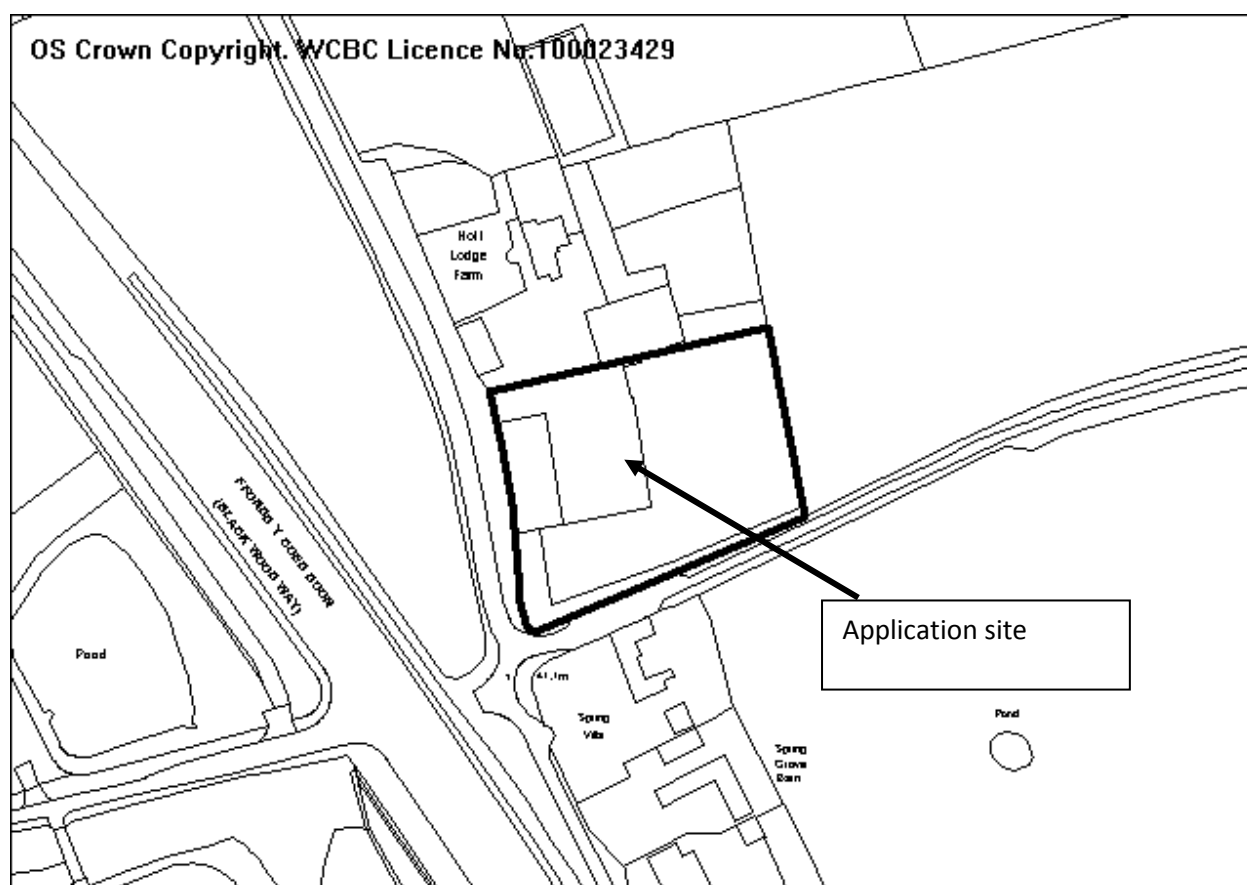


APPENDIX 2

Case Officer Report in respect of application P/2016/1137

SITE

The site is located at the junction of Hugmore Lane and Francis Lane and is occupied by a range of traditional brick farm buildings that adjoining modern former farm buildings converted to industrial use. The majority of the remainder of the site is hard surfaced.



PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing to demolish the modern buildings, as well as a brick lean-to extension to the rear of the traditional buildings, to convert the latter into 4 dwellings as well as to erect 12 dwellings on the remainder of the site.

HISTORY

6/18110 Conversion of redundant farm outbuildings into mail order motor factors, alteration to existing vehicular and pedestrian access and installation of septic tank.
Refused 11.6.1990

6/18557 Conversion of redundant farm buildings into mail order motor factors, alteration to vehicular access and installation of septic tank. Granted 8.10.1990

P/2014/0232 Change of use to dwelling. Withdrawn.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9). In particular:

Chapter 4: Sustainability

Chapter 9: Housing

Guidance in the following Technical Advice Notes is also applicable

TAN1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies

TAN5: Nature Conservation and Planning

TAN12: Design

TAN18: Transport

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan. The site lies outside of a settlement limit. The traditional brick farm buildings are curtilage listed due to their historic association with Holt Lodge Farm, a Grade II listed building.

Policies PS1, PS2, PS3, GDP1, EC4, EC6, EC9, H3, H5 and T8 apply.

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council:	Consulted 16.12.16
Local Member:	Happy for application to be dealt with as a delegated refusal.
Public Protection:	Recommend conditions in respect of contaminated land, construction hours and dust management.
Highways:	Have made the following comments: - Any existing/proposed access would normally require visibility splays of 2.4 x 120m to the north and 2.4 x 43m to the south. It would appear possible to construct an access which could provide the required visibility splays; - I would recommend any existing vegetation/hedgerow on the corner of Hugmore Lane/Francis Lane is removed to provide a visibility splay at the Francis Lane junction of 2.4 x 43m. This has been demonstrated on the site layout plan;

- The vehicle turning head indicated on the submitted plan appears to comply with WCBC adoptable standards;
- Recommend the proposed footway on the northern side of the access is extended along the existing highway verge;
- A suitable scheme of surface water drainage will be required to drain any adoptable areas of the estate roads/footways;
- A suitable scheme of street lighting will be required for the internal estate road and the frontage on Hugmore Lane;
- Recommend each dwelling is provided with adequate parking provision in accordance with the maximum LPG16 standards;
- A number of proposed dwellings (4 no.) located around the turning head have only 2 parking spaces which is considered inadequate;
- The proposed driveways for the 4 no. barn conversions are only approximately 4.2m in length. The 2 no. 3 bedroom dwellings in this location only have 2 parking spaces which is considered inadequate. However 3 no. visitor spaces have been provided which could be considered adequate to offset any shortfall;
- Hugmore Lane is a rural location with limited footway provision and street lighting and very few public services available in this area. The site may therefore be considered to be in an unsuitable location for a development of this size/nature;
- Any resident wishing to use the bus would have to walk a significant distance along the entire length of Hugmore Lane to reach the bus stop on the A534 Holt Road. I understand that this service runs every 2 hours. Residents using this service would have to walk along Hugmore Lane without the benefit of footways or streetlights, which is not ideal. However there is an alternative bus stop located to the south of the site on Abbey Road (approximately 10m walk). This can be reached by existing footway provision serving Wrexham Industrial Estate;
- The proposed development site may not be considered to meet with requirements of settlement policies detailed in TAN18;
- Although there is scope to provide a suitable access off Hugmore Lane, the site may be considered to be in an unsustainable location;

NRW:

Have significant concerns and recommend permission should only be granted if conditions are attached that deal with the following:

- Contaminated land;
- Surface water drainage;
- Piling

Based on the content of the ecological submissions, we consider the proposed development is not likely to be detrimental to the maintenance of the favourable conservation status of any local bat populations.

Welsh Water:

Recommend drainage conditions.

CPAT:

Recommend a condition requiring photographic survey be imposed.

Flood Management:

The application form indicates that surface waters generated by the development will be managed by means of soakaway. No supporting information is including demonstrating both the existing method for managing surface water on site, or that the use of soakaway is suitable. I would normally expect redevelopment of a site to be used as an opportunity to provide betterment when compared to the existing development. Prior to determination of the application I would request that an indicative drainage proposal is submitted in accordance with the attached guidance note.

Site Notice:

Expired 11.1.17

Press Notice:

Expired 28.1.17

Neighbours:

The owners/occupiers of 5 neighbouring properties notified 20.12.16.

1 representation received making the following comments:

- We feel the 4 barn conversions is fine but the 12 new dwellings is by far too many in a countryside. We have no objections to the 4/5 larger houses as this would be more in keeping with the types of property on the lane.
- As you drive up and down Hugmore Lane, you see some nice larger detached houses set out in nice manner. The two properties near the beginning of the lane look well;
- We well the hedging, poplar trees and laurel bank must be retained. If no houses were built on the site the existing buildings will fall into disrepair and become unsightly, so we are in favour of houses being built but only 4/5 not 12.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Policy: The site is located outside of a settlement limit and open countryside. Policy H5 allows for housing development to take place outside of settlement limits through the conversion of suitable buildings, the subdivision of an existing dwelling, up to two dwellings on an infill plot, small scale affordable housing schemes on sites adjacent to a settlement limit and key rural worker housing.

Conversion of the traditional brick buildings to residential use is acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with policy H3. I will comment in more detail on the conversion proposals below.

The demolition of the modern buildings and their replacement with 12 dwellings would not accord with policy H5. Whilst policy UDP policy H10 allows for the erection of a new dwelling to replace an existing dwelling in the countryside however there are **no** UDP policies that allow for buildings used for other purposes to be demolished and replaced by dwellings. The proposed new-build dwellings are therefore in conflict with policies PS1 and H5.

The site constitutes previously developed land and whilst policy PS3 and Planning Policy Wales are supportive of the re-use of previously developed land/sites, paragraph 4.9.1 of PPW also recognises that not all previously developed land is suitable for development, for example due to the location of the site. I will comment on this matter in more detail below.

Housing Land Supply: Planning Policy Wales (paragraph 9.2.3) requires Local Planning Authorities to ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available or will become available to provide a 5 year supply of land for housing.

In accordance with Technical Advice Note (TAN) 1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (2015), because the UDP plan period has now expired Wrexham is unable to demonstrate whether it has a 5 year housing land supply or not. In such circumstances TAN1 (paragraph 6.1) advises that the need to increase supply should be **given considerable weight** when dealing with planning applications, provided that the development would otherwise comply with development plan and national planning policies.

In addition to the above, the emerging Wrexham Local Development Plan will need to make provision for around 8,460 new homes (this includes provision for a 10% contingency) to meet the housing needs of the County Borough over the 2013-2028 period. Taking into account existing deliverable supply this equates to a requirement for sufficient land to be brought forward for around 4,000 houses to be built. It is therefore clear that there is a need to significantly increase the supply of land available for housing in the County Borough. The need to increase housing supply is a material consideration that weighs in heavily favour of this proposal.

Weight afforded to policies PS1 and H5: The existing settlement limits reflect the housing requirements identified in the UDP that were informed by migration led projecting, using mitigation trends from 1996. The LDP housing requirements are informed by far more up to date information. It will not be possible to meet the County Borough's future housing requirements without the release of greenfield sites and in light of this, policy PS1 is now outdated and therefore afforded less weight in the determination of planning applications.

Planning Policy Wales (paragraph 9.3.6) advises that new residential development in the open countryside away from established settlements should be strictly controlled. The limited circumstances set out in policy H5 under which new dwellings in the

open countryside may be permitted are in general conformity with PPW and therefore in my opinion the policy can continue to afford significant weight.

Sustainability: Paragraph 9.2.8 of PPW advises that when searching for sites to allocate for housing development, local authorities should start by with the re-use of previously developed land and buildings within settlements, then settlement extensions and then new development around settlements with good public transport links. Paragraph 9.2.9 advises that when allocating sites for housing, their accessibility by modes other than the car should be taken into account.

Whilst the above advice is primarily applicable to development plan preparation/review, in the absence of a 5 year housing land supply I consider it to also be relevant when assessing individual planning applications, particularly those that depart from UDP policies.

The site is clearly divorced a settlement, being around 2.5km from the edge of Wrexham and just over 4km from Holt. Although not defined as a settlement by the UDP, the dwellings at the northern end of Hugmore Lane have the characteristics of a hamlet/large cluster of houses. However the site is also clearly divorced from it, the continuous built frontage terminating some 500m to the north of the application site.

Whilst the Wrexham Industrial Estate has a settlement limit in the UDP, it cannot be considered as a settlement in the sense of a place where people live or where new housing would be directed. Although there are dwellings within and on the periphery of the Industrial Estate, it is primarily an employment area. The site is in any case also clearly separated from the Industrial Estate.

I accept that the proximity to the Industrial Estate means that the development would provide an opportunity for those who employed by businesses located there to live within walking distance of their place of work. However there are no essential services provided within the industrial estate, such as a local convenience store. The nearest school to the site is St Paul's Voluntary Aided School in Bowling Bank, some 3km away. The next nearest schools are located in Holt or Wrexham.

There are bus stops at the northern end of Hugmore Lane served by Wrexham to Chester (via Holt and Farndon) buses (C56) that are broadly – broadly one bus in each direction every two hours. Bus stops are around 900m from the site and for around two thirds of that distance there are no dedicated pedestrian footways or street lights. Whilst Hugmore Lane carries significantly less traffic than it did prior to the new link road to the Industrial Estate opening, it is nevertheless subject to a 60mph speed limit. In my opinion it is very unlikely that future occupiers would walk from the site to access public transport on Holt Road, indeed it would be unsafe for them to do so, particularly at night.

The Industrial Estate is served by hourly bus services (42) with stops around 750m from the site. Whilst this allow occupiers of the site to travel to Wrexham by non-car means, in my opinion it currently would not be particularly convenient for anyone needing to be in Wrexham before 9am those needing to access a convenience store for top up shopping or to travel to school. Indeed when the timetable for this service

is read in conjunction with a less frequent service (13B) it is clear that they primarily are intended to provide access to employees travelling to and from Wrexham to the Industrial Estate.

In light of the above, with the exception of conversion of the brick buildings, the location the site means its development for housing does not accord with advice in paragraph 4.7.4 of PPW that new development be consistent with minimising the need to travel and increasing accessibility by modes other than private car. In that regard it is also does not accord with the advice set out in paragraphs 9.2.8 and 9.2.9 regarding the location of new residential development, despite being previously developed land.

The application is accompanied by marketing evidence that would appear to suggest that the prospects of the site being reused for employment purposes is low, however I do not consider this sufficient reason to grant permission for the development proposed. The UDP does not contain any policies that specifically prevent the site being used for other purposes or indeed alterations to the existing buildings to perhaps make new uses a more viable proposition. However despite the submissions demonstrating that release of the site from its existing use would be in accordance with the advice set out in paragraph 4.6.9, alternative uses for the site must be considered in their own right. The evidence submitted does not overcome other planning policy objections to the development.

I appreciate that two former farm buildings on the adjacent site have recently been converted to residential use. However both local and national planning policy allow for the conversion of rural buildings to other uses, including dwellings. The supporting statement has also referred to two other developments taking place to the north of the site on Hugmore Lane either side of the dwelling Long Meadow. These two developments were considered to be infill plots, and again local and national planning policy make provision for limited infill development. In any case, all of the developments referred to above were considered on their own merits. They are also much smaller in scale. They therefore do not set any precedent for this proposal.

Design:

New Build

There is ribbon development of a suburban character either side of Hugmore Lane however it extends along only a relatively short distance and there is a very large gap between it and the application site that is clearly rural in character with only sporadic development of a scale and character typical to the countryside in the wider County Borough. Notwithstanding its proximity to the Wrexham Industrial Estate, the immediate surroundings of the site are also rural in character.

Despite the fact the site has an industrial character at present, the agricultural heritage of the site and its relationship with Holt Lodge Farm and its former outbuildings is easily discernible. The development would introduce a very urban/suburban form of development that would be significantly at odds with and harmful to the rural character of the immediate locality in terms of density, layout and

character. This impression would be emphasised by the large turning head and footways of the estate road.

The layout of the development and the appearance of the dwellings in no way take account of their wider context nor do they reflect or complement the form, scale and appearance of traditional farm buildings adjacent to them to the extent that their relationship will look rather contrived. Indeed a modern housing estate would appear completely out of context and will harm the setting of the adjacent curtilage listed buildings.

Conversion scheme

Whilst the principle of conversion is acceptable in principle, I have some concerns about the proposals submitted. The lean-to extension to the south of the buildings is described in the Heritage Impact Assessment early to mid-20th century, the Conservation Officer suggests it may well date back to the 19th century. The potential to retain and re-use this does not appear to have been considered in detail, however because the elevation behind it has been largely removed, a significant portion of the southern elevation will be new-build.

No details have been provided to demonstrate how much of the conversion scheme is new-build/reconstruction, although if much of the lower part of the southern elevation is to be new-build, then it will exceed the 10% recommended by LPG3. Nevertheless, the proposals preserve the overall form of the building and do not result in any additional impact upon the wider rural landscape. The bulk of the resulting dwellings will be original rather than new build. Furthermore LPG3 is only guidance and given the need to preserve curtilage listed buildings, I believe a degree of flexibility is appropriate in this instance.

Notwithstanding the above, the resulting southern elevation fails to preserve or enhance the appearance of the building, particularly in terms of the size and appearance of the ground floor openings, which do not reflect the appearance of the better preserved north-facing elevation and therefore detracts from the character of the building.

Amenity: The layout of the development broadly accords with LPG21 in terms of separation distances within the site and to existing neighbouring dwellings. The new build dwellings will also be provided with adequate private garden.

Because only one means of access into to the proposed barn conversions is proposed both parking and garden space is provided to the south. This arrangement means that the garden areas are not private but open to the street scene, thus severely limiting the standard of amenity afforded to the occupiers of 3 out of the 4 dwellings.

I appreciate that one of the barn conversions to the north of the site does not have a fully private garden area, however the normal requirements were relaxed in that case to limit the impact of the development upon the courtyard that it, the other conversion scheme and indeed the north elevation of the buildings subject to this application face onto. In any case, the courtyard is shared with only one other dwelling so

significantly fewer passing vehicles or pedestrians will be using it than the estate road proposed by this development.

Policy CLF5 of the UDP requires on-site public open space on new housing developments of 10 or more dwellings. The proposals do not include any such provision. Whilst the policy and Local Planning Guidance Note 10 recognise that some exceptions can be made for smaller sites, with contributions being sought to provide or improve public open space off-site, I do not consider this approach would be appropriate in this instance. There are no areas of public open space in the locality of the site – the nearest being in Wrexham or Holt, however these are not easily accessible from the site, particularly for children by themselves and for that reason any contributions towards them would not be directly related to the development.

The lack of open space means future occupiers, particularly children, will be left without a space for informal recreation, do the detriment of their amenity. Well designed and located open space could also assist in integrating a redevelopment scheme into its rural surroundings.

Access and Parking: The proposed access will have adequate visibility in both directions.

House (anti-clockwise)	Bedrooms	Parking Provided	LPG16 Maximum
Type B	3	3	3
Type C	2	2	2
Type B	3	3	3
Type B	3	3	3
Type C	2	2	2
Type B	3	3	2
Type A	4	3	3
Type A	4	2	3
Type D1	3	3	3
Type A	4	2	3
Type A	4	2	3
Type D	3	1	3
Barn Conversion	3	3	3
Barn Conversion	3	2	3
Barn Conversion	2	2	2
Barn Conversion	2	2	2
Total	n/a	38	43

Not all of the dwellings have parking provision in accordance with the LPG16 maximum, however I do not believe this provides a valid reason for refusal. Three communal spaces are proposed which partly off-sets any on-plot deficit. There is also sufficient space within the frontage of the D house type to provide additional parking if needed – the occupiers being able to provide a hard surfaced area under permitted development rights. In any case, a limited amount of on-street parking

within the development is unlikely to significantly harm access to the site or prejudice highway or pedestrian safety given the comparatively limited volume of traffic that is likely to use the estate road.

Highways have requested the footway be extended along the northern side of the existing access. I consider this to be unnecessary. Indeed given the lack of footways in the immediate vicinity of the site, I consider the provision of footways anywhere within the scheme to be unnecessary in this instance.

Drainage: The Flood Officer has commented that porosity tests be carried out prior to determination of the application. Whilst these tests will be necessary to establish if the site is suitable for soakaway drains, the fact that, as far as I am aware, tests have not been carried out is not a valid reason for refusal. The development will reduce the hard surfaced area within the site and therefore reduces the risk of on-site or off-site surface water flooding, irrespective of whether soakaways or another method of surface water drainage are used. A detailed drainage scheme could be required by planning condition.

Ecology: The buildings have been assessed for the presence of bats. No evidence was found and therefore the development is unlikely to adversely impact upon bat species.

Great Crested Newts are present in the locality and whilst the development will not result in the loss of GCN habitat, a scheme of Reasonable Avoidance Measures would need to be implemented before and whilst site works are taking place. This could be secured by condition.

Trees: The double row of poplars, identified as G1, located to the eastern boundary are shown to be included within gardens at distances of 12.0 – 16.0m from dwellings and within 3.0m of garages. The tree officer is concerned that this may lead to concerns from occupiers resulting in pressure to remove the trees. The trees are of merit, I consider it unlikely that all are necessarily at risk of removal. In any case the trees clearly reinforce the impression of this being an artificially created boundary that stands out in the wider landscape. This impression may be reduced if some trees were removed and additional or alternative landscaping provision. I do not consider the proximity of four dwellings to the poplar trees justifies refusal in this instance.

Protection measures will be required to ensure that the trees in the eastern and southern boundaries and the hedgerow along the latter are protected during construction. This could be secured by condition.

CONCLUSION

The development is conflicts with policies PS1 and H5 and despite the need to increase the supply of land available for housing this is considered an unsustainable site for residential development.

The proposed development will harm the rural character of the locality and will harm the character of curtilage listed buildings, as such it does not accord with policies GDP1 and EC9 of the UDP.