.

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
P/2016/0384	Change of use and conversion of barns to form 6 no. residential units, construction of 2no. semi-detached dwelling house (replacement of existing farmhouse) and demolition of remaining structures across the site	Gamford Farm, Gamford Lane, Rossett, Wrexham. LL12 0EW	Approved

Moorside Farm

2.19 Moorside Farm is one of the farms mentioned previously that is a former pig farm, converted to residential use in 2004.

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
P/2004/0489	Conversion of Redundant Farm To 4 No. Self-Contained Dwellings and Alteration To Existing Vehicular And Pedestrian Access.	Moorside Farm. LL12 0BN	Approved

The Darland

2.20 This site has been subject of a number of successful planning applications for conversion of agricultural buildings to residential units. The most recent being in 2013.

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
P/2013/0205	Conversion Of Redundant Barns To Form 2 Dwellings (Amendments To P/2011/0838).	The Darland, Darland Lane, Rossett, Wrexham. LL12 0BA.	Approved

2.21 Previous applications for the Darland:

- P/2013/0722
- P/2011/0838
- P/2008/0810

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.22 The overall objective for the scheme is the change of use and conversion of the existing barns on site for residential use, whilst retaining rural character and improving the appearance and openness of the site. The necessary alterations proposed as part of the scheme would be compatible with the character of the existing buildings (see proposed plans and elevations). Other buildings are to be demolished to accommodate parking and garden areas and increase the openness of the site. Further detail is provided within the design and access statement.

2.23 We believe a residential use for the buildings on site is the most viable and sustainable use, this being for the following reasons;

- The most recent Housing Land Availability Study (April 2016) shows a shortfall in the number of available housing development sites and a lack of a five year housing supply. It is considered that residential use is the most viable option in terms of land value and returns to ensure an investor is willing to take on redevelopment of the site.

- The buildings lend themselves well to residential use and can provide for a range of dwelling sizes and high standard of amenity.

- It is considered that the frequency of trips and associated vehicles with a commercial development would potentially be detrimental to highway safety. The same applies to a tourist accommodation option, where it is likely the unit numbers would far exceed the residential option.

- There is considered to be little to no demand for the use of the buildings as commercial units. The site is close to the existing Rossett business village, which already provides office and employment space within the local area. Broad Oak Farm is compact in size and layout and could not provide the parking provision required for the amount of office accommodation and staff numbers that could be accommodated within the buildings, without intrusion of a new car park into the surrounding fields.

- The site is in a deteriorating condition and action must be taken to ensure the longevity of the buildings. Vandalism and trespass have been common issues in the past.
- The site is not considered to be in an appropriate location to provide tourist accommodation.

3.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

3.1 This section provides an overview of the local planning policy relevant to the site.

3.2 The site falls within the administrative boundary of Wrexham County Borough Council. Wrexham Council is currently in a transition stage between their existing adopted Unitary Development Plan (1996 – 2011) (adopted 2006) and the emerging Local Development Plan for the period 2013 to 2028. The emerging plan is expected to be adopted in March 2018.

3.3 Although the existing UDP has technically expired, until such time when it is superseded by the emerging Local Development Plan, it will continue to be used as the most current planning policy document. The formation of the emerging Wrexham Local Development Plan is still in progress. There is a preferred strategy document available which is the first formal publication in the new Local Development Plan preparation process.

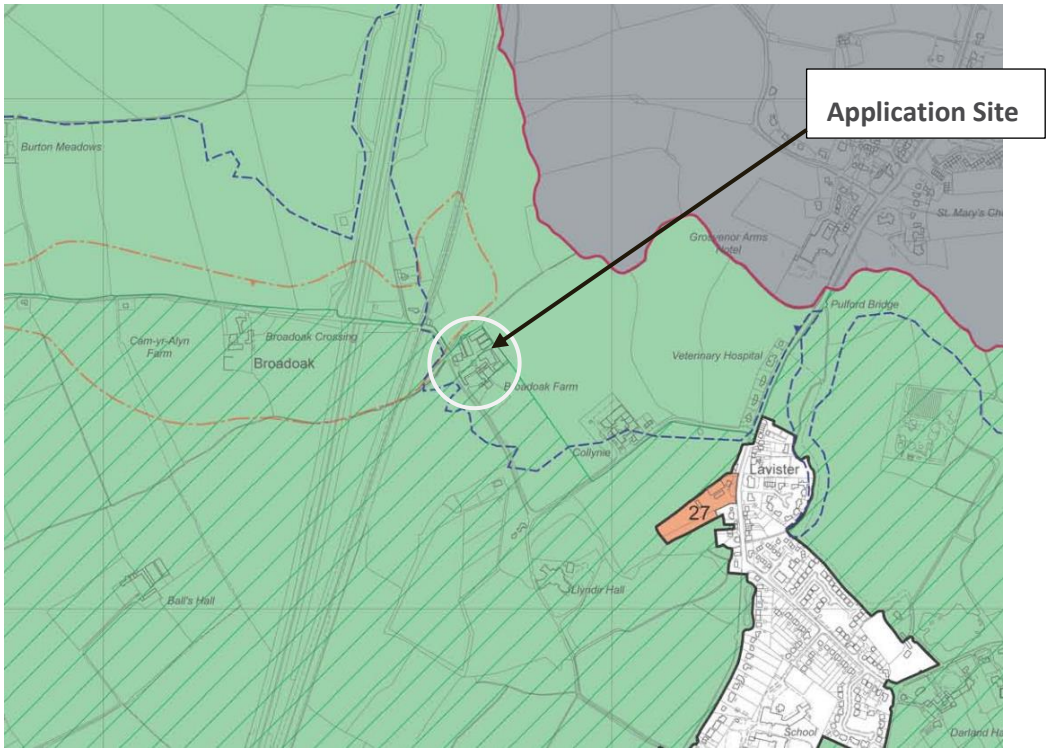
3.4 The current Unitary Development Plan sets out the Council's existing policies and proposals for the way in which land, buildings and infrastructure should be developed. The plan is accompanied by several detailed proposals maps which shows various allocations (linked to specific policies) for particular pieces of land with an aim of guiding future development.

3.5 Broad Oak Farm is situated outside the settlement boundary of Rossett and is within an area covered by the following policy designations:

Green Barrier / *Ffin Gwyrdd* - EC1

Special Landscape Area / *Ardal Tirlun Arbennig* - EC5

Development and Flood Risk / *Datblygiad a Perygl Llif* - EC12



3.6 **Policy EC1 – Green Barriers**

3.7 *"Within Green Barriers, development will only be granted planning permission if it is for agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green Barrier and do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it".*

The purposes of a Green Barrier include:

i) to prevent the coalescence of urban areas and villages with other settlements;

ii) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

iii) to protect the setting of urban areas and villages;

iv) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land".

3.8 The proposal complies within the purposes of the Green Barrier and the reasons for its designation. There will be a reduction in the built form and the openness of the Green Barrier will be increased, through the demolition of several buildings and the silo storage tanks.

Policy EC5 – Special Landscape Areas

"Within Special Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development, other than for agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational development by utility service providers, will be strictly controlled.

Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints".

3.9 The development will be constructed to a high standard of design as outlined in the design and access statement. The presence of a built form and any impact it may have upon the Special Landscape Area has already been established through the existing barns. However the demolition proposed will enhance the Special Landscape Area.

3.10 **Policy EC12 – Development and Flood Risk**

3.11 *"Development (including the raising of land) within defined flood plains will only be permitted if it:-*

a) would not be subject to an unacceptable risk of flooding on-site; and/or

b) does not result in an unacceptable risk of flooding on or off-site; and/or

c) does not adversely affect flood management or maintenance schemes"

3.12 Policy EC12 has been referenced in that the site appears to be located within a flood risk area on the proposals map.

3.13 However it is not clear as to why this is the case. As is explained in the National Planning Policy Chapter and supplemental Flood Risk note, the site is not within a recognised Natural Resources Wales or DAM flood zone, as shown on the relevant maps and is in fact above the 1 in 1000 year flood event zone.

REMAINING POLICIES

3.14 Aside from the above, there are several general policies to consider, relevant to the application.

Part 1 – Strategic Policies	✓
GDP 1 – Development Objectives	✓
EC4 – Hedegrows, Trees and Woodland	✓
EC6 – Biodiversity Conservation	✓
EC13 – Surface Water Runoff	✓
EC15 – Small Scale Neglected Sites	✓
H3 – Conversion of Buildings Outside Settlement Limits	✓
H5 – Housing in the Countryside	✓
H7 – Affordable Housing	✓
CLF5 – Open Space Requirements from New Residential Developments	✓
T8 – Parking	✓
T9 – Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Routes	✓

3.15 **Part 1 – Strategic Policies**

3.16 ***"Policy PS1 –*** *New development for housing, employment, and community services will be directed to within defined settlement limits/employment areas.*

3.17 ***Policy PS2*** *– Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.*

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

3.19 ***Policy PS4*** *– Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car".*

3.20 **Policy GDP1 – Development Objectives**, states all new development should:

a) *"Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*

b) *Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.*

c) *Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.*

d) *Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.*

e) *Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.*

f) *Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.*

g) *Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.*

h) *Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.*

i) *Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.*

j) *Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.*

k) *Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area".*

3.21 The proposal would achieve and conform to all of the above development objectives. The site has been in a deteriorating condition for over 15 years and the development will make a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the local area. There will be natural surveillance from dwellings over parking and garden areas, increasing security and safety. All dwellings will feature high quality security systems and doors / windows.

3.22 Safe vehicular access to the site would be achieved and further details is provided on this matter within the separate supplemental highways note.

3.23 The development would not be at risk from flooding. Convenient access to public transport is provided within Rossett.

3.24 **Policy EC4 – Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland**

3.25 *"Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted".*

3.26 The site as existing has no trees or hedgerows present. Through the development, there will be the opportunity for new tree and hedgerow planting and soft landscaping, enhancing the character of the landscape.

3.27 **Policy EC6 – Biodiversity Conservation**

"Development either within or close to sites of biodiversity interest will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site. Where such development is permitted, damage should be kept to a minimum, and compensatory measures should be provided. Measures to improve the biodiversity value of sites and enhance their natural conservation interest and landscape quality including the establishment of local nature reserves, will be supported".

3.28 The removal of hardstanding and the introduction of new garden areas with associated trees and plants will considerably enhance the biodiversity of the site. The bat survey report identifies that appropriate mitigation methods will be implemented with regards to bat habitats.

3.29 **Policy EC13 – Surface Water Run Off**

"Development which would result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the water environment due to additional surface water run-off will not be permitted".

3.30 Through the development, large areas of hardstanding will be removed and there will be an improvement in terms of the amount of surface water runoff being reduced.

3.31 **Policy EC15 – Small Scale Neglected Sites**

"Action will be taken to protect and enhance general amenity through the reclamation and restoration of derelict sites, and through the improvement of untidy sites, dilapidated buildings, and other eyesores, particularly those in sensitive locations".

3.32 The proposal to refurbish and re-use dilapidated existing buildings would comply with this policy and will enhance general amenity. The buildings are within a special landscape area and their restoration would improve the visual appearance of this sensitive area.

3.33 **Policy H3 – Conversion of Buildings Outside Settlement Limits**

"The change of use or conversion of a building to residential use outside settlement limits will only be permitted where:-

a) in the case of agricultural buildings, there is no longer an agricultural need and alternative non residential uses have proved inappropriate; and

b) the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling; and

c) any inherent characteristics of merit in the building are retained; and

d) the proposed dwelling and the resulting curtilage does not constitute an undesirable intrusion into the landscape, create access problems, nor require the provision of services at public cost; and

e) the floor plan of the existing building is sufficient to create a habitable dwelling".

3.34 Paragraph 6.10 of the UDP as supporting text to Policy H3 states that new homes can be created from the conversion of redundant buildings and the sub-division of larger residences. The paragraph acknowledges that there are a significant number of vacant and underused properties in the County Borough. Conversion can provide much needed smaller accommodation more quickly than would the provision of new homes and, at the same time, ensure a satisfactory re-use of existing resources and supplement conservation policies.

3.35 "The sympathetic conversion of redundant non-residential buildings to housing accommodation should be encouraged, providing that basic design standards can be achieved and it can be proven that the agricultural use has ceased and alternative non-residential are identified as inappropriate. In this way buildings of historic or architectural interest, often set in landscaped grounds of considerable interest, can be saved thereby also helping to achieve the Plan's environmental strategy".

3.36 Policy H3 forms the principal policy is support of the application in allowing for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use.

3.37 **A)** of policy H3 states that, where agricultural buildings are proposed for residential use, it must be demonstrated there is no longer an agricultural need for the buildings and alternative non-residential uses have proven inappropriate. The buildings have ceased to be used for their original purpose for a significant period of time (over 15 years) and no longer represent appropriate accommodation for modern agricultural practices. This is illustrated by the absence of any significant materials or paraphernalia within and surrounding the buildings.

3.38 Alternative uses are not appropriate for the site and there is not considered to be the demand in this location for such a large amount of office space that the site could offer in terms of building floor areas.

3.39 **B)** - The Structural Survey carried out by Adam Consulting Engineers Ltd and the recent Structural Inspection Report carried out in July 2017 reveal that the buildings are structurally sound. They are of a substantial construction with strong, permanent materials and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling. It is understood that new roofs and floors will be required. However this is a common aspect of barn conversions involving buildings which have been vacant for some time and will likely be required in order to meet building regulations. For the purposes of the structural surveys and this section, buildings have been identified as A to K as was previously. It is possible to cross reference the site plan within the structural survey with the existing site plan for this present application.

3.40 With reference to building A in particular, new internal walls will be construction to provide support to the outer walls and new floors.

3.41 The Atcost concrete framed barn (building K) whilst slightly less traditional in nature than buildings A and B presents an opportunity to create a high quality conversion and it is considered that the appearance of the building will be transformed once a new tiled roof, door and window openings and roof lights are fitted.

3.42 **C)** – Barns A and B feature the most inherent characteristics of merit that will be retained e.g. diamond brick vents, door headers and brick corbelling at eaves level. Building K features limited historic character, nevertheless any features and characteristics of merit will be retained and enhanced wherever possible.

3.43 The pig farming industry was very dominant in the surrounding area at one time. The re-use and conversion of the existing buildings ensures that the history of the area is maintained and reflected in the development.

3.44 **D)** - The residential curtilages and new parking area will all be contained within the existing built up form of the farm buildings and will protrude no further into the surrounding countryside than the existing development. There is a distinct existing fence line at which the surrounding fields stop, which will form the new site boundary and residential curtilages. Access to the site is to be improved and will prove adequate for residential use. Please refer to the material considerations Chapter.

3.45 **E)** - The floor plans of all of the barns are of a sufficient scale to create habitable dwellings.

3.46 **Policy H5 – Housing in the Countryside**

"Outside defined settlement limits new dwellings will only be permitted where:-

a) ***proposals accord with Policies H3, H4, and H8****; or*

b) proposals comprise infilling subject to Policy GDP1; or

c) an essential need to house a full time agricultural or forestry key worker can be established and

i) the long term financial viability and functional management of the enterprise is proven; and

ii) the person, due to the nature of the work, has to live on the site rather than in a nearby settlement; and

iii) there are no suitable buildings nearby which could be converted into a dwelling; and

iv) the new dwelling is sited adjacent to an existing building, can be landscaped, and is of a form, bulk, design and materials which reflect the locality's rural character.

Any permission will be conditioned to limit residential occupancy to essential workers".

3.47 The proposals are considered to accord with Policy H3, referenced within Policy H5. Policies H4 and H8 are not considered relevant.

3.48 **Policy H7 – Affordable Housing**

3.49 "Where there is a proven lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the Council will negotiate with developers to provide an element of affordable housing in new proposals of 25 or more homes. The initial benefit of discounted prices will be retained for subsequent and future occupants through the scheme's management by a suitable local housing body with the aid of legal agreements".

3.50 The development is for 13 units and would not be subject to an affordable housing requirement.

3.51 **Policy CLF5 – Open Space Requirements for New Developments**

"New development of ten dwellings or more must provide informal public open space within the site at a minimum level of 0.4 hectare per 50 dwellings, be conveniently located for users, and usable for playing field(s) and/or equipped children's play area(s) and open amenity area(s). In exceptional circumstances, the application of these standards may be varied, in the case of small urban infill housing development, where the developer enters into a legal agreement for financial contributions towards the cost of public open space provision where:-

a) the site is unsuitable for public open space provision; or

b) the development would not place significant additional pressure on public open space facilities in the vicinity of the site".

3.52 The characteristics and layout of the site are unsuitable for public open space to be provided on site.

3.53 **Policy T8 – Parking**

"Development granted planning permission will be required to provide vehicle parking spaces either on site or nearby, in accordance with the Council's current parking standards. Special regard will be paid to the following factors, as appropriate:-

a) the availability of public transport nearby,

b) proximity to public car parking,

c) proximity to local services and facilities,

d) road safety hazards and amenity considerations arising from on-street parking in the vicinity of the site.

Where implementation difficulties arise in making parking provision on-site or nearby, the Council will require a developer to make financial contributions for measures to assist public transport, or walking and cycling as appropriate".

3.54 Adequate car parking is to be provided for each dwelling in accordance with the Council's adopted standards. Broad Oak Farm is within sufficiently close proximity to the local services and facilities within Rossett and public transport.

3.55 **Policy T9 – Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Routes**

"Development proposals will be required to provide walking and cycling routes, where feasible and appropriate, that link with existing or proposed walking and cycling routes, and integrate with the public transport system. Opportunities for horse riding along these routes will be secured where appropriate".

3.56 The surrounding roads are quiet and conducive to good cycling to connect the site to the wider area.

3.57 The site is not located within the centre of Rossett but can be reached by methods other than private car. Cycling is a viable option and there are public transport links within Rossett in the form of a bus service.

3.58 There is an existing pavement on Llyndir Lane along the site frontage which extends past the main farmhouse, leading to a public footpath. The path provides pedestrian access to Rossett, reducing the requirement for residents to walk along Llyndir Lane. Further details are provided in the supplemental highways note.

LOCAL PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE 3 – CONVERTING RURAL BUILDINGS 2006

3.59 This guidance note explains the approach of Wrexham Council with regards to the change of use or conversion of rural buildings and expands upon policies GDP1, H3, E5 and CLF9 from the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan.

3.60 The note states that there are some buildings which are unsuitable for conversion, including those which are:

- *structurally unsound;*
- *roofless, missing substantial sections of wall, or so ruined that only vestiges remain of the original structure;*
- *of temporary construction;*
- *eyesores which should be removed in the interests of landscape conservation;*
- *unsuitable in terms of size and form of construction;*
- *at risk of flooding*

3.61 **The barn buildings which are proposed to be retained and converted at Broad Oak Farm do not fall into any of the above categories.**

3.62 In addition, guidance states that planning permission would not normally be granted if:

- *there is insufficient floor area in the existing building to provide acceptable standards of accommodation (in the case of conversions to dwellings, this should be a minimum of 40m2);*
- *the proposals involve rebuilding more than 10% of the walls if the roof structure needs to be rebuilt; or 20% of the walls if the roof structure is to be retained.*

3.63 The buildings are of a sufficient floor area to provide acceptable standards of accommodation. The roofs of the barns will require reconstructing. The structural survey states that within Building B no more than 15 – 20% of walls will need to be rebuilt. In building A repointing will need to take place. Please refer to the separate structural supplemental note for full details.

3.64 In terms of development principles, it is essential that converted buildings should keep their original character and not have the appearance of being fundamentally new structures. The aim should therefore be to retain such key features.

3.65 Where the building has no original or traditional features of merit, the Council will expect the design of a conversion to reflect the vernacular character and appearance of other buildings in the locality.

3.66 Several design and layout principles are set out, with regard to: walls, roofs, windows and doors, internal features, internal features, drainage and waste, heating and ventilation, extensions and additions, curtilages and landscaping and protected wildlife.

3.67 **Part 2** of the Guidance Note relates specifically to the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings. Several material considerations are set out for when it is proposed to convert an agricultural building to a dwelling:

3.68 ***General Location*** *– In many instances, buildings located in very remote areas will be unsuitable for non-residential uses.*

3.69 Broad Oak Farm is not located in a remote area.

3.70 ***Local Road Network*** *– For road safety reasons, the intensive use of narrow, single-carriageway country lanes with few passing places is normally undesirable. If a building is served by an unclassified road less than 4 metres wide (as defined on the 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale Ordnance Survey Maps), its use for business, commercial or tourism purposes may therefore be inappropriate.*

3.71 Commercial uses at the site would not be acceptable given the relatively narrow width of Llyndir Lane.

3.72 ***Site Access*** *– Where the site access is narrow and/or shared with other premises; or where visibility is obstructed by buildings and boundary walls, its use by significant levels of additional traffic may be hazardous. In such circumstances, conversion of the building to residential use may be the only safe option, although in extreme cases, even this may be unacceptable.*

3.73 The proposal will make use of existing access points and visibility splays will be improved to the required standard.

3.74 ***External Appearance*** *– Conversions of agricultural buildings should seek to maintain the agricultural character and appearance of the existing structure. While this can normally be achieved by residential conversions, commercial uses may require the insertion of larger windows, delivery doors, air vents and the attachment of other external equipment.*

3.75 ***Scale and Form of Construction*** *– Some farm buildings (particularly those of comparatively recent construction) resemble industrial units and rarely lend themselves to sympathetic residential conversion. Such buildings are clearly more suited to a non-residential use.*

3.76 Currently the concrete portal framed building D is slightly less traditional in nature than the brick built slate roofed barns, however this building is not an eyesore. It features good quality brick infill, a strong structural frame and would be transformed following the fitting of a new roof and new windows and door openings. It is evidence that the barn is more akin to traditional barn buildings than modern portal framed barns, which in comparison often feature corrugated metal cladding and roofs and are clearly unsuitable for conversion.

3.77 ***Proximity to existing business sites and buildings*** *– Where there is a significant number of sites and buildings already available for business purposes in the locality (for example, on an industrial estate), it is unlikely that the need to retain agricultural buildings for commercial purposes will be very strong.*

3.78 The site is located close to Rossett Business Village and there is not considered to be a requirement for further business floor space within the locality.

3.79 **Part 3** of the Guidance Note sets out information required to assess the suitability of buildings for conversion.

3.80 This includes a survey report detailing the condition of the buildings. The report must be prepared by a structural engineer or other suitably qualified person and must demonstrate that the buildings are structurally sound and is capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding. Such a report has been produced by Adams Consulting Engineers Ltd, the results of which are outlined within the separate structural supplemental note.

3.81 In summary the proposed development is considered to comply with relevant information contained within Guidance Note 3.

LOCAL PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE NO. 13 - HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

3.82 Guidance Note 13 outlines the various categories of housing that are considered acceptable in the countryside. Amongst these is the conversion of rural buildings, which are no longer suitable for their original purpose. Provided the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new building, it is recognised that conversion to other use(s) such as **residential**, employment, community or visitor accommodation, can safeguard the building's future.

LOCAL PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE NO. 16 – PARKING STANDARDS

3.83 For C3 residential use, the parking standards are:

- 1 bedroom – 1.5 spaces
- 2 bedrooms – 2 spaces
- 3 / 4 bedrooms – 3 spaces
- 5 bedrooms – 4 spaces

4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

PLANNING POLICY WALES (2016) EDITION 9

4.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets the context for sustainable land use planning policy in Wales, within which local planning authorities' statutory Unitary Development Plans and Local Development Plans are prepared and development control decisions on individual applications and appeals are taken. The following sections of PPW are considered relevant to the application. Key points have been highlighted in bold (our emphasis).

Chapter 3: Making and Enforcing Planning Decisions

4.2 **Paragraph 3.1.3** states: *"In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development (see 4.2), applications for planning permission or for the renewal of planning permission, should be determined in accordance with the approved or adopted development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations could include current circumstances, policies in an emerging development plan and planning policies of the Welsh Government. All applications should be considered in relation to up-to-date policies (see 2.14 and 4.2)".*

4.3 The application is considered to be in accordance with the adopted development plan for the area, with further material considerations to support.

Chapter 4 – Planning for Sustainability

4.4 **Paragraph 4.4.3** states: *"In contributing to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, planning policies, decisions and proposals should:*

- *Promote resource-efficient and climate change resilient settlement patterns that minimise land-take (and especially extensions to the area of impermeable surfaces) and urban sprawl, especially through preference for the re-use of suitable previously developed land and buildings, wherever possible avoiding development on greenfield sites (Sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9)".*

4.5 **Paragraph 4.3.1** sets out several sustainable development principles, amongst these, planning should aim to have:

- *respect for environmental limits, so that resources are not irrecoverably depleted or the environment irreversibly damaged. This means, for example, mitigating climate change, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, minimising harmful emissions, and promoting sustainable use of natural resources;*

4.6 The proposal minimises land take by utilising previously developed buildings, avoiding development on Greenfield sites. The removal of hardstanding and the introduction of new garden areas with associated trees and plants will considerably enhance the biodiversity of the site. Consideration will be given to the use of permeable parking areas.

4.7 **Paragraph 4.5.7** states: *"Planning to minimise the causes of climate change means taking decisive action to move towards a low carbon economy (see Section 12.8) by proactively reducing the demand for energy (see Chapter 8 and Section 12.8), facilitating the delivery of new and more sustainable forms of energy provision at all scales (see Section 12.8) and minimising the emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere".*

4.8 The development minimises carbon emissions by utilising existing buildings, with energy already locked into the construction. Fewer new materials and their associated emissions from production, transport and construction stages will be required. This is an important factor to consider when assessing the sustainability of the scheme.

4.9 **Paragraph 4.7.7** states: "*For most rural areas the opportunities for reducing car use and increasing the use of walking, cycling and public transport are more limited than in urban areas. In rural areas the majority of new development should be located in those settlements which have relatively good accessibility by non-car modes when compared to the rural area as a whole. Local service centres, or clusters of smaller settlements where a sustainable functional linkage can be demonstrated, should be designated by local authorities and be identified as the preferred locations for most new development including housing and employment provision".*

4.10 The site is not located within the centre of Rossett but can be reached by methods other than private car. Cycling is a viable option and there are public transport links within Rossett in the form of a bus service. There is an existing pavement on Llyndir Lane along the site frontage which extends past the main farmhouse, leading to a public footpath. The path provides pedestrian access to Rossett, reducing the requirement for residents to walk along Llyndir Lane. Further details are provided in the supplemental highways note.

4.11 **Paragraph 4.7.8** states: *"Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can be best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access and habitat and landscape conservation".*

4.12 Barn conversion schemes are not typically located within or directly adjoining existing settlements, however this should not be a limiting factor to their success. Location is but one aspect of sustainable development.

4.13 The paragraph proceeds to say that: *"All new development should respect the character of the surrounding area and should be of appropriate scale and design".*

4.14 The development will respect the character of the surrounding area in utilising existing buildings and retaining their traditional character and form, with sensitive alterations where necessary.

Green Barrier

4.15 **Paragraph 4.8.1** states: *"Around towns and cities there is often the need to protect open land. Local planning authorities need to* ***consider establishing Green Belts and making local designations, such as green wedges****. Both Green Belts and green wedges must be soundly*

based on a formal assessment of their contribution to urban form and the location of new development and can take on a variety of spatial forms. The essential difference between them is the issue of permanence. ***Land within a Green Belt should be protected for a longer period than the current development plan period, whereas green wedge policies should be reviewed as part of the development plan review process".***

4.16 **Paragraph 4.8.17** states: *"The re-use of buildings in a Green Belt or green wedge is not inappropriate development provided that:*

- *the original building is substantial, permanent and capable of conversion without major reconstruction;*
- *the new use will not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt or green wedge and the purposes of including land within it. Strict control will need to be exercised over the extension, alteration or any associated use of land for re-used buildings; and*
- *the building is in keeping with its surroundings".*

4.17 The re-use of the barn buildings at Broad Oak Farm would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Barrier. The structural survey (see Chapter 6) has concluded that the original buildings forming the focus of the development are substantial and capable of conversion without major reconstruction. The development will not increase the footprint or height of existing buildings and will therefore have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt (Green Barrier). The buildings are in keeping with their surroundings and this compatibility would not be compromised through the conversion.

4.18 The development utilises existing, vacant buildings. Whilst the site is not strictly previously developed land (being an agricultural holding), the scheme will assist in regeneration and relieve pressure to some extent on more valuable Greenfield sites in the Borough. The development will make a contribution towards overall housing land provision and constitutes sustainable development.

4.19 There is currently shortfall of housing within the Wrexham Borough, below the required five year land supply. It is our understanding that the Council are looking to release areas of land from the Green Barrier to meet housing needs. The proposal at Broad Oak Farm to utilise existing buildings within a previously developed site will reduce the pressure to release and build upon undeveloped Green Barrier land elsewhere.

4.20 **Paragraph 9.2.22** states: *"In planning for housing in rural areas it is important to recognise that development in the countryside should embody sustainability principles, benefiting the rural economy and local communities while maintaining and enhancing the environment. There should be a choice of housing, recognising the housing needs of all, including those in need of affordable or special needs provision. In order to safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside, to reduce the need to travel by car and to economise on the provision of services, new houses in the countryside, away from existing settlements*

recognised in development plans or from other areas allocated for development, must be strictly controlled".

4.21 The proposal provides for a mix of housing type, including a good proportion of smaller homes, aimed at first time buyers and younger families, recognising the housing needs of all. The character and appearance of the countryside will be safeguarded through the sensitive restoration and conversion of the existing barn buildings. The site whilst not in the centre of Rossett, is far from an isolated rural location.

Chapter 7 – Economic Development

4.22 **Paragraph 7.2.2** states: *"Local planning authorities are required to ensure that the economic benefits associated with a proposed development are understood and that these are given equal consideration with social and environmental issues in the decision-making process, and should recognise that there will be occasions when the economic benefits will outweigh social and environmental considerations".*

4.23 Broad Oak Farm as an active source of economic activity has ceased to function for over 15 years and will not continue as a farm. The residential development will create economic benefits during the construction, design and supply stages. There will be an increased resident population in the area contributing towards sustaining local services and facilities.

TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTES (TAN)

4.24 Technical Advice Notes within Wales are comparable to Supplementary Planning Guidance in England and should be read in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales. Alongside their use in the preparation of local development plans, TAN's can be classed as a material consideration when deciding on planning applications.

4.25 The following Technical Advice Notes are considered particularly relevant and have been taken into account during the planning and design of the development:

TAN 1 – Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (2015)

4.26 TAN 1 states that the purpose of a Joint Housing Land Availability Study is to provide an agreed statement of residential land availability for development planning and development management purposes.

4.27 This the Welsh Government national policy requirement for local planning authorities to ensure sufficient land is genuinely available to provide a 5 year supply of land for housing. Wrexham Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year housing supply.

TAN 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

4.28 This note provides advice on areas including the key principles of positive planning for nature conservation, nature conservation in Local Development Plans and development management procedures.

TAN 12 – Design (2014)

4.29 In relation to conversion or adaptation of agricultural buildings, character retention will often involve the least amount of change possible to external appearance. Solidity and simplicity in design and relationship of built form with landscape provide the distinctive character of many Welsh rural areas. The fragility of these qualities and the important contribution which local distinctiveness makes to a sustainable future for rural areas should be reflected in development plan policies and guidance.

4.30 TAN 12 also provides wide ranging advice regarding good design for transport, buildings, biodiversity, the landscape, housing and layouts.

TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk (2004)

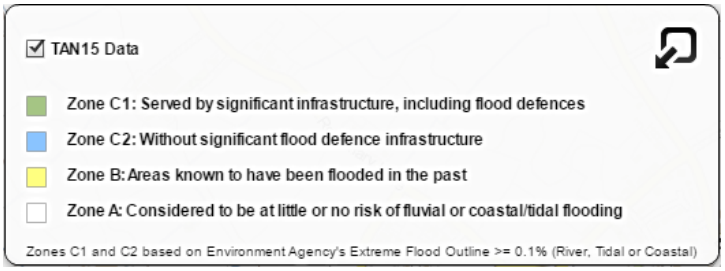
4.31 TAN15 contains a development advice map (DAM). This is the Assembly Government's map, based on Environment Agency and British Geological Survey mapping.

4.32 The DAM shows three development advice zones, A, B, C. Zones A and B are areas of generally low risk (i.e. outside the main river flood plain). Zone C represents the extreme flood outline, and is further subdivided into two zones. These are:

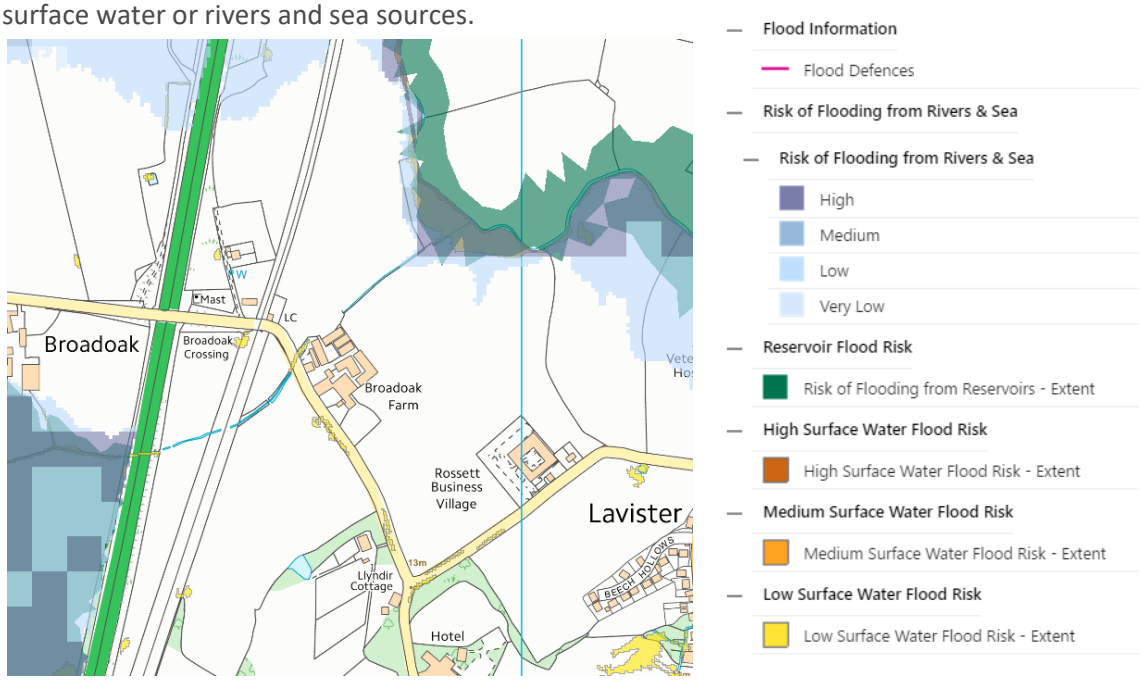
C1: described as "Areas of the floodplain which are developed and served by significant infrastructure, including flood defences." and

4.33 C2: described as "Areas of the floodplain without significant flood defence infrastructure."

4.34 The site is not located within any identified flood zone as shown on the map extract below.



4.35 Similarly the Natural Resources Wales Flood Map shows the site is not at risk of flooding from surface water or rivers and sea sources.



TAN 18 Transport

"Integration of land use planning and development of transport infrastructure has a key role to play in addressing the environmental aspects of sustainable development. It is important to:

- *promote resource and travel efficient settlement patterns;*
- *ensure new development is located where there is, or will be, good access by public transport, walking and cycling thereby minimising the need for travel and fostering social inclusion;*
- *manage parking provision".*

5.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Aside from relevant planning policy, there are a number of other material considerations related to the development that have been addressed, outlined within this section.

ACCESS + HIGHWAYS

5.2 Access and highway considerations are outlined within the separate supplemental highways note and design and access statement.

ECOLOGY

5.3 Bowland Ecology Ltd. were commissioned to undertake an extended Phase 1 habitat survey and daytime building inspection of buildings at Broad Oak Farm. Ecology considerations are outlined within the separate supplemental ecology note.

5.4 Based on recommendations within the report, further bat surveys have been carried out by Sambrook Associates and a bat mitigation report produced.

FLOOD RISK + DRAINAGE

5.5 Flood risk and drainage considerations are outlined within the separate supplemental flood risk note.

STRUCTURAL SURVEY

5.6 A structural survey of the buildings on site was carried out in October 2008 by Adams Consulting Engineers Ltd. Please refer to the separate structural supplemental note for a summary of this survey.

5.7 After taking this survey into consideration, an updated structural condition report of the buildings to be retained through the application has been carried out by Huxtable and Hodgeson in July 2017 and is also submitted separately.

5.8 In summary both surveys conclude that the buildings are structurally sound, of a substantial construction with strong, permanent materials and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling.

TREES

5.9 There are no trees present within the boundary of the application site. As such it is considered that an Arboricultural Survey is not required to support the application.

CONTAMINATION

5.10 A desktop contamination survey was carried out as part of the 2010 application at the site. From this assessment, it is concluded that there are no significant issues of ground contamination which may prevent the development of the site for residential use.

5.11 The pre application consultation response from the Council's Contaminated Land Officer states that no conditions would be placed upon the planning application and that an advisory note is issued with regards to a precautionary approach during the construction phase and evidence of the storage/spillage of agro-chemicals. The pre application consultation response from NRW recommends several contaminated land conditions for the local planning authority to attach to aplanning permission.

NOISE

5.12 The closest sources of noise to the site are the Chester to Wrexham Railway line, which passes 100 metres to the west and the A483 dual carriageway which passes 200 metres to the west. These would not have an unacceptable impact upon the development and internal noise levels, subject to appropriate high performance window glazing, door types and ventilation systems. Such specifications are to be the included within a building regulations application at the appropriate time.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application site of Broad Oak Farm comprises several redundant farm buildings that are suitable for conversion to residential use in accordance with relevant planning policy.

6.2 The aim of the proposal is to create a high quality, attractive residential development which makes best use of the existing buildings present on site, improving the condition of the landscape and character / openness of the countryside in this part of the Wrexham area.

6.3 It is considered that the following are key factors that weigh in favour of the development:

- No agricultural need for the buildings;
- Expectation of no commercial, industrial or tourism demand for the buildings;
- Requirement for housing and housing land supply within the County Borough;
- Design in keeping with the rural context of the site and character of the barns;
- Increase in openness of the Green Barrier.

6.4 The site is within a sustainable location to benefit from the services and facilities present in Rossett and the wider area. The scheme will make a noticeable contribution towards the shortage of housing supply within the Wrexham Borough.

6.5 There will be a significant reduction overall in the built form present on the site through the demolition of several portal framed barn buildings. Large areas of hardstanding will be removed and soft landscaping introduced, resulting in a net improvement with regards to surface water runoff and biodiversity.

6.6 There are not considered to be any material considerations that would preclude development, when assessed against the proposals and characteristics of the site. It is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted without delay.

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